



**CITY OF WOLLONGONG
RSL SUB-BRANCH**

Standard Operating Procedure 1

FUNERALS

Updated 18 August 2022

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1. Purpose

This Sub-Branch Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) provides guidance on the essential elements of providing an RSL Tribute at a veteran's funeral to ensure dignity and the maintenance of accepted protocol.

2. Standardisation

RSL NSW has a standing policy of providing a deceased veteran, regardless of RSL membership, with an RSL Funeral Tribute, regardless of whether or not they are an RSL member. However, the wishes of the bereaved, and the direction of the officiant (Rector, Minister, Priest, Pastor or Funeral Celebrant) will generally take precedence. Prior communication with the Officiant is to be made to ensure that there is no variation in the minds of the Officiant, the RSL representative and the veteran's family on how the service is to be conducted. It is important to ensure the wishes of the veteran's family are met.

3. How does the sub-Branch find out about the passing of a local veteran?

Knowledge of a veteran's passing may come to the sub-Branch in a number of ways. The most common of these are:

- Communication of a veteran's passing sent to the sub-Branch Hon. Secretary.
- Communication of a veteran's passing discovered through the Committee Member Contact Programme.
- Contact from a veteran's NOK.
- A request coming directly from the funeral home Director.
- A request coming from the funeral officiant.

4. Different forms of RSL Tribute at a veteran's funeral.

A veteran's RSL Tribute may take many forms. In order of likelihood, these are:

- A short-duration eulogy, Poppy Ceremony, Ode, Last Post, and Reveille at a funeral chapel;
- A eulogy, Poppy Ceremony, Ode, Last Post, and at a church as part of a religious ceremony;
- A short-duration eulogy, Poppy Ceremony, Ode, Last Post, and reveille at a church as part of a grave-side religious service;
- An appropriate length eulogy, Poppy Ceremony, Ode, Last Post, and at a church as part of a full 'military-style' religious or memorial service
- A eulogy, Poppy Ceremony, Ode, Last Post, and at a church as part of a full military service organised by Defence for a veteran who dies in service.

5. Common procedure to follow.

The general procedure to follow is:

- Find out the full name of the deceased service member.
- Source a family contact name and number.
- Find out the organising funeral director (Parsons, Hanson and Cole etc).
- Ask the funeral director or family if the family would like an RSL Tribute at the funeral.

If an RSL Tribute is requested:

- Research and compile a summary of the deceased veteran's service and RSL Membership history from the NSW RSL Records, DVA Nominal Rolls, Australian National Archive, the Australian War Memorial, family and from sub-branch records and members.
- To obtain a member's ADF Record of Service contact ADF Records using their request at Annex A. Ensure the subject line of the mail contains the words "URGENT EULOGY REQUEST – time and date of the funeral.
- Liaise with the Funeral Director to confirm the chapel or church has recordings of Last Post and Reveille should a bugler not be present for the service.
- Produce a running sheet to read from and/or refer to. If time permits, add the RSL badge and laminate for offering to the family via the Funeral Director.
- On arrival at the service confer with the officiant as to when the RSL Tribute will be conducted (generally toward the end of the service before the final benediction). Depending on the style of service the RSL Tribute may come before family memories and a photo/music sequence. Be flexible.
- Ensure it is clear with both the Funeral Director and Officiant that the Last Post will commence directly after the reading of the Ode near the end of the Tribute.

6. Use of Flags and Ensigns, and other adornments.

It can be the practice at veteran's funerals for RSL members that the Australian National Flag (ANF) or other Ensign as appropriate to their Service be placed on the casket, and/or be flown on masts outside. The placement of flags/ensigns will be done by the funeral home. The Union portion of the ANF (i.e. the first quarter or Canton) is placed on the casket to cover the left shoulder of the deceased. In some cases it may be requested that the crucifix on the coffin be not covered by the ANF. In this instance the ANF should be folded back. Other military adornments such as the veteran's medals and a cap/hat might also be placed on the casket.

7. Use of red poppies.

In the Illawarra, funeral homes have a supply of red-crepe paper poppies. To prevent a blow-

out of time, poppies should only be offered to the immediate family and fellow veterans in attendance after the sub-Branch member places his/her poppy on the casket. However, it may be the family's wish to offer poppies to all present to place on the casket. Check with the officiant beforehand.

