



## Media Release

### **Returned Services Association Postpones Poppy Day Appeal and Cancels Public ANZAC Day Services**

*RSA Calls For A United Front To Fight COVID-19 As National Poppy Day Postponed & Public ANZAC Day Services Cancelled*

**Wellington, 19 March 2020** – The Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association (RNZRSA) today announced that because of the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19), it has decided to cancel ALL public ANZAC Day Services on 25 April and to postpone its national Poppy Day Appeal.

RSA National President B J Clark says this is the first time that public services to commemorate ANZAC Day have been cancelled and the Poppy Day Appeal postponed.

Clark adds that New Zealand is under attack and so the bonds of service, sacrifice and support that our community has demonstrated in times of war, adversity and natural disaster must once again come to the fore.

“COVID-19 is a powerful and dangerous foe. RSA’s and the communities they are part of, all-over New Zealand must fight hard to protect our whanau and kaumatua from the transmission of this virus in keeping our proud memories of service and sacrifice. For this reason, RSA has decided that it is in the best interests of all New Zealanders to take these decisions”

“Unprecedented times call for unprecedented decisions to protect the health and safety of all New Zealanders says Clark.

“RSA calls on all New Zealanders to join in the service of protecting our country. We will still remember those that served and the sacrifice made on ANZAC Day but will not be able to commemorate this as public events – so it is likely to be different from previous ANZAC services but as the stewards of remembrance, the RSA will still honour the service and sacrifice of our brave servicemen and women,” says Clark.

Clark notes that ANZAC Day is one of New Zealand’s most important commemorative occasions.

“While often the images of our veterans tend to focus on the older returned service people from earlier campaigns, including World War II and Vietnam, increasingly our support and advocacy



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Is for the benefit of our younger military personnel. These veterans of the Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Timor-Leste and Afghanistan and all service personnel who continue to support New Zealand in times of natural disasters and crisis.

“Given there is little public awareness around the scope and nature of the very real struggles they face both mental and physical injuries directly linked to their service. This group and their families, who are extremely vulnerable to the effects of COVID -19, require a more professional level of care and support that will further stretch the finite resources of RSA Support Services.”

Clark reflects that the postponement of the RSA’s major annual fundraiser will have a significant financial impact on the organisation’s ability to support and help all service personnel, past and present, and their families to get the everyday help they need and deserve.

“The RSA is in most communities across New Zealand working to support our service men and women, past and present, and their families in recognition of their service and sacrifices while protecting our way of life. Poppy Day is the time for New Zealand to look after them with an individual contribution no matter how big or small. We hope we can work with the Government to make up any financial shortfall we might have because of the postponement of Poppy Day.”

Clark says that Anzac Day still provides the opportunity for New Zealand to have a conversation around the real sacrifices and loss of life that our serving and ex serving military people face and to thank them for their service.

“We are working with other agencies to bring a plan on how New Zealanders nationally can continue to demonstrate their support and remembrance for those who have served on ANZAC Day. RSA will continue to protect its members, families and communities from COVID-19 and work to organise another date for Poppy Day when everyone can support those New Zealanders who have served their country.”

**ENDS**

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**About RSA**





Every day the RSA movement helps all service personnel and their families get the support they need.

Our mission is to remember and care for all those impacted by service for New Zealand in military operations.

The RSA was formed in New Zealand in 1916 by returning Anzacs during World War One to provide support and comfort for service men and women and their families.

The Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association is made up of 182 local RSAs around the country, each an entity in their own right, with over 102,000 members. Local RSAs are managed by their own executive committee while being united with the RNZRSA in our strategic pillars, vision, and values. We believe in a nation joined by a heartfelt connection to the Anzac spirit of courage, commitment, comradeship and compassion.

See RSA for more information - <https://www.rsa.org.nz/about-the-rsa>



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