

Dear Members,

As we move well into the 2025 financial year, it is timely and important that we reflect on the challenges, changes, and progress made throughout 2024. It was a year of considerable transition, and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts and resilience of our team and the wider North Bondi RSL community.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the management and staff of the Club. Their continued support, dedication, and meticulous attention to detail were invaluable during a year marked by significant changes in senior leadership. Despite these shifts, the team has maintained a consistent standard of excellence that kept the venue running smoothly and professionally. I would like to make special acknowledgement of Julie (*Operations Manager*), Leanne (*Secretary of the Board*), Shelley (*Membership Manager*), Amit (*Head Chef*), Lee (*Duty / Functions Manager*), and Dan (*Duty Manager*). Their work ethic and professionalism played a crucial role in ensuring the venue remained successful, especially during the latter part of the year. Their experience and commitment have helped foster an environment that is not only professional and efficient but also warm and welcoming to our members and guests.

With the appointment of a new Club board in May 2024, a renewed focus was placed on aligning our strategy with the fundamental purposes of the RSL movement, with an emphasis on supporting veterans and their families. This significant strategic shift reflects our broader purpose and commitment, not only to operate a viable hospitality venue, but to ensure that we are fulfilling our role within the RSL network across Australia. Working closely with the North Bondi RSL Sub-Branch, we have taken significant steps to enhance our support for veterans, creating a space where they and their families feel welcomed, valued, and at home. Whether for assistance, participation in events, or simply enjoyment of the camaraderie that thrives within our Club, we have strived to ensure that our doors are open to all those seeking to participate in our community.

I would like to personally thank the North Bondi RSL Sub-Branch Board for their close collaboration with the Club throughout the year. Their shared commitment to our redefined and strengthened purpose has been vital to our success in this area.

From September 2024 onward, the Club also saw a transition in the senior management team. This brought new energy and direction, particularly in expanding our functions, events, and promotions to attract a broader and more engaged demographic. We specifically focused on patrons between the ages of 18 and 44, which is an essential demographic to secure the Club's long-term economic sustainability. In collaboration with marketing consultant Craig Tapper, we implemented targeted strategies to improve our appeal to this age group. That said, we remain fully committed to ensuring that members and guests of all ages feel equally welcome and valued. Our programming continues to reflect a balance that honours the Club's history while embracing its future.

Regarding our financial performance for 2024, it is appropriate to be transparent about challenges that the Club has needed to address. The external audit of our accounts conducted by BDO records a misappropriation of funds amounting to \$71,006, which came to light from internal investigations conducted by the Club's current Board and senior management. The Club has addressed this matter via appropriate channels and an investigation by NSW Police remains ongoing. Naturally, we are fully cooperating and we look forward to an appropriate outcome.

In addition to this, the Club was subject to a Fair Work general protections claim in the latter part of 2024. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Board and senior management, supported by our legal counsel, this was resolved in February 2025 with the matter being thrown out by the Fair Work Commission in favour of the Club. However, these legal proceedings incurred significant costs, which are reflected in the 2024's Profit and Loss statement. Unfortunately, as the Fair Work Commission is a 'no-costs' jurisdiction, none of the costs incurred by the Club in defending

the matter are able to be recouped from the unsuccessful plaintiff.

The Club recorded a total loss before income tax of (\$459,428) for 2024. When we isolate the misappropriated funds (\$71,006) and legal fees (\$70,858), the underlying operational loss stands at (\$317,564). It is important to note that this result was further impacted by decisions made under previous senior management, particularly the directive to close the venue two days a week during slower trading months. This not only reduced revenue but also caused confusion among patrons about the Club's trading hours, resulting in diminished foot traffic and patronage. This approach will not be repeated in 2025. The venue will remain fully operational throughout the year, ensuring consistency and accessibility for all members and guests, and with new offerings aligned with seasonal changes.

Looking ahead, the venue will continue to undergo a comprehensive transformation. We have introduced stronger governance across several key areas including workplace bullying and sexual harassment policies, financial controls and cash handling procedures, staff culture and inclusivity, whistle blower protections, workplace health and safety, asset maintenance, and supplier management. These improvements are not only necessary to ensure compliance, but they also represent our commitment to fostering a respectful, inclusive, and safe environment for both staff and patrons. Coupled with an invigorated calendar of events, promotions, and functions, these changes will position the Club to achieve sustained profitability and long-term viability.

I would also like to thank the Club's new Board of Directors for their support, leadership, and commitment in steering the Club towards a brighter future. Their dedication to strengthening our strategic vision while remaining true to the Club's core mission – supporting veterans and their families – has been invaluable. I am fully aligned with this vision and offer my complete support as we continue to work together in building a strong, sustainable future for North Bondi RSL Club.

Finally, I thank you, our members and guests, for your loyalty and support throughout 2024 and now into 2025. It has undoubtedly been a challenging period, but I remain confident in the steps we have taken and the direction we are now heading. My resolve to see this Club thrive has never been stronger, and I look forward to evolving together with all of you as we make 2025 a year of growth, strength, and renewed purpose.

Blake Johnson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER