



## Alstonville RSL Sub-Branch

# Standfast 2026

Issue 277

April 2026



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### FOR YOUR DIARY:

**Next Committee meeting 11<sup>th</sup>  
April @10am, sub-Branch  
meeting @ 1100 hr. Followed  
by a light lunch**

### Alstonville RSL Sub-Branch Office Bearers

President	John Porter	0477 773 140	All emails to:  <a href="mailto:AlstonvilleSB@rslnsw.org.au">AlstonvilleSB@rslnsw.org.au</a>
Vice President	Phil Skinner	0427 291 292	
Vice President	Stephen Bryce		
Secretary	John Gordon JP	0437 509 790	
Treasurer	Garry Henderson-Smith	0400 474 413	

The Annual Voluntary Levy is payable now, \$15. Donations are also acceptable!!

Payment can be made to: BSB 728 728 22306259 with your name as refernce

Dear Members,

We are fast approaching our busy season with Anzac Day just around the corner. Once again, I ask the support of our members to ensure we meet our fund raising commitments; school commemorations and that Anzac Day runs smoothly.

The Middle East war is beginning to place pressure on our fuel supplies. Any member who needs assistance during this time, please reach out to me or one of our Committee Members. We can help!!

At last, we have put into place our new entry Arbor. It's only temporary until we fix it permanently with new posts and a tidy up of the roof. With completion in mind, what colour should we paint it? I suggest white so it stands out, but that decision will be made by you.

Once again, if you need assistance with anything, please make contact. JP 0477773140, JG 0414285812.



## From the President

### Friendship

Friendship is a voluntary, personal relationship based on mutual affection, trust, and shared experiences. It provides emotional support, improves health, and reduces stress. Maintaining strong friendships requires intentionality, such as open communication, kindness, and acting as a confidant, which strengthens social bonds.

Blessings! 🙏

John Porter  
President

## Sub-Branch Meeting Minutes

MINUTES of the sub-Branch General Meeting 14 Mar 2026.

President John Porter declared the meeting open at 11.16 with the wreath laid by member Phil Skinner followed by the Ode and a half minute's silence.

Attendance was 22, with 8 apologies.

**MOTION:** That apologies be accepted.

**Moved** – Bob Wilson      **Seconded** – Rob Fry      **CARRIED**

### Minutes of the meeting held on 14 Feb 2026

**MOTION:** That the Minutes of the meeting on 14 Feb 2026, as printed, be accepted as a true record of that meeting.

**Moved** – Secretary      **Seconded** – Alan Brown **CARRIED**

Business arising from minutes - Nil business arising.

### Correspondence:

Inwards

Secretary read the received and sent correspondence including:

State Circulars

Ad for military silhouettes for purchase

ANZAC Day equip hire confirmation

Invitation from Trinity College for members to attend their ANZAC Day ceremony

Outwards

Letters for ANZAC Day sent, several responses already (Wollogbar PS, Rev Snyman, RFS and Emmanuel College).

Letters to Primary Schools re Essay Competition

**MOTION:** That the Inwards correspondence be adopted, and the Outwards correspondence be endorsed

**Moved** - John Gordon      **Seconded** – Brian Partridge      **CARRIED**

## **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer presented the Revenue statements and accounts as at 28 Feb 2026 and the Accounts for payment.

**MOTION:** That the Revenue Statement as at 28 Feb 2026 be accepted, and the Payment of Accounts for May/Jun be approved.

**Moved** – Gary Henderson-Smith    **Seconded** – Rob Wilson    **CARRIED**

The treasurer suggested we show our appreciation to the person who donated \$5,000 to the sub-Branch! He/She/It/They may be a member, or not. Definitely lives in Alstonville, or doesn't. and is very generous.

**State HQ** – RSLNSW Listening Tour – 30 Mar at 6pm at Byron Bay Services Club.

## **FNDC**

The FNDC AGM, John Porter elected as FNDC President, John Gordon as Secretary/Treasurer.

