



New Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel



The Hon Andrew Gee MP was sworn in as the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel on 2 July 2021.

Minister Gee has held previous roles as the Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister from 25 January 2019 to 6 February 2020, and Minister for Decentralisation and Education and Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment from 6 February 2020 to 2 July 2021.

Minister Gee is the Member for Calare in New South Wales and was first elected to Federal Parliament in 2016 and re-elected in 2019. The seat encompasses a region of nearly 33,000 square kilometres west of the Blue Mountains in NSW, including the key regional centres of Bathurst and Orange.

Prior to entering federal Parliament, Mr Gee was a Member of the NSW Parliament.

Minister Gee is also the father of a young family. He studied economics and law at Sydney University and practised as a barrister in the fields of civil litigation and family law.

On behalf of the veteran community, we would like to welcome Minister Gee to the Veterans' Affairs portfolio, and look forward to working with him to serve veterans and their families. We also acknowledge the former Minister, the Hon Darren Chester MP, for his service to the veteran community over the past 3 years.



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Budget 2021-22 breakdown

The focus of the 2021-22 Budget for veterans and their families is on wellbeing, suicide prevention and more funding for critical departmental services to ensure veterans and their families can continue to meaningfully contribute to our nation.

"There are a range of measures in the Budget that will enable DVA to better respond to the current and future needs of veterans and their families."

There are a range of measures in the Budget that will enable DVA to better respond to the current and future needs of the increasing number of veterans and their families engaging with the department.

The Government invests over \$11.5 billion each year to support 325,000 veterans and their families, and the 2021-22 Budget builds on this with an additional \$702.6 million with a focus on wellness, support, suicide prevention and ensuring DVA is appropriately equipped.

As part of the success of changes made to DVA, there has been a doubling of compensation claims received between 2017-18 and 2019-20, with more than 121,000 claims received last financial year.

The Government is providing an additional \$98.5 million for claims processing over the next two years. DVA has also received funding for more than 440 Australian Public Service staff to bolster capability in the year ahead.

The Government will provide \$62.1 million to improve long-term data capability, which will for the first time examine all aspects of an Australian Defence Force (ADF) member's service - from enlistment to transition - and will allow both Defence and DVA to make better policies to support whole-of-life health, wellbeing and safety outcomes for current and former ADF members and their families.

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FROM THE DEPARTMENT

Liz Cosson AM CSC
Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs

An evolution in veteran support services

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Hon Andrew Gee MP as the new Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel. I look forward to working with him as we seek to deliver the best possible support for the veteran community. I also acknowledge and thank the Hon Darren Chester MP for his service to the veteran community for the last three years, and his support for key reforms underway in DVA.

Australia is one of the few countries in the world that has a government department dedicated to meeting the needs of veterans. It began when the Repatriation Commission was established in 1917, and continues today as we look for new and better ways to support the veteran community.

It could be argued that the idea of 'Repat' (Repatriation), coined during the First World War, is a distinctly Australian concept, referring not just to bringing troops home but to supporting them as they reintegrate back into civilian life. One example is the various soldier resettlement schemes launched during the War, which were well-intentioned but only moderately successful.

As you would expect and hope, we have learned a lot since then. And by 'we,' I'm not just referring to what is now DVA. So many organisations and government agencies are involved in supporting the veteran community - from the departments of Defence

and Health along with state and territory governments to ex-service organisations (ESOs), Comcare, the National Disability Insurance Agency, employers, health providers, and so on. What is heartening is the extent of collaboration that is occurring in the wider support network for veterans and their families. A clear example is the recently established Joint Transition Authority, which is a collaboration between Defence, DVA and the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation. It aims to ensure all services and supports work together as Australian Defence Force (ADF) members' transition to civilian life.

What we do know is that we need to focus on all aspects of a veteran's wellbeing. The Soldier Settlement Scheme had provided land to 23,000 repatriated soldiers by 1923, but among the reasons why it did not prove as successful as hoped was that many veterans who took up the offer had no training in or experience of farming, or were given parcels of land that were unsuitable or too small. It was a good idea but it needed wider support and training to ensure its success.

Recently, we developed a Wellbeing Model (see figure), which looks at seven elements that contribute to the wellbeing of veterans and, importantly, their families. This is central to our Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and our ongoing transformation, which will improve

the extent and nature of the wrap-around support we provide. DVA seeks to provide veterans and their families with the support they need to serve well, live well and age well, providing them with access to appropriate, integrated and effective services and support across those seven domains of wellbeing.

That is why we're putting so much effort into ensuring the services we provide complement one another. For example, our Early Engagement Model means that all personnel joining and leaving the ADF are automatically put on our books, making it easier for them to access our services.

DVA offers free mental health care for life to anyone who has served even a single day in the full-time ADF (and some Reservists), and counselling is available through Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling, which also facilitates improved health and social connectedness through, for example, its Community and Peer Program.

