



Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch Social Impact Report 2025

*Supporting Veterans &
Strengthening Communities*





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Reflecting On What Matters Most

At Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch, we believe that financial results alone do not capture the full story of our contribution to the community.

This Social Impact Report reflects our commitment to provide a broader understanding of the work we do — supporting veterans, fostering community partnerships, and creating welcoming spaces for members and the public.

While this report only offers a glimpse into our activities, it reflects the depth of our commitment to community engagement and the strong reciprocity we are fortunate to enjoy in return.

Through our engagement with the community, we promote awareness of our veterans and uphold our mission. With over 8,500 members and strong community connections, Bentleigh RSL is proud to continue delivering real and lasting impact, aligned with the RSL's enduring values.

We remain committed to strengthening these connections for the benefit of those who have served and the community that stands alongside them.



Mark Schröffel
President
Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch Inc.



The Difference We Make

Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch has long recognised that financial reporting alone does not reflect the full contribution we make to the lives of veterans, members, staff, and our broader community.

While prudent financial management remains essential, our true measure of success lies in how well we deliver on our Charter: supporting veterans, fostering remembrance, strengthening community connections, and providing a welcoming and inclusive environment.

This Social Impact Report represents a step towards more formally capturing and communicating that broader contribution. It draws on both qualitative and quantitative research conducted in early 2025, offering real examples, survey results, and reflections from those we support and work alongside.

The stories, partnerships, and community activities outlined in this report demonstrate that Bentleigh RSL is not simply a venue — it is a living, active part of our community.

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Through our sponsorships, member programs, staff development initiatives, and veteran services, we make a positive, visible, and lasting difference.

We acknowledge that this report touches only the surface of our full impact. Nonetheless, it is intended to offer a meaningful insight into the values we live by, the community we serve, and the ongoing commitment we make to the veterans and families who are at the heart of our organisation.





About This Report

Introduction

Bentleigh RSL (BRSL) is seeking to understand better its engagement with its Community. This research project seeks to understand the patron and guest perspectives as well as those of staff and organisations across the broader community that receive sponsorship from BRSL.

Independence Statement

BPPR Consulting is an independent management consulting organisation. It has no affiliation to the Bentleigh RSL and undertook this assignment within a clearly defined scope and Statement of Work agreed in advance with clearly defined project deliverables.

The work was undertaken in close collaboration with Bentleigh RSL CEO and relevant staff.

Quality Process

To assure the quality and veracity of the questionnaires used for the Patrons and Guests we engaged with Andrew Joyce, Senior Research Fellow and the Centre for Social Impact (Swinburne University) who provided quality assurance guidance and review prior to implementation of the Quantitative survey. Andrew also provided input for the Qualitative survey engaged with Sponsored Organisations and Staff respectively.

Findings

The findings set out below in this report are drawn from the information collected and the observations made through the research collection and evaluation processes.

Evaluating Our Impact

This Social Impact Report draws upon a combination of quantitative and qualitative research conducted across two phases during November – December 2024 and March- April 2025 respectively.

The research was designed to gather a comprehensive understanding of Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch’s social, community, and internal impacts. It focused on three primary groups: sponsored community organisations, RSL employees, and RSL members, guests and patrons.

Quantitative Research

A structured survey was distributed to members, guests and patrons of Bentleigh RSL.

- Participants: 70 respondents for general club operations and 92 respondents for extra-curricular activities.
- Scope: The survey covered perceptions of venue operations, participation in activities, staff engagement, and overall sense of community connectedness.
- Analysis: Responses were collated and analysed for satisfaction metrics, trends, and key areas for improvement. Verbatim comments were also reviewed to provide qualitative context to quantitative findings

Qualitative Research

- Community Organisations: Interviews with the Bentleigh Cricket Club, Bentleigh Junior Football Club, and 302 Army Cadet Unit explored the nature and impact of Bentleigh RSL’s sponsorship, reciprocity, and community engagement.
- Employees: In-depth interviews with two staff members – Harry Clifton and Anna Higgins – examined workplace culture, personal development, and broader social impacts of employment at Bentleigh RSL.

Data Sources

- Survey responses from Bentleigh RSL members and patrons.
- Structured interview notes and summaries.
- Observations and reflective notes from the research consultant.

Approach

All qualitative and quantitative findings were triangulated to identify key themes, validate observations, and provide a balanced assessment of Bentleigh RSL’s social impact. Particular attention was given to highlighting real-world examples and personal reflections that illustrate the broader statistical trends.