## **Welfare & Hospital visits**

Grahame Gooding reported that visits to St. Vincent's are back on, 3 new members attending training

## **Hall Bookings**

No changes, Northern Rivers Astronomy Group are meeting on the last Sat of month an Ballina 4WD prefer not to have the tables set up.

## **Membership:**

Membership 1 new member.

## **Memorabilia**

Glass panels at front of table – donated through Bob Crosthwaite. They were originally in Lismore RSL Club, purchased by RSL LifeCare & displayed t Fromelles Aged Care. It is being stripped & contractor though they were too good to throw out, he asked Bob if he knew if anyone would like them. Bob asked me & I said to bring them out & we would see. Suggestion is to mount them out on the Veranda over the doors..

## **Fundraising**

Rosters will be available for ANZAC Day badge sales tables at next meeting.

Great result from the Market Charity, well done those who came along.

Wollongbar Post Office have offered to sell badges for us? John G & Bob W will discuss

### General Business

Rob Wilson asked if people would let him know about ideas for the meeting lunches, would you prefer a sit down meal, sandwiches & cakes, sausage sizzle, etc.

A suggestion was that we have a “bring-a-plate” every now & again to give Rob W a break!!

**ANZAC Day** Feddy Hotel will have a breaky on.

We will have our usual gunfire breaky at the Hall.

41Btn will supply a Catafalque Party & Guest Speaker.

Grahame Gooding will be away so he deputised Michael Letts as Schools wrangler for the march.

**BEACOM SHIELD** – confirmed Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April, registrations start at 0900. \$35

Brian Partridge reminisced about watching his dad play in the 50's & 60's. Many sub-Branch members were also members of the Bowls Club.

Secretary put out a call for people interested in forming a **Social Committee** – please contact him.

Also, the **Open Hall on Tues & Thurs mornings** is being resurrected, come along for a yarn or two!

### **REMINDER:**

**Family BBQ with Byron Bay SB at Clarke's Beach on 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**RSLNSW Listening Tour at Byron Bay Services Club on 30<sup>th</sup> @6pm.**

Looking at ideas as a possible upgrade of the shed, new shed? Container?

An AHS student has been selected for the NSW State Gov ANZAC Day service in Gallipoli next year.

Meeting closed at 12.03.

Next Meeting: Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2026      Committee meeting at 10  
followed by General Meeting at 11.00hrs.

Lunch will be provided on completion from 12.00.

### **New additions to the Hall**

The arbor for the front, thanks to John Porter, it's a work in progress!



And before you go inside, look up above the doors, mounted thanks to Stephen Bryce



**I DON'T ALWAYS CARRY  
ALL THE GROCERIES ON  
ONE ARM,  
BUT WHEN I DO, MY KEYS  
ARE IN THE WRONG  
POCKET**



## **Jessie Jane Eaton-Lee ARRC (nee Blanch) (18 March 1910 – 15 May 1999)**

Jessie Jane Blanch was born in Bangalow, in northern NSW, on 18 March 1910. She was the daughter of Florence May Williams (1882–1969), from Ulmarra in New South Wales, and Edwin James Blanch (1874–1943).

In early 1932 Jessie decided upon a career in nursing. She had long thought of it, having been inspired while still at school by an uncle who had returned from the Great War. She was accepted as a trainee by Brisbane General Hospital, and her friends bade her farewell at a function held at the Lynwood Methodist Church.

Jessie completed her training and qualified in 1936. Three years later, war broke out in Europe. Initially many Australians enlisted, but numbers soon fell away, and it was not until June 1940, when German armies invaded northwestern Europe, capturing Paris and threatening Britain, that patriotic fervour began to grip Australians, prompting a wave of enlistments. Jessie's workmates began to volunteer to join the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) for overseas service with the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF).

Jessie wanted to join too but was blocked by hospital authorities, who cited staff shortages. After all, she was by then an experienced theatre nurse. Jessie did her bit in the meantime by joining a committee of nursing staff that arranged a series of monthly fundraising dances in support of their colleagues' enlistment. The first dance was held on 20 March 1940 in the ballroom of the nurses' recreational quarters at the hospital and was attended by over 400 guests. Also on the organising committee was Beryl Chandler, who would later become Flying Officer Beryl Chandler of the No. 1 Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit and a member of the party that rescued Jessie and 23 colleagues from Japanese captivity on Sumatra.