DVA's transformation over the past 4 years has improved access for veterans. For example, MyService is making the claims process easier and quicker more generally. This, coupled with a better understanding across the community of DVA services and payments including by serving members, means we have seen a significant increase in compensation claims over the past couple of years and longer than expected timeframes



DVA's Wellbeing Model

to finalise. DVA received additional funds in the May Budget to address the claims backlog and is committed to reducing this as a priority.

While veterans are waiting for a claim to be considered, they can access additional support including Non-Liability Health Care, Provisional Access to Medical Treatment, interim Veteran Payment, Open Arms counselling and support programs such as the Wellbeing and Support Program.

Recently transitioned veterans who identify the need for some additional employment assistance can access the Support for Employment program launched earlier this year. This program provides up to 10 hours of pre- and post-employment support, such as job-seeking skills and interview preparation. It also offers increased engagement with Veterans' Employment Commitment organisations, and is expanding the network of employer organisations committed to veteran employment.

The Veteran Wellbeing Centres, some of which are already up and running, provide a range of services which can include transition and employment support, ESO advocacy services, social connectedness, physical and mental health services, and veteran community engagement. They provide a place for veterans and their families to connect with and support one another while also accessing the services they need.

Improving the extent and nature of this wrap-around support is a major focus of our Transformation process, which will be assisted by the next Census on 10 August. It will be the first Census to include a question about ADF service, providing an effective means of gathering important information about the veteran community, which will enable us to better target services and support.

The announcement on 8 July of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide is critical. It will enable DVA to better understand what it can do to prevent veteran suicide and tailor services appropriately. I want to assure you that while the Royal Commission progresses, DVA will continue to support the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families. The essential work we do every day to support veterans and their families will not stop while the Royal Commission is underway.

I would like to conclude with a correction to my last *Vetaffairs* column. I said, in reference to serving and ex-serving members of the ADF: 'Be proud that you have volunteered to serve your nation'. Of course, there are many thousands of veterans who were conscripted to serve their nation, most recently in the Vietnam War, and did so with great distinction. I am very grateful to our Nashos and their families for their distinguished service to the nation.



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FROM THE MINISTER

The Hon Andrew Gee MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel

I started my first day as Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel with an ending.

The pews were full at Penhall's Funeral Home in Orange, with medals clasped over many hearts for the funeral of former digger, Glen Sutton. Dozens of people braved the brisk morning air, listening from outside to the farewell of an old mate most had never met.

From 1968, Glen Sutton served in the Engineers, then later in the 1/19th Battalion RNSWR. With little known family or friends to attend Glen's funeral, fears

who came before, was on display recently at Exercise Talisman Sabre 2021. There, the current generation of Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel showed those fortunate enough to see them in action, just what they can do.

It was a privilege to meet some of the 8,300 men and women of the ADF at the military exercise in Shoalwater Bay and Rockhampton. The event, which is the largest bilateral military exercise between

to meet some of the 4000 strong 3rd Brigade who call the barracks home.

Since being sworn in, I have spoken with many current serving members and veterans and listened to their stories. Through these conversations, I have gained a strong insight into the need for ongoing care throughout a veteran's life.

While in Townsville I visited the newly opened Oasis Veteran Wellbeing Centre which does just that. This centre, like several being built around the country, offers specialised community support and engagement with veterans and their families. It provides services such as transition and employment support as well as physical and mental health services.

It is our nation's duty to look after our old and young diggers, not just during their service, but through their transition into civilian life, and beyond.

I have arrived in the job at a seminal moment for the portfolio, with the establishment of a Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The



Visiting Lavarack Barracks, Townsville – command centre for Exercise Talisman Sabre.

Royal Commission will be a chance for veterans and their families to be seen and heard. To tell their stories, share their views and express their ideas. Their contributions will help shape policies to improve the treatment and care of veterans and their families, both now, and for future generations.

The Royal Commission will conduct its inquiries in a trauma-informed way and hold private sessions for those who don't wish to give their evidence in public. The Royal Commission website is up and running so I urge any veteran or current serving member to visit defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au and share their story. General information on Royal Commissions can be found at www.royalcommission.gov.au.

Our veterans have been counted on to protect our country. Now, I ask something more of them – to stand up and be counted in this year's Census. At present, we don't know the exact number of veterans living in Australia, or whereabouts they call home. The

simple fact is we can't help veterans we don't know about. Therefore, this year's Census will ask: 'Have you ever served in the Australian Defence Force?'

The answer to this question will help us to better understand veterans' needs, reach more veterans, and provide the right services to veterans and their families.

Each day, I'm determined to advocate as hard as I possibly can for all of those who've given so much to our country.