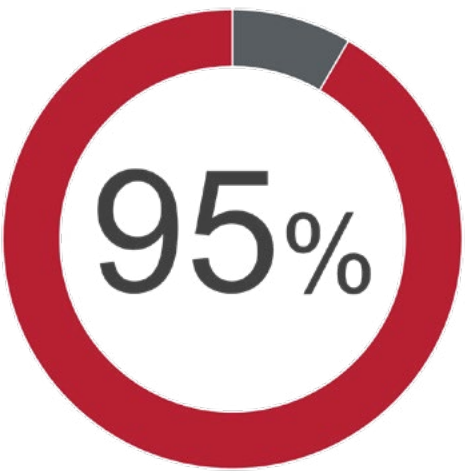
- The findings from both phases of research form the basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in this report.

“...I just wanted to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for everything you’ve done for me. Your kindness, generosity, and support mean the world to me, and I feel so lucky you give your time to help me...”

*Written Feedback for RSL
Active Participant*

Key Indicators 2024

	8,684	Members
	118	Employees
	137	Registered Volunteers
	4,486	Volunteer Hours Recorded
	410	Home & Nursing Home Visits
	9	Bereavement and Funeral Services
	171	External Group Excursions and Social Activities
	\$133,500	Education, Community Support & Sporting Clubs
	\$701,600.00	Veteran Support
	\$172,500.00	Funding to RSL Vic State Branch



Strong Sense of Community:
95% of Participants in Bentleigh RSL Activities Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Activities Provide a Sense of Community (1)

1. Independent survey of 92 participants conducted by BPPR Consulting. Activities include bus trips, Bingo, exercise classes, and Morning Melodies.

Partnering For A Stronger Community

Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch has a longstanding commitment to supporting local organisations through meaningful sponsorships that go beyond financial assistance. Sponsorships are structured to foster enduring partnerships, encourage community participation, and reinforce the RSL's role as a pillar of civic life.

These partnerships are carefully developed with organisations that align with the values of service, leadership, and community development. They are not transactional arrangements, but relationships built on mutual respect, shared purpose, and active engagement. They also serve to extend the reach and visibility of the RSL's mission within the broader community.

This report focuses on three prominent examples of community sponsorship — the Bentleigh Cricket Club, Bentleigh Junior Football Club, and the 302 Army Cadet Unit — to illustrate the depth and nature of our engagement. However, these are only part of a much broader program of support. Bentleigh RSL currently sponsors 30 sporting clubs, 8 schools, and 18 external organisations, providing a tangible and sustained contribution to local life.

Support also extends beyond traditional sponsorships. The Sub-Branch actively backs initiatives aimed at younger veterans, including the Veteran Ball, and provides scholarships and prizes to local schools to encourage leadership and community values among younger generations. Bentleigh RSL contributes to the Melbourne Legacy Children's Christmas Party and supports RSL Active programs that promote health, wellbeing, and connection among veterans and their families.

Social and commemorative activities are a further core element of the Sub-Branch's work. We host events for local veterans and their families, deliver eulogies at veteran funerals, and coordinate visits and outings for veterans who are housebound or who require assistance to participate in community life. This direct support ensures that no veteran is left isolated or unrecognised.

The scale of these activities is made possible through the work of our employed Veteran Services Team and over 130 registered volunteers, whose dedication reflects the values that underpin our Sub-Branch's existence. Together, they demonstrate that supporting the community and honouring service are not abstract concepts, but daily practices that strengthen lives and uphold the principles of the RSL.

The following case studies illustrate how our approach to sponsorship has created lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships, beginning with the Bentleigh Cricket Club.



A Partnership In Progress



Bentleigh RSL's relationship with the Bentleigh Cricket Club is a clear example of how sponsorships, when approached with a long-term mindset and shared values, grow into genuine partnerships.

What began as a modest sponsorship arrangement over fifteen years ago has evolved into a deeply embedded relationship that supports not just the club's financial viability, but its culture, development, and sense of community.

Through consistent engagement, use of RSL facilities for meetings and events, and mutual support during critical times such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the partnership has become one of active collaboration rather than simple financial support. Club members view the RSL not merely as a sponsor but as an extension of their own community network — a place for celebrations, commemorations, and ongoing connection.

This relationship exemplifies the broader philosophy underpinning all of Bentleigh RSL's community sponsorships: that meaningful support must be active, visible, and anchored in shared commitment to strengthening community life.

The Bentleigh Cricket Club



The partnership between Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch and the Bentleigh Cricket Club has spanned more than 15 years, characterised by continuity, reciprocity, and shared community values.

