

FOR SUBBRANCHES

WHAT CAN A VISITING VETERAN OFFER SCHOOLS?

A visiting veteran can support and enhance learning in several important ways. Students will gain unique insights into the everyday life, values and significant experiences of someone new to them. The opportunity to interact with an unfamiliar person and become comfortable relating to adults are important social lessons for children. Having veterans visit classrooms also provides opportunities to build important partnerships between RSL Queensland and school communities, which can result in significant benefits for everyone concerned.

Veterans not only offer all this, but they can also bring new perspectives and insights about very important aspects of our nation's past, present and future. Veterans can expose students to firsthand, real-life experience which brings a richness and authenticity to their learning. Students' knowledge and understanding can be enhanced by access to information and the opportunity to discuss and question. When information – stories, personal anecdotes, answers to specific questions and the display of artefacts – is recounted by someone who has 'been there', the positive impact on students' learning is momentous.



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN VISITING A CLASSROOM

If you're not a teacher, facing a classroom full of children can be daunting. How will the kids behave? What will I say? What kind of language should I use? Will they understand me? How will they react? What will I do if...? If possible, speak to someone who has visited a school to address young students. Ask them about their experience. They may have advice about what worked well that you can use to prepare for your visit.

ESTABLISH CONTACT

You may have received an invitation from a teacher or curriculum leader at your local school, perhaps via your RSL Sub Branch, or a friend or relative might have offered your name to their school community. Either way, you will have a contact at the school to liaise with prior to the visit. That



person will be very familiar with the classroom environment. Don't hesitate to ask any questions you might have, even if they seem trivial. It is in your contact's interests to make sure you are comfortable with the visit and that you know everything you need to know.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

A visiting guest speaker is a highly valued event and most schools will want to make the most of your visit, without making undue demands on your time. School timetables can be complicated beasts, as classes may attend several specialist lessons during the week. For these and various other reasons, you may be asked to speak to more than one class during your visit, across a number of year levels. You may also be asked to represent your Sub Branch in a formal or ceremonial capacity during an ANZAC or Remembrance Day event.

Ask your contact at the school how many students will be at your presentation, what age/s the children are, and how or where they will be seated. Check if you will need to hold a microphone while you speak or stand behind a podium. If you are intending to show a presentation (a slideshow, some photographs etc) the school may be able to help with the technology. Ask if you can use your own computer to present a slideshow and what ports, cables or adapters they can provide (e.g. VGA, HDMI). If you must provide your presentation as a file on a memory stick, find out the preferred file format. Let them know if you also require audio.

PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

You will have to sign in at the school office on the day of your visit. Ask your contact for the best way to enter the school, where you should park, and how to find the office. Please be aware that you may require a blue card to visit a school.

PLANNING CONTENT (WHAT TO DISCUSS, SHOW AND HIGHLIGHT)

Two factors will guide you in planning what to say: why the teacher or school wants you to visit and the age group of the children. Check in with the classroom teacher wherever possible. If you don't have the opportunity to speak directly with the classroom teacher, ask your contact to explain what the teacher hopes to achieve for their students by having you visit. Check if the students have any particular learning needs that you should be aware of.

Here are some of the details you may wish to ask your contact about:

- How old are the children I will be speaking to?
- Do you have a time limit or a guide for how long you'd like me to speak?



- How long will be allowed for answering students' questions?
- Will the children have particular questions prepared in advance for me?

Be aware that some schools may have refugee students or new arrivals who have had a recent negative experience of war or conflict. These students may be sensitive or anxious about some content that is shared. Your contact can offer advice and recommendations or make alternate arrangements for potentially affected students to avoid a negative experience.

IN THE CLASSROOM

If you have brought a digital presentation or visual aids, arrive earlier to allow time to set up and arrange these items.

Even before you are introduced to the children, they will have been prepared for this event. The teacher will have spoken about you and set clear expectations about appropriate behaviour for your visit. The children will have some prior knowledge and understanding of what you will be speaking about. They may have watched a video, read a picture book or participated in class discussions. If you ask them a question or two, you can gauge the extent of their background knowledge and build on this. For example, "Raise your hand if you've heard of...?" Many children will raise their hands regardless, but you've provided an opportunity for them to feel confident of your interest in them and to engage with the content you are presenting.

HANDLING THE UNEXPECTED

If a student calls out inappropriately or exhibits unexpected behaviours during your presentation, the teacher will know how best to handle the behaviour and you can take your cue from them. Feel free to ignore any disruptive behaviours but do respond to unsolicited or unusual questions or comments in a respectful and accepting way. Remember, the teacher will support you and help to make the visit a success.

Finally, and most importantly, be yourself! You have been invited as the expert that you are, due to your knowledge and experience as a valued member of our Defence family. When children are interested, encouraged or inspired and are given the opportunity to ask questions, they learn better. You already have all it takes to engage students in learning about something very important to all Australians.