Just some of the areas of the portfolio I'm keen to progress include: making claims processing faster and more efficient; seeing through the adoption of new medical treatments; increasing support for veterans transitioning out of the military; and to provide mental health support services.

I look forward to working with the entire veteran community and their families to make sure they're properly supported both during and after their service.

"It is our nation's duty to look after our old and young diggers, not just during their service, but through their transition into civilian life, and beyond."

were held that few people, if any, would bid him goodbye.

The airwaves and papers quickly filled with his name and his story, and soon a handful of attendees swelled into a congregation, as the region showed up to say farewell, and thank him for his service.

The spirit of that generation of Australians, and all

Australia and the US, showcases the important work ADF personnel are doing for our country.

The command centre for Exercise Talisman Sabre '21 was at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville, which I also had the honour of visiting recently. I observed first-hand just how large the Talisman Sabre logistical operation is, and I got



Getting sworn in as Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel on 2 July 2021.

Letter to the editor

At 18 years old, I joined the Australian Army and served in an infantry battalion from February 1972 until August 1975. I joined up to learn a trade and was advised to enlist for a 6-year period.

I only completed 3½ years of my 6-year enlistment, as I had the opportunity to buy a newsagency and it was an offer too hard to refuse. I applied for discharge and it was granted. My discharge was honourable, my service satisfactory, and my military conduct was deemed as very good.

Recently, I applied to receive an Australian Defence Medal (ADM) for my service. My application was denied as I didn't complete my enlistment period and I was not discharged on medical grounds. Ironically, if I had signed up for 3 years, I would have received the medal. I fully accepted the decision of the Directorate of Honours and Awards, and didn't wish to take it to the review tribunal.

Today, when the men and women of the Australian Defence Force march on Anzac Day, they wear their ADM proudly. Not because they showed valour, or went over and above the call of duty, but for the sheer pride of being recognised as a professional soldier and member of the ADF either past or present.

I would have also worn the ADM with pride if I had been eligible to receive it. But not having it, I have often felt that I don't 'deserve' to march on Anzac Day. I often wonder whether other veterans out there feel the same way, and have been put off marching for that reason. I reckon anyone who serves, whether they have medals or not, should feel proud of their service. I would even go so far as to suggest that in the absence of a medal, veterans wear their white service number patch.

Phillip Daniel
Maryborough, Victoria



From the Editor

A quick note to thank the nearly 1,000 people who took part in the *Vetaffairs* and *e-news* survey. Your feedback and suggestions were very useful and we have already begun to implement them. For instance, the text in this edition is easier to read than in the past and there is an article on page 16 about services and entitlements available to veterans living overseas. We will act on other suggestions in subsequent editions.

If you have any suggestions or would you like to write an article for us, please email vetaffairs@dva.gov.au.

Conan Elphicke
Editor – *Vetaffairs* and *e-news*

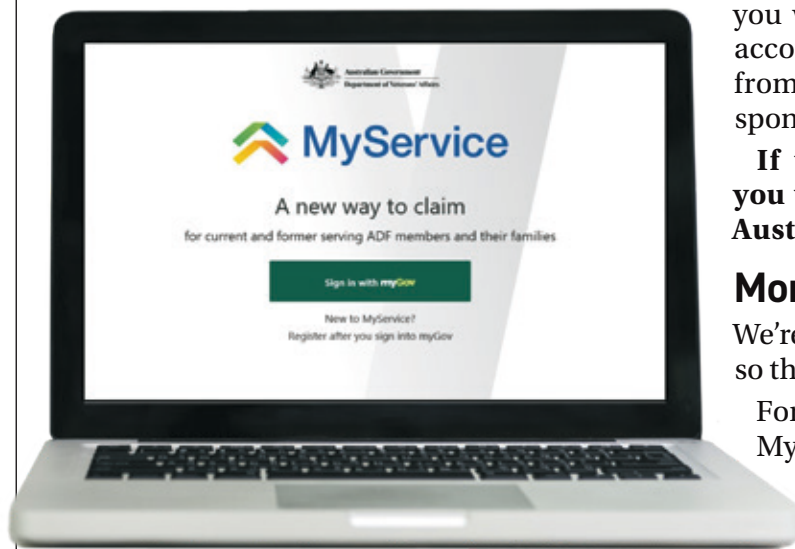
Changes to MyAccount and MyService

More services are moving to MyService

Over the past few months, we have been increasing the services you can access on MyService. MyService will soon be your one-stop access point for all your DVA online services.

As part of this change, MyAccount will be turned off in coming months.

If you're a MyAccount holder and have correspondence in your inbox that you want to keep, you'll need to save it to where you store your electronic files. To help you do this, we've provided instructions on the DVA website (on dva.gov.au, search for 'Moving to MyService').



The letters you currently receive in your MyAccount inbox will temporarily be sent to you via Australia Post once MyAccount is turned off.