The RSL provides annual financial sponsorship of approximately \$7,000, supplemented by an additional \$2,000 in meal vouchers. This support has played a vital role in the sustainability and growth of the cricket club, particularly during the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, the Bentleigh Cricket Club supports a thriving membership base across junior, senior, male, female, and all-abilities teams. Engagement between the two organisations extends beyond financial support to include shared use of facilities, visibility of sponsorship at club events, and a strong mutual presence within the local community.

Key Impacts

- Long-term sponsorship contributing to the survival and growth of the club during difficult periods, particularly COVID-19.
- Active reciprocal engagement, with the club using RSL meeting rooms regularly and hosting major functions at the RSL.
- High public visibility of RSL support through branding on kits, signage on fences and scoreboards, and promotion across club communications.
- Increased awareness among club members of the RSL's role in supporting local organisations and community activities.

"The sponsorship from Bentleigh RSL quite literally kept our club alive during the pandemic. It's not just money; it's a real community relationship that our players, families, and committee deeply value."

– Jon Raju, President, Bentleigh Cricket Club

Community Connections Through Everyday Experiences



The integration of RSL dining vouchers into Bentleigh Junior Football Club's sponsorship offering demonstrated how practical support can create wider community engagement beyond financial assistance alone.

The vouchers provided a tangible and immediate benefit for BJFC families, many of whom might not otherwise have visited Bentleigh RSL. By using the vouchers for family meals and team gatherings, local families experienced the Sub-Branch's welcoming environment first-hand, reinforcing a sense of community ownership and connection.

This simple but thoughtful approach not only eased some of the financial pressures facing families during periods of club activity but also strengthened the social fabric linking the football club, the Sub-Branch, and the broader Bentleigh community. Over time, regular interaction helped build lasting relationships that extended beyond sport, reinforcing the RSL's role as a community hub and trusted gathering place for people of all ages.

The success of this initiative illustrates how targeted, accessible support initiatives can deliver multiple benefits — sustaining community organisations, encouraging family participation, and deepening public awareness of the RSL's enduring social role.

The Bentleigh Junior Football Club



Bentleigh Junior Football Club (BJFC) and Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch have maintained a strong partnership for over 15 years, with the RSL providing annual sponsorship valued at approximately \$6,000 (\$3,000 in direct funding and \$3,000 in meal vouchers).

This sponsorship supported BJFC's rapid expansion, particularly in response to significant demographic changes in the local area. From a modest base of 80 Auskick participants in 2012, the Club grew to more than 240 by 2016, creating a vital pathway for children's engagement in sport and community life.

The RSL's support is well-known across the club, with the meal voucher programme fostering a connection between families and the RSL's dining and hospitality facilities, strengthening social bonds between the organisations.

Key Impacts

- Financial support critical to the purchase of annual equipment (goalposts, balls, bibs) supporting accessibility and participation.
- Stability during COVID-19, ensuring the club's survival and the maintenance of community sport programs.
- Increased use of RSL facilities for coaches' meetings and small events, strengthening organisational ties.
- Enhancement of family engagement with RSL facilities, broadening our community reach of the Sub-Branch.

"The relationship we have with Bentleigh RSL is about much more than just funding - It's about respect, community support, and living out the values that the RSL stands for."

*- Paul Jemmeson, Past President,
Bentleigh Junior Football Club*

302 Army Cadet Unit

Bentleigh RSL's sponsorship of the 302 Army Cadet Unit (ACU) has been fundamental to the Unit's development and sustained operations since 2013.

Operating under the leadership of Captain Vincent Ho and a team of six volunteers, the Unit provides weekly training, leadership development, and community engagement opportunities for approximately 75 young people each year.

The support provided by Bentleigh RSL has enabled the Unit to fulfil its mission of fostering discipline, resilience, leadership, and citizenship among its cadets. Importantly, the partnership embodies the RSL's broader commitment to nurturing the next generation of Australian leaders.

Key Impacts

- Annual sponsorship of \$12,000 directly funds uniforms, transport, bivouac activities, and the annual training camp at Puckapunyal.
- Active participation in Bentleigh and Cheltenham Anzac Day services and broader community commemorations.
- Development of leadership and life skills including communication, time management, and bushcraft.
- Ongoing leadership sustainability, with former cadets returning as volunteer instructors.

Investing in Leadership for the Next Generation

Several of today's volunteer instructors within the 302 Army Cadet Unit were once cadets themselves, a clear reflection of the lasting legacy created through sustained community support. This natural leadership pipeline is a direct result of long-term investment in youth development, resilience, and service values — principles that align closely with the mission of Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch.

By supporting the Unit through sponsorship and community engagement, the RSL has contributed to an environment where leadership skills are not only taught but embedded. Former cadets who return as instructors bring lived experience, a strong sense of civic responsibility, and a commitment to mentoring the next generation.

