

These 'troops' will not shut up

It is with regret, but not surprise, that I note our gaff-prone State president of the RSL, Bill Gaynor, has managed to get himself offside with the mainstream veteran community with his edict on who and who may not march on Anzac Day (Anzac march ban, 22/4).

While having some sympathy for his wish not to have the march resemble a mardi gras, it is surely a matter for each association to decide who may or may not march behind their banner.

Like many at the State and national executive level of the RSL, they still hold the authoritarian and hierarchical ideology that the "troops" should just shut up and obey their orders. Failure to internally reform and become more transparent and democratic has caused this once proud and widely respected organisation to become largely irrelevant (while still proclaiming its primacy) within the national veteran community.

It must be acknowledged that it continues to do some good work in the welfare area, but its days of taking the fight to government on behalf of veterans and the defence community have gone and its dwindling membership is likely to see it fade slowly into oblivion unless it can meet the challenge of reforming its ethos and making itself truly relevant to a much

younger generation of veterans and their families.

As much as I may wish for the RSL to regain its former credibility and relevance, it is decisions like this that make it increasingly unlikely.

Kevin Bovill, Vietnam veteran, Success.

Bill Gaynor says "it's a day for veterans". This begs the question: what about those former full-time serving members of the Australian Defence Force who not only served the interests of the nation but were also fully trained and prepared to embark on operational service when and if the need arose.

Then there is the issue of the former ADF reservists who not only served, with history now showing that they too could meet the challenge of both full-time and operational service, yet by the very criteria set by Mr Gaynor should not be in the March unless they are veterans.

Mr Gaynor also says the decision preventing auxiliary organisations such as the Partners of Veterans Association of WA from marching reflected the wishes of veterans. I question the veracity of that statement because I am not aware of any veteran whose opinion was asked, canvassed or sought about

auxiliary organisations participating in any Anzac Day march, much less that of 2010.

Anzac Day is one of commemoration and remembrance and a failure to encourage maximum participation on the day is the antithesis of what the day is about.

J. R. Babbage, Nollamara.

I am appalled at the decision to exclude partners of veterans from taking part in the march. The RSL has again shown itself to be dogmatic and so far out of touch with reality as to be almost irrelevant in today's society.

While veteran numbers continue to decrease rapidly and ex-service associations fold through lack of numbers at an alarming rate, one might have thought that the RSL could take a peek into the future when all that will be left will be the RSL president and his cohort.

I recall the Surf Lifesavers of WA marching in the parade last year.

To the partners of veterans denied the opportunity to march this year, I say bloody well done for an outstanding job of caring for your veteran partners. You have done great service for your country.

RSL, shame on you.

Ken Bowen, Denmark.