8. Form of the RSL Tribute.

The RSL Tribute should generally take the following form:

- Express condolences of the sub-Branch President and members to the most prominent NOK in attendance.
- Recite – “We are gathered here today to honour ... (veteran's full name, Service Number, veteran's RSL member number)... now that he/she has fought his/her last battle & joined other fallen comrades. Rest in Peace”.
- Present a verbal potted summary of the deceased veteran's service and NSW RSL membership history.
- Recite (or sing) the first verse of the hymn 'Ó Valiant Hearts'.

*O valiant hearts who to your glory came,
through dust of conflict and through battle flame
tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved
your memory hallowed in the land you loved.*

- Take the poppy from your lapel or behind medals and recite ...*“The hour has come to rest. This poppy, an emblem of sacrifice, the symbol of a life offered in the service of one's country, is a link between our comrade and us who remain. I place it here in remembrance.”* Then place the poppy on the veteran's casket.
- Invite all RSL members, veterans, and those who have poppies to come forward and also place them on the casket in remembrance.
- After all poppies have been placed, say ... *“Would all those who are able please stand for the Ode, Last Post, a minute's silence and Reveille”.*
- Recite The Ode.

“They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old, age shall not weary them nor the years' condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning. We will remember them. Lest we forget”.

Or a slightly longer version commonly known as the Army Ode:

“They went with songs to the battle, they were young, straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow. They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted, They fell with their faces to the foe. They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old, age shall not weary them nor the years' condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning. We will remember them. Lest we forget”.

- Last Post: Last Post is played.
- Minute's silence.
- Reveille: Reveille is played.
- ANF: Present a pre-folded ANF to the NOK (if applicable).
- Sit down or retire to the rear of the funeral seating.

9. Factors to consider for a primarily RSL-type funeral.

Should a prominent member of the RSL decease, the family may ask the sub-Branch for a greater RSL presence.

Factors to consider:

- Prior to the arrival of the hearse at a ceremony or church RSL members and other ex-service persons can, subject to the wishes of the family and the officiant, form two files in the church's/chapel's aisle facing inward for the casket to pass through.
- After the committal part of a church service RSL members, can if arranged beforehand, form two files for the casket to pass through to the hearse.
- Alternatively, or in tandem with the above, RSL members may form a tunnel for the hearse to pass through as it departs the church or chapel for a private grave-side service or to the crematorium.



REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR EULOGY PURPOSES

Please Note: If you request the eulogy on the day of the funeral service, we will do our best to assist, however, we cannot guarantee that the request will be fulfilled.

To obtain a statement of service for eulogy purposes the applicant must provide proof of identity (i.e driver's licence or other photo ID) and proof of death. **Alternatively the funeral home or an RSL can apply on the applicant's behalf.**

DECEASED EX-MEMBER DETAILS

Full Name:

Date of Birth:

Service number (or PMKeyS):

Service – Navy / Army / Air Force

Era served, eg, WW2, Vietnam, Korea, National service, etc.

Date of death:

Date and time of funeral service:

CONTACT DETAILS OF APPLICANT

Organisation: City of Wollongong RSL sub-Branch

Name: Derek Howard (Vice President – Welfare)

Email: derek.howard@outlook.com.au

Telephone: 0421-816 034

Alternate contact details: C/- RSL sub-Branch Secretary (Peter Lipscombe) 0449-199 016

Forward to:

Defence Archives

Email: ADF.Records@defence.gov.au **URGENT EULOGY REQUEST**

Fax: 03 5258 0657

Please include in the subject line the time and date of funeral

Please call **1800 333 362** if you have any further queries

<http://www.defence.gov.au/Records/>

Mel TANNER

As a fellow servicemen, and on behalf of the President and members of City of Wollongong Sub-branch Australian Returned Services League of Australia (RSL) I extend our sincere condolences to Adele and members of the family. For our American watchers the RSL is similar to the US VFW.

We are gathered here today to honour Mel TANNER & now that he has fought his last battle & joined other fallen comrades. Rest in Peace.