MyService users will soon see DVA letters in their myGov inbox

We're working towards having as many of our letters available digitally and being sent to your myGov inbox. This is a step forward to align with Australian Government service delivery standards. Delivery of your DVA letters is secure and myGov will automatically send you a message to let you know you have mail. You can access your mail on your preferred device wherever you have internet access.

We're starting small to make sure we get it right for you. Letters about changes of circumstances, lump sum advances, and income support acknowledgement are the first to be sent to your myGov inbox. Over the next 12 months, we will be increasing the types of letters to be sent to your myGov inbox, including the letters currently sent to MyAccount holders.

If you want to receive your mail by post, you will see a new feature in your MyService account where you can choose how your letters from DVA will be sent to you. Look for 'Correspondence' on your MyService homepage.

If you don't have a MyService account you will continue to receive your letters by Australia Post.

More information

We're excited to be improving our online services so that it is easier for you to interact with us.

For more information and to register for a MyService account, visit dva.gov.au/myservice.

If you need help, call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

Entitlements for those who served in the former Yugoslavia or the Tanker War

Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s

If you served as an Australian Defence Force (ADF) member in the former Yugoslav republics between 12 January 1992 and 24 January 1997, you might be eligible for a range of benefits including a means-tested Service Pension at age 60 and/or the automatic grant of the Gold Card at age 70.

The Department of Defence has recently issued a new allotment instrument for service in the former Yugoslav republics during that period. It covers certain ADF members who served there on attachment with allied forces.

Eligible veterans can lodge a claim for Qualifying Service through MyService (dva.gov.au and search for 'MyService') or by completing form D0506 'Claim to Determine Qualifying Service by a Current or ex-Member of the ADF' (dva.gov.au and search for 'D0506').

For privacy reasons, details of these members cannot be published. Most affected members already have qualifying service accepted and have no need to apply. Where relevant members are known to us and do not already have qualifying service accepted, DVA has attempted to contact them.

Gulfs of Oman and Iran in the 1980s (Tanker War)

Defence has recently clarified that certain members of the Royal Australian Navy who served on attachment with UK or US forces in the Gulfs of Oman and/or Iran between 17 November 1986 and 28 February 1989 are considered to have Hazardous Service. If that applies to you, your service might be recognised as Hazardous Service under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA).

Consideration of claims

Veterans with the above service may be eligible for a Disability Pension under the VEA for any injuries or disease that arose from this service. Claims will be considered against the Reasonable Hypothesis Statements of Principles issued by the Repatriation Medical Authority and against the more generous reverse criminal standard of proof.

If you believe you have a medical condition that was caused or aggravated by any of your ADF service, DVA encourages you to lodge a compensation claim through MyService.

Budget 2021–22 breakdown

Continued from page 1

Suicide prevention continues to be a key focus of the Government, which provided DVA with \$28.9 million for an improved adverse events analysis capability and resources to respond to requests from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide and from the National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention.

The Veterans' Affairs 2021–22 Budget package also addresses several of the Productivity Commission's recommendations contained in the report, *A Better Way to Support Veterans*, either in part or in full and builds upon the Government's interim response. This includes some measures already mentioned to

support the lifetime health and wellbeing of our veterans and their families, and their transition to civilian life. The Government will finalise any outstanding matters from the Productivity Commission report as part of its response to the Royal Commission once it is finalised.

The Government is also providing \$138.3 million over four years to support the lifetime wellbeing of veterans and their families, by providing timely access to targeted services and support for their economic, physical and mental wellbeing. This includes:

- \$23.3 million to continue the successful Wellbeing and Support Program;
- \$16.9 million to extend the Provisional Access to Medical Treatment

(PAMT) program for a further two years;

- \$61.9 million for a one-off fee increase for occupational therapists and podiatrists when treating veteran clients;



Budget 2021-22

- \$2.3 million for a pilot program of vocational and psychosocial rehabilitation, without the requirement for any liability claim to be lodged;

- \$10.7 million to establish Veteran Wellbeing Centres in Tasmania and South East Queensland;
- \$6.0 million over four years for the Australian Defence Force Firefighter Scheme (see page 7);
- \$5.1 million over four years to expand the Family Support Package to more veterans' families and widowed partners;
- \$7.4 million to bring forward access to rent assistance for eligible Totally and Permanently Incapacitated and other veterans who pay private rent, to begin on 1 January 2022 rather than 20 September 2022;
- \$4.7 million allocated to improve the Building Excellence in Support and Training Program (BEST) grants program.

The Government has also allocated \$32.1 million to enable the continued recognition of the service and

sacrifice of those who have served or continue to serve in the defence of our nation, including their families. This includes:

- \$19.6 million for international Anzac Day services from 2022 onwards, as well as support for domestic commemorative events, including Operation Ivanhoe (the Battle of Nui Le);
- \$12.5 million for the Office of Australian War Graves over the next four years to address the increasing costs associated with the care and maintenance of the resting places of Australian war dead.