Nonetheless, Jessie grew increasingly frustrated and, threatening to resign, was eventually permitted to enlist. She did so on 17 January 1941 and was attached to the 2/10th Australian General Hospital (AGH) at the rank of Staff Nurse. She was going overseas. Also enlisting that day were Queensland colleagues Pearl Mittelheuser, Cecilia Delforce, Chris Oxley, Flo Trotter and Joyce Tweddell. They were all attached to the 2/10th AGH. Flo and Joyce worked with Jessie at Brisbane General. Jessie's enlistment was noteworthy back home in northern New South Wales and was reported in the Lismore Northern Star on 1 February.

Jessie went on pre-embarkation leave from 24 to 28 January, returning home to Alstonville on the Kyogle Express. She was met at Lismore by her sister Alice. She took the train back to Brisbane on 27 January and returned to the hospital. The next few days were spent shopping, socialising and packing. On the morning of 31 January, she said goodbye to everyone, arrived at the barracks, had her photo taken, then went to the station in time for the 10.00 am to Sydney. At the station she met Flo Trotter, Joyce Tweddell, Pearl Mittelheuser, Cecilia Delforce and Chris Oxley, and they all entrained for Sydney. They were due to sail in four days' time.

The nurses arrived in Sydney at 8.00 am on 1 February and at 1.00 pm boarded the Queen Mary, at one time the largest passenger ship in the world and by many measures the grandest, which was anchored off Bradley's Head in Sydney Harbour. It had been requisitioned as a troopship and was carrying some 6,000 troops of the 2/22nd Infantry Brigade of the 8th Division, 2nd AIF – the so-called 'Elbow Force', set for garrison and other non-combat duties in Malaya following a British request for more troops. They were as yet officially unaware of this, and many assumed that they were going to the Middle East. Jessie herself thought so. However, crates marked 'Elbow Force – Singapore' sitting on the wharf awaiting loading, plus the fact that troops had been issued with tropical kit, offered substantial evidence to the contrary.

On board, Jessie and the Queensland contingent joined their new 2/10th AGH colleagues from New South Wales. They were 43 in total. In addition, there were six AANS nurses attached to the 2/4th Casualty Clearing Station (CCS). Together, the 2/10th AGH and 2/4th CCS nurses would provide medical support to 'Elbow Force'.

At 1.30 pm on 4 February, a beautiful blue day, the Queen Mary, accompanied by the Aquitania and the Dutch liner Nieuw Amsterdam carrying thousands of troops to the Middle East, put out to sea escorted by the Australian cruiser Hobart. Thousands of people had turned out to see the mighty vessels leave. They lined the shores of Sydney Harbour and bobbed about in hundreds of boats, and as the ships steamed past, their cheers mingled with those of the troops on board. Fire boats sent jets of water into the air, and sirens and the Queen Mary's foghorn added to the festive cacophony, as the convoy steamed down the harbour, and through the Heads.

On 18 February, the Queen Mary arrived at Sembawang Naval Base, on the north coast of Singapore Island, just across the Strait of Johor from the Malay Peninsula. "Coming into the harbour the colours of the water marvellous," Jessie noted in her diary. "Beautiful green trees and grass" (Kirkland, p. 9).

Jessie and her 2/10th AGH colleagues disembarked and were taken to adjacent railway sidings. They boarded an air-conditioned train that took them to the railhead town of Tampin. When they alighted early the next morning, they were taken by truck to Malacca.

Malacca was an old colonial town on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula, by all accounts very pleasant. The 2/10th AGH had been allocated several wings of the Colonial Service Hospital some little way out of town. The modern, five-storey building was set on a slight rise in spacious grounds bright with bougainvillea, frangipani and hibiscus – altogether a pleasant haven, according to Jessie's 2/10th AGH colleague Pat Gunther, who was from Casino, only 30 kilometres away from Alstonville.