US 56650346 Specialist 4 Merlyn (MEL) Devere TANNER United States Army

After basic training at Fort Leonard Wood Missouri and Fort Lewis Washington state Mel served two tours in South Vietnam from 24 October 1968 to 27 May 1970. He served at various areas sometimes during fierce combat situations under sustained small arms and grenade attacks where Mel lost many friends. It was here that Mel experienced hearing loss firing mortars.

Mel contracted Cerebral Malaria in Vietnam a couple of times, he was exposed to defoliants (Agent Orange) during his time in Vietnam. Mel also suffered from PTSD, Grand Mal seizures, Parkinson Disease, cancer and stroke most likely all stemming from his service overseas.

The Medals and Decorations Mel was awarded are , THE NATIONAL DEFENCE SERVICE MEDAL, VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDAL, COMBAT INFANTRYMANS BADGE , THE AIR MEDAL and the ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL with 3 OVERSEAS BARS.

The AIR MEDAL is presented to SPECIALIST MERL TANNER who distinguished himself by meritorious achievement, while participating in sustained aerial flight in support of combat ground forces in the Republic of Vietnam during the period 20 NOVEMBER 1968 to 8th JUNE 1969 he actively participated in more than 25 aerial missions over hostile territory in support of operations against communist aggression. During all these flights, he displayed the highest order of air discipline and acted in accordance with the best tradition of the service. By his determination to accomplish his mission, in spite of the hazards inherent in repeated aerial flights over hostile territory, and his outstanding degree of professionalism and devotion to duty, he has bought credit upon himself, his organisation, and the United States Army.

The ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL is presented to SPECIALIST MERL TANNER who distinguished himself by exceptionally meritorious service in support of military operations against communist aggression in the Republic of Vietnam during the period OCTOBER 1969 TO May 1970 he astutely surmounted extremely adverse conditions to obtain consistently superior results . Through diligence and determination he invariably accomplished every task with dispatch and efficiency. His unrelenting loyalty, initiative and perseverance bought him wide acclaim and inspired others to strive for maximum achievement. Selflessly working long and arduous hours, he has contributed significantly to the success of the allied effort. His commendable performance was in keeping with the finest traditions of the military service and reflects distinct credit upon himself and the United States Army.

We honour his heroism and thank him for his service.

POPPY

The hour has now come to rest Mel. This Poppy, an international emblem of sacrifice, the symbol of a life offered in the service of one's country, is a link between our comrade & us who remain. I place it here - In remembrance.

Place poppy on the casket **Salute**

I invite RSL and ex-service members and members of the immediate family to come forward & place a poppy on the casket.

ODE (ask people to stand if able for Ode/Last Post & Reveille)

They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning.

We will remember them. (Pause) Lest we forget.

LAST POST & REVEILLE

Would all those who are able please stand for a moment's silence in memory of our comrade." End silence with LAST POST followed by REVEILLE.

John Sperring
City of Wollongong RSL sub-Branch
10 December 2020

ORDER OF RSL TRIBUTE FUNERAL SERVICE KENNETH PATRICK HAMMOND

1. On behalf of the President & members of the City of Wollongong RSL sub-Branch I extend our sincere condolences to the family.
2. "We are gathered here today to honour KENNETH PATRICK HAMMOND Service Number 2718281, now that he has fought his last battle & joined other fallen comrades. RIP"

Ken was one of thousands of young Australian men who enlisted in the Armed Forces under the National Service Scheme in the 1950's.

Ken enlisted in the Army on the 7th of January 1953 and completed his service on the 14th of April 1953. Ken then returned to Wollongong completing a further 5 years' service with the Citizens Military Force before discharging on the 6th of January 1958.

Ken was a member of the City of Wollongong RSL sub-Branch from the 10 August 2001.

O valiant hearts who to your glory came,
through dust of conflict and through battle flame
tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved
your memory hallowed in the land you loved.

3. "The hour has come to rest. This **Poppy**, an emblem of sacrifice, the symbol of a life offered in the service of one's country, is a link between our comrade & us who remain.
4. I place it here - In remembrance.

Place **poppy** on the casket Salute

- I now invite all present who have **poppies** to please come forward and also place them in remembrance

On completion of **poppy laying**...Would all those who are able please stand for a moment's silence in memory of our comrade.

"They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them. Lest we forget."

End silence with LAST POST (30 seconds silence) and REVEILLE

Pete Lipscomb
15 January 2021