This is an abridged version of an article on DVA website (go to dva.gov.au and search for 'Budget 2021–22 breakdown'). More information on all DVA's measures is available on the 2021–22 Budget page on the DVA website.

Disability Pension changes

From 1 January 2022, pending passage of legislation, the DVA Disability Pension will be removed from the income test for Social Security payments.

This will simplify the way income support payments are calculated, indexed, and administered by DVA and Services Australia. The initiative will exempt the Disability Pension from the Social Security Act 1991 income test and the rent assistance test under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986.

As part of these changes Disability Pension will be re-named 'Disability Compensation Payment' to better reflect the nature of the payment.

The Defence Force Income Support Allowance (DFISA) will no longer be paid because the Disability Pension will not reduce income support payments from Centrelink and Age Pension from DVA. These payments to affected Disability Pension recipients and their partners may increase.

DVA Disability Pension will no longer affect the Rent Assistance of Service

Pension, Income Support Supplement and Veteran Payment recipients.

This means that Disability Pension recipients and their partners may receive increased Rent Assistance payments, or receive Rent Assistance for the first time if they are renting privately.

DVA will contact you towards the end of 2021 if you may become entitled to Rent Assistance to invite you to update your accommodation details so that your Rent Assistance is calculated on up to date information. You can update your details online using MyService via MyGov. If this is not possible, you can contact DVA via phone 1800 VETERAN or email. You will need to provide evidence of the rent you pay.

Rent Assistance is payable to Service Pension, Income Support Supplement and

Veteran Payment recipients who pay rent of more than the rent threshold of, as at 1 July 2021, \$125.80 (singles) and \$203.60 (couples combined) per fortnight.

You cannot receive Rent Assistance if you live in state or territory government public housing.

If you or your partner already receive Rent Assistance with a Family Tax Benefit payment from Services Australia, you will not be eligible for Rent Assistance from DVA as well.

For more information, go to the DVA website (www.dva.gov.au) Rent Assistance and DFISA pages (on introduction of legislation).

More information will be provided in the next edition of *Vetaffairs*.



More support for veterans in residential aged care

Older veterans and their families will receive increased support through Budget 2021–22 with \$246 million to improve the care delivered to veterans and their families through mainstream in-home and residential aged care.



As part of this measure, the Government is providing \$22.7 million to ensure the 17,000 DVA clients living in residential aged-care facilities are able to access allied health, aids and appliances through DVA card arrangements, just as they did when they were living in their own home. Currently, only those clients classified as requiring low-level care can access these DVA-funded services.

This initiative will begin on 1 October 2022.

The expansion is a component of the Government reforms to Australia's aged-care system. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recognised the importance of allied health in supporting ageing Australians to maximise independence and autonomy.

Veterans and their families have existing access to allied health and rehabilitation aids and appliances while living in their own homes. However, that access becomes limited once clients move into residential aged care. This initiative ensures that in addition to the services provided by their residential aged-care facility, DVA clients can continue to access allied health and aids and appliances through DVA card arrangements, so long as it is not duplicating services provided by the facility.

For further information on the broader aged-care reform measures visit www.health.gov.au.

Indexation of rates from 1 July 2021

The Income Free Areas and Assets Value Limits used to calculate rates of income support pensions under the *Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986* (VEA) rose from 1 July 2021.

The amount of income (per fortnight) an income support pensioner may receive before their pension is reduced under the income test:

| | Single rate (fortnightly) | Couples rate – combined (fortnightly) |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Service or Age Pension | \$180.00 | \$320.00 |
| Income Support Supplement (War Widow(er)'s Pension is included in these amounts) Different limits apply if assessed under transitional rules | \$1,483.60 | \$2,002.80 |

The maximum value of assets a person can have before their pension is affected:

| | Single rate | Couples rate – combined |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|
| Service or Age Pension | | |
| Homeowner | \$270,500 | \$405,000 |
| Non-homeowner | \$487,000 | \$621,500 |
| Income Support Supplement Different limits apply if assessed under transitional rules | | |
| Homeowner | \$488,000 | \$685,500 |
| Non-homeowner | \$704,500 | \$902,000 |

The deeming thresholds have increased effective from 1 July 2021. This means that the value of financial assets deemed to be earning the lower rate of 0.25% has increased. The higher deeming rate of 2.25% is applied to the balance of financial assets over these thresholds.

| | Single rate | Couples rate – combined |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Deeming threshold | \$53,600 | \$89,000 |

Some payments under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) also increased, including:

| | New rate (weekly) |
|---|-------------------|
| Maximum Permanent Impairment amount | \$363.09 |
| Maximum rate of Household Services | \$514.12 |
| Maximum rate of Attendant Care Services | \$514.12 |
| Dependent eligible young person | \$155.47 |

A full list of the new rates is available from the DVA website in the CLIK tool under the Quick links heading. For further information, contact DVA on 133 254 or from regional Australia free call 1800 555 254 or visit dva.gov.au.



