



GAWLER RSL

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (15:25): The RSL, as it is known today, evolved as a direct result of the concern and mateship shown by diggers for the welfare of their mates during and after the First World War. In South Australia, the RSL was formed as the Returned Soldiers Association on 8 December 1915. The name was changed on 12 July 1917 to the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia. At a meeting in the Foresters Hall in Murray Street, Gawler on 16 July 1919, 35 returned soldiers discussed the establishment of a branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Association for the Gawler area.

The decision was made to form a branch, and monthly meetings to be held in the Foresters Hall were planned. The first meeting of the Gawler RS&SA was held in the Foresters Hall located on Murray Street, Gawler, almost opposite *The Bunyip* building. While the hall no longer exists, the pioneering spirit of those 35 members lives on. The Gawler RSL club has received widespread praise from community leaders for the work it has undertaken with returned services people and their families over the past 90 years.

State President of the RSL, Mr Jock Statton, said that the Gawler RSL is still caring for those who have served since the war to end all wars and wars and conflicts which still continue today. Mr Statton believes that the Gawler RSL is not just a building where old men and women meet to reminisce on old times: it is a community of ex-service people who, through mateship, support each other. Gawler RSL President, Mr George Sibenaler, said that since its inception 90 years ago, the Gawler RSL has unstintingly fulfilled the aims of those diggers in caring for the welfare and interests of its members, ex-service personnel and members of the ADF and their dependents.

Mr Sibenaler recently stated that the ethos of compassion and service remains the motivating influence of the league. The state Minister for Veterans' Affairs (Hon. Michael Atkinson) in a recent letter said that the Gawler RSL is a splendid example of a successful RSL sub-branch. The minister said that it is engaged in the local community and enjoys an excellent relationship with the Town of Gawler, the state government and the local community. The minister noted that the Gawler RSL sub-branch recently commissioned a Second World War honour board in the council chambers and that, whilst he has not seen it, it has been described as spectacular.

The RSL makes an enormous contribution to the wellbeing of families of returned service personnel. In my view, the Gawler club is a hardworking committee that continues to raise funds and provide direct support to often ageing family members of former service personnel. The club also provides an important opportunity for members to receive emotional and other support from each other. The federal member for Wakefield, Mr Nick Champion, in a recent message of congratulations earlier this year said:

As we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Gawler RSL, we honour all those from the local area who have served in uniform, as well as those who have kept the memories of the fallen alive.

Gawler Mayor, Brian Sambell, has highlighted the high regard in which the RSL is held by the local community. According to Mr Sambell, 90 years later this esteemed organisation is still providing sterling service to our community, and is well supported by the Gawler RSL Women's Auxiliary, which was formed in 1950 to assist the Gawler sub-branch members in social activities. The Gawler RSL has organised a number of events and activities to commemorate its 90 years of service to the returned services community of Gawler.

On 14 April there will be a shop window display in Murray Street, and there will be a public library display. On 19 April there will be the traditional Sunday march, and also the dedication and blessing of the first stage of the Remembrance Garden. On 25 April there will be the traditional dawn service. On 16 July

there will be a special anniversary dinner to mark the 90th anniversary. In October there will be the traditional annual dinner. On 11 November there will be the Remembrance Day ceremony and the possible launch of *Gawler's Fallen*, a book that is to be prepared by students.

Community support for those who have served their nation is growing, with local service clubs banding together recently with the state government and the Town of Gawler to do up the first stage of a remembrance garden in the local Pioneer Park. I wish the members of the Gawler RSL success during its 90th year. I would also like to acknowledge the wonderful research support provided by the Gawler Public Library for this speech and other publications produced by my office.