This continuity strengthens both the Unit and the broader community, fostering a culture of service that extends beyond formal training programs into everyday life. It demonstrates that targeted community support can create ripple effects over decades, building stronger individuals, stronger organisations, and a stronger society — all aligned with the enduring values of the RSL.

"Our connection to Bentleigh RSL gives our cadets a real sense of belonging to the wider community – it's more than just training, it's about service."

*– Captain Vincent Ho,
Officer Commanding, 302 ACU*





Harry's Story

Harry Clifton joined Bentleigh RSL following a life-altering accident that led to a diagnosis of Functional Neurological Disorder (FND), impacting his ability to maintain full-time work. At a time when he felt withdrawn and disillusioned, Bentleigh RSL offered him an opportunity to join the team.

This role has had a transformative impact. Harry has become a valued team member, forming strong workplace friendships and rediscovering his confidence. His ability to connect with members and guests has grown, and his genuine personality shines through in these familiar, everyday interactions.

Working at the RSL has given Harry purpose, structure, and a renewed sense of self-worth. It has helped him manage the challenges of FND and offered a broader, more positive outlook on life. There's a natural 'fit' between Harry and the RSL — one that continues to benefit both.

"Working here has given me back a sense of purpose. I'm not defined by my condition anymore - I'm just Harry again."

- Harry Clifton

Anna Higgins Executive Chef

Since joining the Bentleigh RSL in 2016, Anna Higgins has played a key role in building strong, cohesive kitchen teams across both Bentleigh and Cheltenham campuses. With a background in commercial hospitality, she brings both experience and leadership to her role.

Anna's open management style has created a welcoming, family-like environment that has reduced staff turnover and fostered a strong sense of team accountability.

Known as "the glue in the kitchen," Anna is passionate about delivering high-quality hospitality and maintaining a positive, motivated team culture.

The flexibility and autonomy in her role allow her to balance professional demands with family life — a critical factor in her ongoing engagement. With a broad mix of ages and strong social bonds in the kitchen, Anna finds continued purpose and energy in leading her team every day.

"I didn't expect to build such close friendships - it truly feels like family."

- Anna Higgins



More Than Work: A Shared Commitment

Harry's story (Page 21) exemplifies Bentleigh RSL's ability to provide not only employment but also community connection and personal rehabilitation.

After experiencing a life-changing diagnosis that limited his employment options, Harry found in Bentleigh RSL a workplace that offered flexibility, respect, and inclusion — qualities that have been essential to his personal growth and renewed sense of purpose.

The flexibility and understanding he has received are not isolated experiences but are reflective of a broader internal culture consistently observed across staff interviews.

Bentleigh RSL has fostered an environment where employees are valued not just for their output, but for who they are as individuals. Staff consistently spoke of the “family feeling” within their teams, highlighting that “we look out for each other,” and that “there is a genuine interest and desire to deliver first-class hospitality to patrons.”

Such sentiments underscore the Sub-Branch's approach to building a positive, supportive working environment where people feel connected, motivated, and respected.

Harry's personal journey, combined with the experiences of others, reflects a deeper organisational culture that recognises the importance of inclusion, encourages personal development, and creates opportunities for individuals to thrive — both within their roles and in their broader lives.

This culture not only strengthens the Sub-Branch internally but also enhances the quality of engagement members and guests experience every day.

Bentleigh RSL has fostered an environment where employees are valued not just for their output, but for who they are as individuals.



Staff and Volunteers: Supporting Our People

Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch's commitment to community extends internally, fostering an environment where staff feel valued, supported, and connected.

Through structured employment opportunities, an inclusive workplace culture, and professional development pathways, the RSL demonstrates its Charter not only externally but within its own organisation.

Anna and Harry's Case studies highlight the lived experiences of two staff members whose stories reflect the broader impact of Bentleigh RSL's approach to staff engagement and community-building.

Key Impacts

- Provided stable, meaningful employment in an accessible and supportive workplace environment.
- Enabled the development of social skills and personal confidence through daily interactions with members and patrons.
- Supported broader personal growth, allowing Harry to shift his identity from being defined by his medical condition to living confidently in the present.
- Fostered strong, genuine workplace friendships that contributed to improved mental health and wellbeing.





A Hub for Community Engagement and Support

Many members described the extra-curricular activities offered by Bentleigh RSL as more than just social outings; they are seen as vital lifelines that combat isolation, foster new friendships, and enhance overall wellbeing. These activities play an essential role in keeping members socially connected, engaged, and active, regardless of age or ability.

