

# we've come a long, long way together

## In the beginning...

In the early 1950s, a group of returned servicemen had the idea of forming a social club. They met in the 'Digger's Hall' – a wooden building on the corner of Moon and Tamar Streets where the Post Office now stands – to talk about their idea. All were members of the RSL Sub-Branch. Anzac Cummings was one of those men. "A few of us got together and said we should have a club." In late 1954, the inaugural meeting of the Ballina RSL Club was held. Initial membership of the Ballina RSL Club was 110 (80 members of the sub-branch and selected associate members). They obtained a lease on the Digger's Hall from the sub-branch and Ron Flanagan was the foundation President.

This was a social club, and the blokes met weekly to play darts, billiards and cards. "There were no women in those days – they were forbidden," Anzac said. The blokes would chip in and buy a 'jondi' – a small keg of beer. One of the fellas would have to go down to the Commercial Hotel, to fill up the 'jondi'. Membership grew quickly, and space soon became a problem. Extensions to the Digger's Hall couldn't be made because of restricted land, so the search began for a new site.

Not many people would want to build on land that was 180cm under water, but that's exactly what the Board of the Ballina RSL Club decided to do! Considering the Ballina RSL Club's prime riverfront position, the decision showed incredible vision.

## the 60's ...

Les Schreiber was the first full-time Secretary-Manager employed by the Ballina RSL Club. Appointed in 1963, he came from Narrabri, and worked in the Moon Street premises. The Board of the club had already decided on a new site (the current site) on the corner of River and Grant Streets.

Anzac Cummings said one of Mr Schreiber's first questions, having seen the 'basin of water' the club was to be built on, was simply: "How are you going to do that?"

But it was done. The site was drained, sand was pumped in and the land was left to consolidate.

In August 1963, 83 piles were sunk to depths of up to 20 metres to provide foundations for the new RSL Club.

## august 1964 – official opening of the ballina rsl club, river street

Original Club facilities included: River Street Bowling Green, Members' Dining Room, Ultra Modern Kitchen, TV & Bowlers' Lounge, distinctive Ornamental Stairway, Auditorium, Committee Room, Main Lounge Bar and Billiard Annex.



## who remembers ...

- Saturday Night Dinner Dances with the Pacific Jazzmen?
- The Little Blue Room – the only room where ladies were 'allowed'?

## the '66 news round-up ...

The first official member newspaper, the **Ballina RSL Club News** was released in December 1966. Price: 5 cents

### From the editorial:

"All profits have been ploughed back into building improvements and amenities, entertainment, community services and charities.

I sincerely believe that the growth of the Club has been a fruitful incentive towards town improvements generally.

- Les Schreiber



"Cover girl image: Miss Dawn Pullen – Sportsgirl and nominee for Spastic Queen. Dawn is our idea of Australian Womanhood – the type of person our boys in Vietnam think of when they think of home."

## the 70's & 80's ...

### who remembers ...

- The Dining Car Restaurant?
- Gala Days in the Auditorium?
- All of the boats tied up to the Club's wharf – sometimes 4 or 5 deep!
- Fishing Club weigh-ins on the wharf?

• New Taste ... We are toying with the idea of providing Members with a "third" beer in place of the renowned but now extinct Grafton Ale. In case you are interested, the possibility is Miller's Lager ...

• Water Skiing ... Do you think you are too old for this sport? Why? In the Ballina RSL Club it's RIGHT at your door. Bill Hinton and Col Seymour are only too pleased to tow along newcomers ... The boys were just a little down-hearted after last week ... after many partly-successful "buzzes" west of the Club, 1966 Spastic Queen Contender, Miss Dawn Pullen, and Club Secretary, Bev Sellick, showed everybody how to keep gracefully afloat on one and two skis respectively.

## but baby, look at us now..!

## the 90's ...

The **Riverside Report** – the Official Magazine for Ballina RSL Club Ltd and RSL Bowling Club ... in the 80's & 90's ...

## who remembers ...

- Wickety-Wak, Judith Durham, Jon English, Bullamakanka, Bourbon Street, Shoobydoo, Normie Rowe, Mental As Anything, Ian Moss, Spy v Spy, Yesterdays Heroes, America, Spencer Davis & His Supergroup ... ?
- The early days of Spinnakers and the Anchorage Cocktail Lounge?

## the 90's news round-up ...

### The Northern Star, 1990:

"Club set to outshine the others ...

The bold white and blue Ballina RSL Club has become one of Ballina's major landmarks ... from the outside, one of the main features of the new building is the dome...

The first part of the job has been finished, with the club's new function rooms, entrance foyer, casino area and administration centre now open for business. Within a few days the trip

upstairs will be a breeze with the club's new escalators. The new entrance to the club is now in Grant Street... "

### The Northern Star, 1990:

"Extensions mean more entertainment ... The first stage of a major overhaul of the Ballina RSL Club is expected to be completed by mid 1991, giving Ballina one of the best entertainment venues on the coast...