Services begin for NSW Veteran Wellbeing Centre

Lead organisation RSL LifeCare has opened a temporary location for a Veteran Wellbeing Centre in Nowra.

While the process of building the new Wellbeing Centre is underway, the opening of a temporary location helps provide services and support to meet the needs of veterans and their families.

RSL LifeCare, with the support of RSL NSW, are getting on with business and ensuring veterans are connected to a range of core services providing support for transition, employment, health and social connection.

The first occupants of the temporary location will include Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling, RSL LifeCare Veteran Services and Veteran Sport Australia.

RSL LifeCare Chair Andrew Condon said the organisation is proud to have a physical footprint in the Nowra region to deliver services to veterans and their families.

'Nowra has a proud tradition of service and a great mix of current and ex-serving Defence Force members that we hope to connect with,' Mr Condon said.

'We will continue to consult and work with the local community to ensure that the Nowra Veteran Wellbeing Centre delivers services that are veteran-centric and recovery focused.'

RSL NSW President Ray James says it is important for them to continue to work with a variety of exservice organisations to improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families, and to provide individualised services based on the needs of local veterans.

'When the Veteran Wellbeing Centre is open, veterans and their families will be able to access services and programs in a friendly, welcoming environment where their unique experiences are understood and supported, and their military service is respected,' Mr James said.

Services and support such as community and peer programs, wellbeing case services and coordinated community sporting activities, offered by the Nowra Veteran Wellbeing Centre are available through the temporary location at Unit 1, 19 Nowra Lane, Nowra.

For more information about the Veteran Wellbeing Centres, visit the DVA website www.dva.gov.au/wellbeing-centres.

Beware of scams

DVA is warning veterans to be cautious of potential scammers operating online.

We would like to remind veterans and their families to be vigilant and protect themselves from any incident that may compromise their private or personal information.

If you are a veteran, or know someone who is a veteran, please pass on the following tips:

- If you receive a phone call or letter asking for your DVA client number or banking details, do not provide them. Contact your nearest DVA office to confirm the request is legitimate.
- Be cautious if you are contacted out of the blue by someone claiming to be from ANY

government department requesting personal information. Always contact the organisation before responding, using contact details from a trusted source.

- Never give personal details to someone you do not know and trust.
 - Never provide information such as passwords, tax file numbers or bank account details via email links.
 - Do not open suspicious texts or click on links or attachments in emails received from unknown or unexpected sources.
 - If you think you have provided your account details to a scammer, contact your bank or financial institution immediately.
- If you think you have provided your DVA number to a scammer, contact the nearest DVA office.

If you, or someone you know, has been approached by someone posing as a DVA representative please contact your nearest DVA office.

If you have shared personal information and believe you may be at risk, you can contact IDCARE, a not-for-profit organisation that provides assistance and support to victims of identity theft and other cybercrime. Visit idcare.org or telephone 1800 595 160.

For additional information about scams, visit scamwatch.gov.au – you can also subscribe to a free alert service to receive updates about the latest scams.

The Australian Cyber Security Centre also provides advice for individuals, a free alert service to help you understand the latest online threats and the ability to report online crimes via the ReportCyber page. Visit cyber.gov.au.

ROYAL COMMISSION

into Defence and Veteran Suicide

Royal Commission begins

On 8 July 2021, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, His Excellency, General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), issued Letters Patent, which established the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The Letters Patent formally appoint the Commissioners and outline the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission. These are available for your awareness on the Royal Commission's website (defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au).

As the Royal Commission has now commenced, the Government remains completely independent of the process and your enquiries should be forwarded to the Royal Commission directly. The Royal Commission website allows for all interested parties to subscribe to its mailing list.

Submissions can now be made to the Royal Commission website either through an online form or a paper version, which can be downloaded from the Royal Commission's website, printed and mailed to: GPO Box 3273, Sydney NSW 2001.

If you have any issues making a submission or you would like the submission form posted to you, then you can ring the Royal Commission on 1800 329 095 between 09:00 and 19:00 AEST Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.



Australian Government

Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal

Inquiry into unit recognition for ADF service in Somalia

Call for Submissions

The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal has been directed to inquire into and report on recognition for Australian Defence Force units that served in Somalia between 1992 and 1995.

In particular, the Tribunal is to examine relevant evidence and consider whether it is appropriate that any Australian units that served in Somalia between 1992 and 1995 be awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation, or another form of further recognition for service.

In doing so, the Tribunal is to have regard to the eligibility criteria for the Meritorious Unit Citation, as set out in the Unit Citations Regulations or other relevant Regulations.