Bentleigh RSL offers a broad range of activities that cater to different interests and capabilities, ensuring that all members have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in community life. Regular programs such as Morning Melodies, darts, angling, and swimming clubs, as well as RSL Active activities and exercise groups, provide social, physical, and recreational engagement throughout the year.

Volunteering opportunities are also widely available, enabling members to contribute to the life of the Sub-Branch and play an active role in supporting major commemorative events such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. Members consistently referenced feelings of belonging, safety, and purpose when describing their involvement in these activities.

The inclusive and welcoming nature of these programs highlights Bentleigh RSL's role not merely as a venue, but as a genuine community hub where people of all backgrounds and circumstances can connect, contribute, and feel part of something larger than themselves.

This commitment to creating spaces and opportunities for meaningful engagement reflects the Sub-Branch's deeper mission of fostering resilience, promoting social cohesion, and honouring the spirit of service that continues to define the RSL movement.

"Love coming to the RSL - I always feel welcome and safe with my friends."

- Survey Respondent, 2025

Surveying Member And Patron Experience: A Place To Connect and Belong

The experiences of members and patrons are central to Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch's social impact.

Surveys conducted in early 2025 reveal consistently positive feedback across all key aspects of the club's operations, including the quality of facilities, social activities, safety, staff engagement, and overall member satisfaction.

This section summarises key survey findings and highlights opportunities for ongoing improvement, based on both quantitative and qualitative feedback.

Survey Summary

Quantitative surveys conducted in March 2025 involved two key participant groups:

- Bentleigh Operations Survey (n = 70): Members' perceptions of day-to-day club operations.

Extra-Curricular Activities Survey (n = 92): Member experiences related to bus trips, bingo, exercise groups, and Morning Melodies events.

Key Findings

- Overall Satisfaction: The majority of respondents (over 85%) expressed strong satisfaction with their experiences at Bentleigh RSL.
- Sense of Safety: Members consistently reported feeling safe and welcome within the venue.
- Staff Interaction: Staff were widely praised for professionalism and friendliness, although occasional variability in interactions was noted.

- Activities Participation: Activities such as Morning Melodies, Bingo, and bus outings were described as significant contributors to members' social engagement and personal wellbeing.
- Food and Beverage: Positive feedback was recorded regarding food quality; however, value for money was identified as an area needing attention.

"The activities are a significant part of my life. I look forward to every outing."

- Survey Respondent, 2025

Our Commitment To Continuous Improvement

At Bentleigh RSL, our commitment to continuous improvement is a core principle that drives everything we do. As CEO, I am proud to lead an organisation that embraces change, innovation, and accountability in order to better serve our veterans, members, and the wider community.

The RSL movement has a long and proud history, but with that history comes the responsibility to evolve. We understand that our community's needs are constantly changing, and it's essential that we adapt to remain relevant and effective. Continuous improvement for us means regularly reviewing our operations, services, and governance structures to ensure we are delivering the best possible outcomes for our stakeholders.

Over the past couple of years, we have undertaken several key initiatives to strengthen our organisation. We've enhanced our hospitality offerings, upgraded our facilities, and improved our digital systems to provide a more efficient and engaging experience for members and visitors alike. We have also continued to expand our veteran and welfare support, ensuring that veterans and their families receive timely and meaningful assistance.