The emphasis of the new building is on style and function ... the interior of the club has undergone a colour transformation with blues and greys reflecting the colours of the sea.

The proximity to water has been a feature of the club for many years. The club's wharf has been a favourite mooring point for visiting boats as well as an attractive outdoor area for patrons. All this is to make a change for the better when the final stages of the renovations take place ...

A new wharf, with additional space is proposed with a restaurant making full use of the river views as a feature...

Add to this, improvements to the auditorium bar, restaurant and a new TAB and sports room and the club will

have something for just about everyone. A decade and a half of more fun times later ...

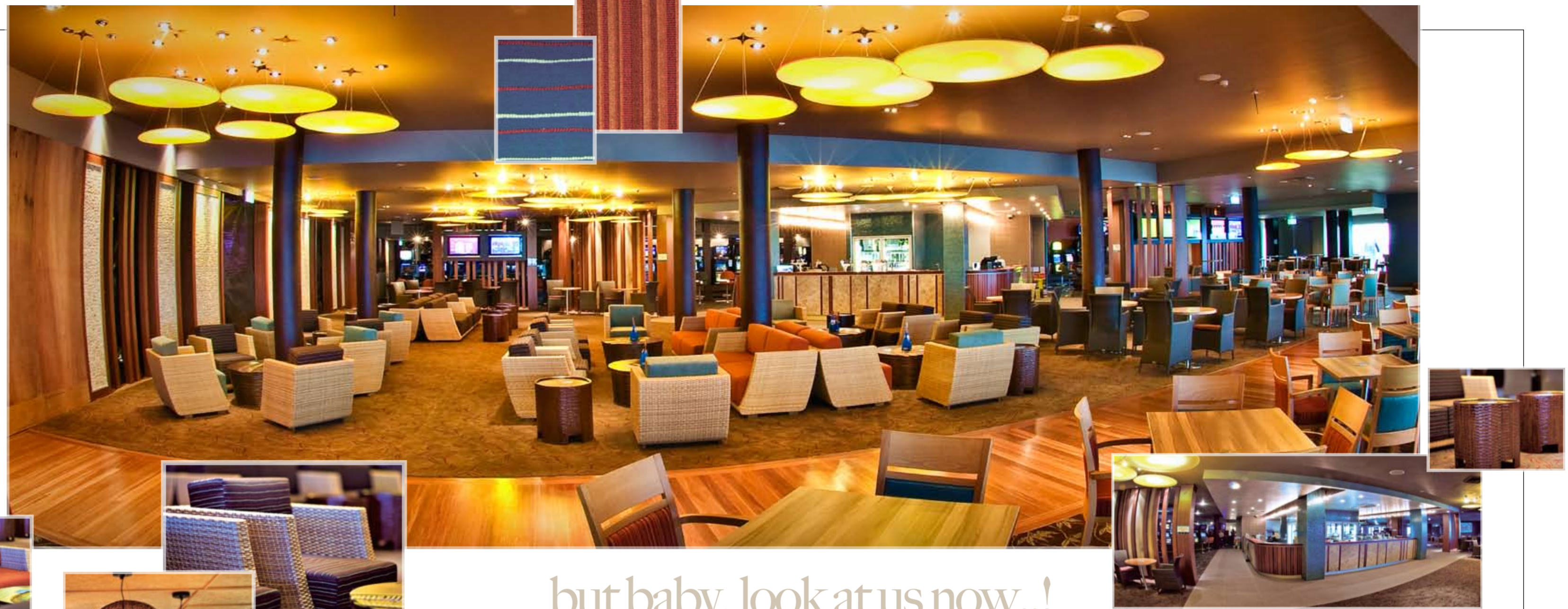
## in 2005 ...

The Ballina RSL Club launched its 'vision for an exciting and secure future' in its new member newspaper, **Ballina Club Life**. This took the form of a concept masterplan sketches presentation spanning four new major stages of potential club development over the coming years.

## 2007 – the present ...

"So as both the Ballina community AND the club industry changes, so are we changing ... and ... we are doing so in ways that ensure the betterment of facilities and infrastructure for our entire community. We're looking forward to influencing new lifestyle habits and creating some wonderful new memories with the enjoyable experiences that we can continue to offer as a result of embracing an exciting club future! Our members and visitors will be bestowed with an immensely comfortable and stylish club – a place where the whole family can relax."

- Bob Grant - Chairman  
Ballina Club Life Winter 2007 Edition



**PRESIDENTS — 1954-1964**  
1954-55 RON FLANAGAN President  
1955-56 A. T. GARDY: MAY President  
1960-61 BOB HANFORD President  
1962-64 ANZAC CUMMINGS President