The Tribunal is to report, in writing, to the Minister for Defence Personnel on the findings and recommendations that arise from the inquiry.

Submissions to the Tribunal close on 31 August 2021, and can be lodged online through the Tribunal's website. More information about making a submission can be found at www.defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au.

Support for ADF firefighters due to start in September

As a part of the 2021-22 Budget, the Government allocated \$6 million in support of Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel who participated in fire training at Royal Australian Air Force Base Point Cook Fire Training School between 1 January 1957 and 31 December 1986.

These personnel were potentially exposed to a range of toxic chemicals at a time when personal protective equipment standards were lower than today.

The Scheme will provide eligible personnel with:

- simplified access to compensation and treatment for a list of 31 specified conditions, under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988*;
- screening for colorectal cancer and melanoma, for early detection and prevention; and
- individually tailored lifestyle advice under the 12-month Heart Health Program.

Serving and former ADF firefighters who participated in fire training at Royal Australian Air Force Base Point Cook Fire Training School between 1 January 1957 and 31 December 1986 can register their interest in the Scheme by emailing ADF.Firefighter.Scheme@dva.gov.au.

For more information, please visit the ADF Firefighters Scheme page of the DVA website (dva.gov.au) and search for 'ADF Firefighters Scheme'.

Recall notice:
Philips medical breathing support devices

Electronics manufacturer, Philips, has announced a product defect correction for a range of medical breathing support devices due to concerns about potential defects.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is working with Philips to ensure the product defect correction is conducted quickly and safely.

Over the last 10 years, DVA has supplied around 1,700 clients with DVA-funded devices affected by the product defect correction. We are working with our service providers who supply these products to ensure affected clients are aware of the product defect correction and the need to register their affected devices with Philips.

Anyone who is affected by the product defect correction should speak to their treating physician, or health professional in the first instance.

DVA's priority is the health and safety of veterans and their families and we will work closely with the TGA and our service providers to ensure affected clients continue to receive appropriate care.

Further information about the product defect correction is available on the TGA website (tga.gov.au).

We need YOU!

We are looking for veterans would like to feature in our successful series, #OurVeterans.

This series showcases a veteran's journey, from transitioning out of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) into civilian life. By sharing your story, you can help other transitioning personnel by providing insights into what they can expect as they begin the journey, and also what you've been able to achieve since leaving the ADF.

Perhaps you've been able to put the skills you learnt in the ADF to good use in civilian life.

You will be featured on the Minister for Veterans' Affairs social media pages, DVA's social media pages and the DVA website. Check out the DVA website now to see some examples (dva.gov.au/newsroom/meet-our-veterans).

If this sounds like something you're interested in, please contact us at communications@dva.gov.au. We look forward to hearing from you.



The ADF Firefighter Scheme is scheduled to begin on 20 September 2021.

Annual increase to travel allowances

Travel allowances for transport, meals and accommodation under DVA's Repatriation Transport Scheme increased from 1 July 2021 in line with the consumer price index.

The increase applies to travel by private vehicle as well as accommodation and meal allowances for all eligible veterans, war widows and widowers (entitled persons) travelling for treatment purposes or disability and income support claims.

The increase also applies to eligible persons under the *Australian Participants in British Nuclear Tests and British Commonwealth Occupation Force (Treatment) Act 2006* and the *Treatment Benefits (Special Access) Act 2019*.

The intention of the Scheme is to assist with travelling expenses for an entitled person and their medically required attendant, not necessarily to reimburse the entire cost incurred. To receive the maximum benefit, entitled persons should travel to their closest practical health provider.

The Scheme is available to holders of:

- Veteran Gold Cards and Veteran White Cards (for specific conditions) eligible under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA) are entitled to assistance towards travelling expenses when attending approved treatment
- Veteran Gold Cards under the *Australian Participants in British Nuclear Tests and British Commonwealth Occupation Force (Treatment) Act 2006* and the *Treatment Benefits (Special Access) Act 2019* are entitled to assistance towards travelling expenses when attending approved treatment.

For any queries about travel for treatment allowances, contact DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372). Further information is also available on DVA's website (dva.gov.au) and search 'claim travel expenses under the RTS'.

New travel allowances from 1 July 2021

| Type of allowance | Measure | New allowance from 1 July 2021 | Travel with a medically required attendant † |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Private vehicle | Per kilometre | 37.2 cents | x1 |
| Public, community or air transport | Actual fare | Actual fare | x2 |
| Taxi transport | Actual fare | Actual fare | x1 |
| Commercial accommodation non-capital city - single* | Per night | \$153.60 | x2 |
| Commercial accommodation capital city - single* | Per night | \$182.40 | x2 |
| Entitled person and medically required attendant - commercial accommodation - shared* | Per night | \$249.80 | x1 |
| Subsidised accommodation - single* | Per night | \$95.90 | x2 |
| Private accommodation* | Per night | \$47.90 | x2 |
| Meal allowance - more than 50 km but less than 200 km from entitled person's home to the treatment location | Per day | \$15.30 | x2 |
| Meal allowance - more than 200 km from entitled person's home to the treatment location | Per day | \$31.00 | x2 |

*A meal allowance is not paid on a day where an accommodation allowance is paid, as a meal component is already built into the accommodation allowance.