The nurses did not have to do their own housework. "We are living under ideal conditions," Jessie wrote in her diary. "[We have] amahs to do our washing, make our beds, etc., even get our shoes cleaned" (Kirkland, p. 11). They also had local staff to cook for them. They enjoyed amenities supplied by the Red Cross, including a sewing machine and fabric, a record-player and records, and books.

Jessie soon settled into her new life. Among other things, she enjoyed afternoon tea of chicken sandwiches and rainbow cake with a certain Mrs. Scott; visited the dressmakers' with her close colleagues Flo Trotter and Joyce Tweddell; played tennis and went swimming; played bridge; attended dances and concerts; and went to sampan parties. She even had time to attend Malay language classes. One day Jessie and 19 others were taken in a military van to a picnic 45 kilometers away in a rubber plantation. "Great fun," Jessie noted, "everyone laughing at us, boys cheering" (Kirkland, p. 11).

Of course, life wasn't all one long social whirl for the nurses. When on duty, the 2/10th AGH nurses looked after the thousands of Australian soldiers of the 8th Division garrisoned in the Port Dickson–Seremban area, treating on average 400 patients a month between April and December. The cases were mainly tropical skin and ear infections and occasionally malaria, typhus, dengue fever or some other tropical disease. The nurses also treated broken bones and sprains caused by army exercises, sporting activities and other mishaps. Jessie, as a theatre nurse, assisted with operations. She was an excellent theatre nurse. Betty Jeffrey, Jessie's 2/10th AGH colleague who came over as a reinforcement in May on the Zealandia, praised Jessie's theatre skills in her book *White Coolies*. "This dark-haired, dark-eyed girl from the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales is a most amusing and likable soul. She was a wizard at her job in the operating theatre in Malacca and [later] Singapore" (Jeffrey, p. 71).

For 10 months Jessie had led a pleasant and interesting and even exciting but more or less uneventful life. "We went to the pictures, got to know the local people and led a normal life," she recalled in an interview with the Lismore Northern Star in 1980. This was about to change in the most dramatic way. "We were told by our spies that the [Japanese] all wore glasses and couldn't see at night ... they weren't supposed to be able to do anything. Then on 8 December the Japanese bombed Singapore. As soon as they began to fight, we found they were better equipped. Everything we expected them to do they did the opposite ... From the beginning we knew defeat was unavoidable" (McCullagh, p. 111). End of Part One – continuing next month.

## The funny side of life:

I'VE HEARD ABOUT THIS MY WHOLE LIFE



My parents had a TV like this,



I remember because I was the remote..

Courage is knowing it might hurt, and doing it anyway.

Stupidity is the same.

And that's why life is hard.

**I get most of my exercise these days from shaking my head in disbelief.**

**We all know mirrors don't lie...  
I'm just grateful that they don't laugh.**



**I'm proud of myself. I finished a jigsaw puzzle in 6 months, and the box said 2-4 years!**

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

Mr	Colin	Biddle	3-Apr
Mr	Brian	Partridge	5-Apr
Mr	Justin	Stevenson	13-Apr
Mr	John	Rixon	21-Apr
Mrs	Christine	Wood	25-Apr