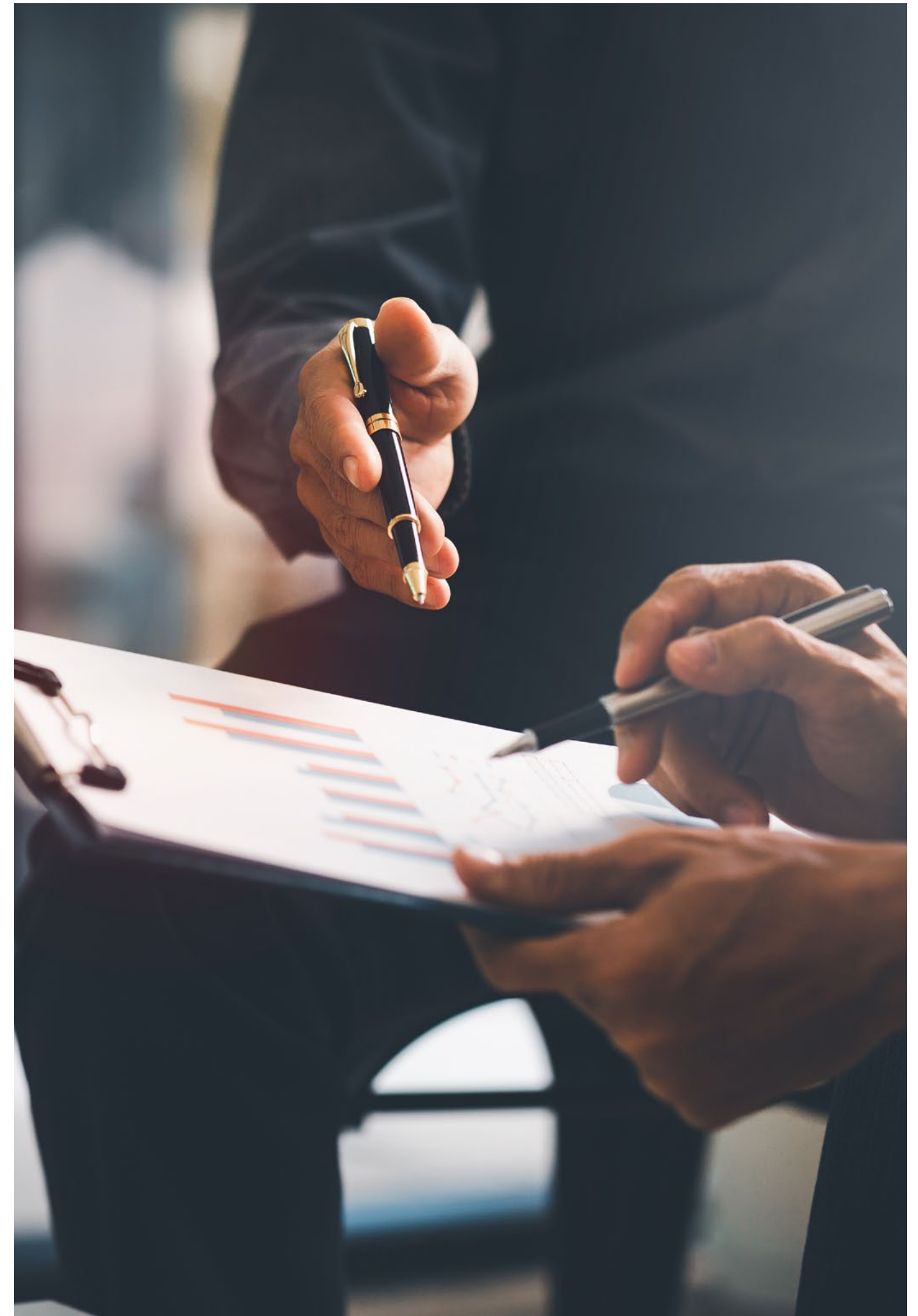
Our employees and volunteers are at the centre of our success. We invest in their development through training, support, and opportunities for growth, creating a culture where excellence and innovation are encouraged at every level. Importantly, we see feedback as a vital part of this journey. We actively seek input from members, partners, and the community to better understand where we can improve. This

feedback informs our decisions and helps us stay aligned with the values and expectations of those we serve.

Continuous improvement is not a one-off project—it's a mindset that guides us every day. It means being open to new ideas and initiatives, learning from challenges, and always striving to be better tomorrow than we are today. Bentleigh RSL remains committed to leading by example. We will continue to invest in our people, infrastructure, and services so that we can deliver on our mission with pride, purpose, and lasting impact.



Glenn Sanders ACCM
Chief Executive Officer



Observations and Opportunities For Improvement

While some survey respondents offered suggestions for improvement, the nature of the feedback fell within the expected range of personal preferences and occasional one-off experiences rather than identifying systemic service failures.

The general tenor of the feedback was positive and respectful, with participants typically expressing a willingness to suggest minor enhancements rather than raise significant concerns.

Comments regarding aspects such as menu pricing, behaviour management, and facility enhancements reflected a spirit of constructive contribution, aimed at further strengthening an already strong member and patron experience.

Overall, the survey responses demonstrate a well-regarded venue that enjoys a high level of member loyalty and satisfaction, supported by a workplace culture and activity program that are central to community engagement.

Next Steps

Building on the strong foundation of member satisfaction, it is recommended that Bentleigh RSL:

- Continue to actively engage members through regular surveys and informal feedback channels.
- Address pricing perceptions through promotional initiatives or menu adjustments.
- Reinforce behaviour standards consistently across all areas of the venue.
- Incorporate small, member-driven enhancements to demonstrate responsiveness to feedback.



"Your kindness, generosity, and support mean the world to me - I feel so lucky you give your time to help me."

- Survey Response, 2025

Connection and Support

One veteran, responding through the member survey, described how activities coordinated by the Veteran Services Team provided an essential point of re-entry into community life following a period of profound isolation. Participation in regular activities such as bus trips, exercise groups, and social gatherings not only helped this individual reconnect with others but also restored a sense of belonging, purpose, and personal confidence that had been missing for some time.

This experience is not isolated. It reflects a broader pattern observed among many who engage with the Sub-Branch's veteran-focused programs. For individuals who have faced challenges adjusting to civilian life, managing health conditions, or coping with social isolation, access to a supportive and understanding environment is critical. The work of the Veteran Services Team, supported by volunteers and integrated into the Sub-Branch's broader community activities, creates a bridge back into active participation in community life.

Such stories illustrate the tangible difference that a well-supported Sub-Branch can make to the lives of those it exists to serve. Through thoughtful program design, personal outreach, and sustained commitment to individual wellbeing, Bentleigh RSL continues to uphold its mission of honouring and supporting those who have served, not just in symbolic ways, but through practical, life-changing engagement.

Veteran Services And Community Engagement

Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch's activities extend beyond the provision of hospitality and recreation services, demonstrating a genuine commitment to broader community wellbeing and the welfare of veterans and their families.

Through the work of its Veteran Services Team and its community-focused programs, the Sub-Branch delivers outcomes that directly align with the RSL's founding Charter — to support veterans, foster remembrance, and strengthen the Australian community.

Survey feedback, qualitative interviews, and participant reflections confirm that Bentleigh RSL is regarded not only as a venue but as a valued and active contributor to community life.

Veteran Services

The Veteran Services Team at Bentleigh RSL plays a fundamental role in the Sub-Branch's social impact.

Although detailed statistical data on veteran services was not the primary focus of the 2025 surveys, multiple members highlighted their experiences of receiving support, particularly through activities under the RSL Active initiative and broader welfare assistance.

Examples of impact include:

- Provision of social connection opportunities for isolated or vulnerable veterans.
- Support programs assisting with health, wellbeing, and re-engagement with community life.
- Practical assistance and advocacy for veterans navigating health, entitlements, and transition challenges.

Community Perceptions and Engagement

Beyond direct veteran support, Bentleigh RSL is recognised for its role in fostering broader community engagement:

- Sponsorships with local clubs have not only supported community sport but reinforced the visibility of the RSL's purpose across generations.
- Staff stories demonstrate the organisation's capacity to provide inclusive and meaningful employment opportunities.
- Survey respondents consistently referenced the welcoming and safe environment created at Bentleigh RSL, extending the Sub-Branch's impact beyond traditional service audiences.

This broader engagement reflects a living expression of the RSL Charter — serving veterans, strengthening communities, and preserving the spirit of service.



Lending a Hand

The collaboration between Bentleigh RSL and Hawthorn RSL exemplifies the power of united community action in support of Victoria's veteran population. Bentleigh RSL has been a major financial contributor to the success of the Veterans Ball in 2024 and is playing a key role in ensuring the continued success of the 2025 event. This annual gathering not only honours the service of ADF members but also serves as a meaningful opportunity to bring together veterans, families, and the wider community in celebration and reflection. The event has grown into a cornerstone of support for Victorian veterans, promoting inclusion, recognition, and a shared sense of purpose.

Beyond the Ball, both sub-branch committees remain actively engaged in addressing the complex social and policy challenges impacting the veteran community across Victoria. By fostering open communication and genuine collaboration, Bentleigh and Hawthorn RSL are working to ensure that both large and smaller sub-branches are heard and supported. Their joint efforts underscore the importance of cross-network engagement in shaping effective solutions and policies. Together, they are not only strengthening ties within the RSL network but also driving positive change that reflects the evolving needs of those who have served.

In addition to our joint effort in delivering major events and policy initiatives, Bentleigh and Hawthorn RSL sub-branches remain deeply committed to supporting individual veterans in need. We work collaboratively to identify and respond to cases where veterans require direct assistance—whether through financial aid, mental health support, housing solutions, or navigating access to essential services. This collaborative approach enables us to provide support that is timely, compassionate, and effective. By pooling resources, knowledge, and local networks, Bentleigh and Hawthorn RSLs are providing a lifeline to those who have served, reinforcing the principle that every veteran deserves dignity, care, and respect.

Marianne Doyle
Hawthorn RSL Committee Member

Responsible Gambling

Managing Risks, Supporting Individuals, Upholding Community Values

Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch takes its responsibility for the management of gambling activities seriously, with a strong focus on risk management, individual wellbeing, and the maintenance of community trust. While the Sub-Branch complies fully with all legislative and regulatory requirements, its commitment to responsible gambling extends well beyond the minimum standards required by government reporting frameworks.

Our approach is grounded in the principle that a safe, respectful, and professionally managed venue is essential to protecting patrons, staff, and the integrity of the Sub-Branch. Bentleigh RSL is proud to operate a venue where community values, not the insatiable pursuit of profit, guide the management of all activities, including gaming operations.