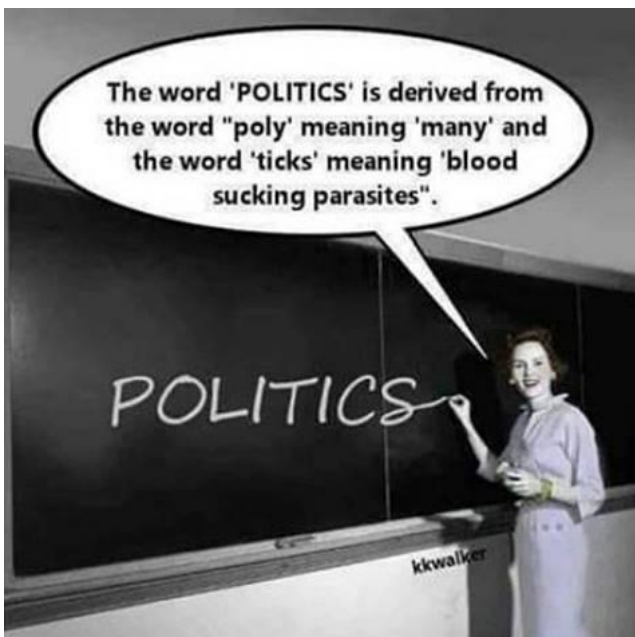
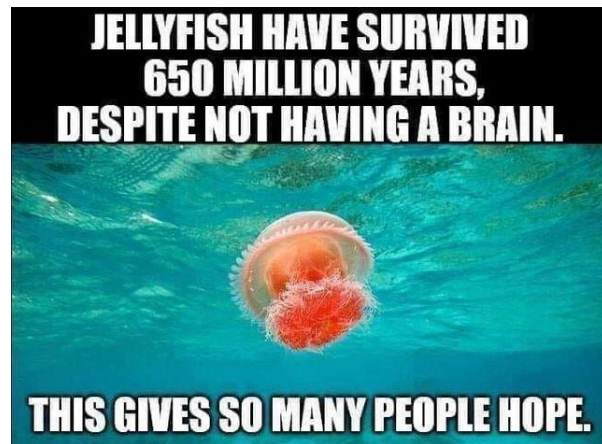
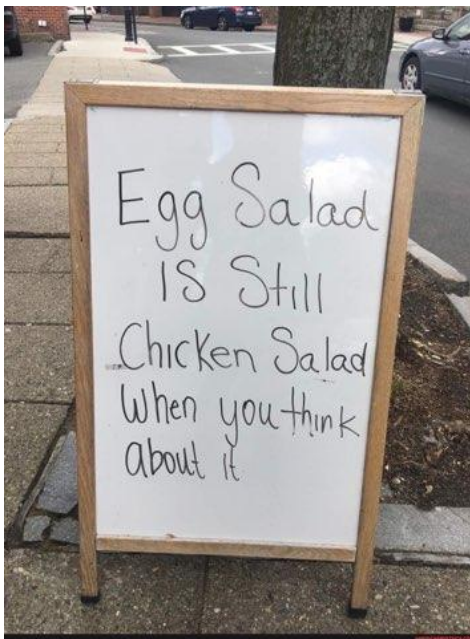
Many Thanks to the Anonymous member who donated \$5,000 to the coffers!! If you have a spare amount, donations would be gratefully accepted!!! We could use the extra!! It could be part of the \$10,000 you can 'gift' to reduce your assets for Age/Service Pension!! Payment can be made to: BSB 728 728 22306259 without your name!

Think about it!

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Calling all those with Grant Writing knowledge! I need your help to work out what grants we can apply for and how to justify!!

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"If you remember, I did mention possible side-effects."

## Information:

DVA – Lismore VAN Office:  
 Suite 8 Level 1 17 Conway Street  
 Lismore (next to Australian Hearing)  
 Email: NSWVANLismore@dva.gov.au  
 Ph 1300 838 372  
 DVA  
 GPO Box 9998  
 Brisbane QLD 4001

DVA Gold Card – Many Vietnam and other Returned from Active Service Veterans are not aware of their entitlement to a DVA Gold Card which is not means or asset tested.

To check for your entitlement complete the DVA form D3057 “Application for a Gold Card for Veterans of Australia’s Defence Force”. Those under 70 and not in receipt of any DVA payment can complete DVA form D0506 “Claim to determine Qualifying service by current or ex-member of the ADF”.

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- Coles Supermarket, Alstonville
- Parkview Funeral Home, Ballina
- Guardian Funerals – Alstonville, Ballina, Lismore
- McGraths Real Estate, Alstonville

#### *RSL Tibouchina Day Club*

**When:** Wednesdays @ 10:00am

**Where:** Rous Mill Hall

**What:** Enjoy good company, live entertainment, light exercise (suitable for the elderly). Mental stimulation activities, morning tea, lunch  
 A bus will pick you up and return you to your home within the Alstonville / Wollongbar villages for a \$10:00 contribution.

**Who:** For members of our community who are looking for social interaction in a friendly welcoming environment.

Contact Marett for more details: **0421 272 643**