A key strength of the Sub-Branch's responsible gambling efforts lies in the relationships built between staff and patrons. Staff are encouraged and supported to form genuine, professional connections with regular patrons. This familiarity enables staff to identify changes in behaviour that may indicate emerging gambling harm or, equally importantly, suspicious behaviour from individuals who may seek to exploit the venue. Early identification allows for timely and discreet intervention, referral to support services, or other appropriate protective actions.

The Sub-Branch invests in regular training to ensure that staff are equipped to recognise the signs of problem gambling and to respond appropriately, prioritising the welfare of individuals over commercial interests. This proactive and personalised approach to responsible gambling reflects the broader culture of Bentleigh RSL — a culture of care, vigilance, and community leadership.

Patrons benefit from a safe, professionally managed environment where their wellbeing is respected and protected. The atmosphere at Bentleigh RSL is not one of commercial excess but of community responsibility, service, and respect. In maintaining these standards, the Sub-Branch ensures that its operations remain aligned with the founding principles of the RSL and the expectations of the community it serves.

Planning for the Future: Deepening Our Social Impact

Our Opportunities for Growth

The research findings demonstrate that Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch is highly regarded across its member base, sponsored community organisations, and broader stakeholders.

The Sub-Branch has effectively maintained its traditional commitments to veteran welfare and remembrance, while also evolving to serve a broader contemporary community role.

While the overall feedback was overwhelmingly positive, the research identifies several opportunities to strengthen and further enhance Bentleigh RSL's community impact and organisational resilience.

Building on Strong Sense of Community

1. Broader Communication of Social Impact

The Sub-Branch is encouraged to more actively publicise its social contributions, including veteran support initiatives, staff development success stories, and community sponsorships. Sharing short stories, vignettes, and case studies through local media, social media platforms, and internal publications would reinforce Bentleigh RSL's relevance and counter outdated perceptions.

2. Highlighting Veteran Support Services

Although the Veteran Services Team is highly regarded by those who engage with it, broader visibility of veteran-specific services could be strengthened through targeted communication within the club and to external audiences.

3. Leveraging Sponsored Organisations as Advocates

Existing sponsored organisations such as Bentleigh Cricket Club, Bentleigh Junior Football Club, and 302 Army Cadet Unit are well positioned to act as advocates for Bentleigh RSL's role in the community.

Opportunities exist to formalise mutual promotion initiatives that reinforce shared community objectives.

Enhancing Member and Patron Experience

1. Ongoing Engagement with Member Feedback

The Sub-Branch should continue to periodically survey members and patrons, with a focus on identifying incremental improvements. Regular feedback loops demonstrate responsiveness and reinforce members' sense of ownership and connection.

2. Minor Enhancements to Facilities and Services

Although no systemic service issues were identified, the Sub-Branch could consider small, member-driven enhancements such as:

- Continuing to review food and beverage pricing, particularly for seniors.
- Addressing minor facilities improvements (e.g., seating, outdoor sound systems).
- Maintaining vigilance on behaviour management standards across all venues.

Strategic Considerations for Long-Term Sustainability

1. Maintaining Cultural Strength

The internal culture of the Sub-Branch, particularly among staff teams, has been identified as a significant contributor to member satisfaction and organisational resilience.

Continued investment in staff development, recognition, and inclusive leadership practices will be critical.

2. Future-Proofing the Sub-Branch's Community Role

The demographic and social environment surrounding Bentleigh is continuing to evolve. Bentleigh RSL is well placed to remain relevant by sustaining partnerships with emerging community groups, expanding youth engagement pathways, and maintaining flexibility in service delivery.





Conclusion

The findings of this Social Impact Report confirm that Bentleigh RSL Sub-Branch is delivering substantial and meaningful outcomes across its community engagement, veteran support services, and internal organisational culture.

The Sub-Branch's commitment to its Charter is evident not only through formal programs and sponsorships but also through the daily experiences of members, patrons, staff, and partner organisations.

Bentleigh RSL has successfully adapted to the evolving needs of its community while preserving the core principles of service, remembrance, and social responsibility that underpin the RSL movement.

The feedback gathered through member surveys, interviews, and case studies demonstrates that the Sub-Branch is recognised as a trusted, welcoming, and respected institution.

Opportunities identified in this report provide a pathway for further strengthening Bentleigh RSL's position, enhancing its communication of impact, and ensuring its continued relevance for future generations.

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Finally, we recognise and appreciate the broader community whose participation and feedback continue to inspire and drive our commitment to meaningful, lasting impact.

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