†This column refers to the number of times an allowance is paid when an entitled person travels with a medically required attendant. For instance, if an entitled person shares a room with an attendant, only the allowance for one room is paid for (x1). If they each have a single room, the allowance for both rooms is paid for (x2).



Transport support available

Transport assistance

Under the Repatriation Transport Scheme (RTS), Veteran Gold and White Card holders can receive assistance towards travel costs to attend treatment within Australia. Note that Veteran White Card holders must be travelling to receive treatment for an accepted service-related condition to be eligible for travel assistance.

Travel reimbursements

You will need to make your own arrangements to use a private vehicle or public transport and then submit a reimbursement claim to DVA. You can also receive an allowance for accommodation for yourself and your medically approved travel attendant. A meal allowance may also be payable depending on how far you travel.

DVA arranged travel

DVA may arrange your travel using the Booked Car with Driver (BCWD) service to transport you to certain treatment locations.

Ambulance services

Emergency (dial 000) and non-emergency (arranged by your health provider, must be clinically necessary) ambulance services are also available.

For the full story, visit dva.gov.au/latest-news.

Changes to concession travel in Victoria and NSW

Victoria's free travel voucher scheme

Victoria's free public transport voucher program is changing significantly. From 1 January 2022, Victorian residents will no longer receive free travel vouchers. The program has moved to an 'opt-in' program, with eligible DVA clients now having to register with Public Transport Victoria (PTV) to continue receiving free travel vouchers annually.

You can register online at ptv.vic.gov.au/vouchers or in person at a PTV Hub. You only need to register once and the vouchers will be mailed to you each year, provided you remain eligible.

If you have already registered through PTV's other eligibility categories, such as a Senior or Carer, you don't need to register again.

This is because the free voucher scheme has been streamlined, which means all eligible customers get access to the same entitlement, regardless of your concession category.

As part of the new voucher program, PTV is phasing out peak-free travel vouchers. However, eligible DVA clients who previously received one peak voucher per year will now be eligible for two or four off-peak vouchers annually (depending on where you live - metro or regional).

For more information visit ptv.vic.gov.au/vouchers or call 1800 800 007.

Update on NSW War Widow/er Transport Concession Card

From 1 January 2022, NSW war widows/ers will no longer receive their NSW War Widow/er Transport Concession Card.

Instead, you can now use your Veteran Gold Card to apply for a Gold Senior/Pensioner Opal card. This will enable you to travel on senior/pensioner fares in NSW at the same reduced rate.

Keep your Veteran Gold Card with you as proof of entitlement for concession fares.

You can apply for a Gold Senior/Pensioner Opal card on the Opal website opal.com.au. Make sure you have your NSW Pensioner Concession or DVA Veteran Gold card handy to confirm your eligibility.

Interstate seniors can apply for a Gold Opal card on the Opal website or by printing the Interstate Seniors application form available on the Transport NSW website transportnsw.info and following the instructions provided. You will need to apply 2-3 weeks before travelling to NSW.

To find out more go to transportnsw.info/veteran.

WIDOWS' NEWS

Please be aware that articles in Widows' News have been submitted and written by war widows' organisations. The articles do not necessarily represent the views of DVA. Such organisations are welcome to submit stories for publication by emailing vetaffairs@dva.gov.au.



Main photo: 2021 ANZAC and Field of Remembrance Service.

Left: Cover of the book No Peacetime Cinderellas, published in 2008

Right: 18th public meeting of the War Widows Guild, 14 July 1965

Our voices have never been more important

I want to tell you a story.

A story of one woman who stood tall, who stood up for what she believed in, who devoted her life to service and empowering others. A woman who had a unique ability to tell it like it was, to inspire activity, unity and positive change for those in her community. A woman who, with many others, stood against gender bias and created a legacy for this generation of women to carry forward.

I am of course speaking about Mrs Jessie Mary Vasey OBE CBE, founder of the War Widows Guild.

Beginning her work to support women impacted by war well before she became a widow herself, Jessie was never going to stand idly by while war widows in the 1940s and 50s were denied access to their late husbands' pensions and were living off just £2, 10 shillings (under \$200/week). She was never going to stand by while war widows' pensions could be revoked at will, when government felt it was 'desirable' to do so.

She wasn't going to stand by while war widows remained 'invisible, left out and forgotten; the sacrifice they had made for the community overlooked'.

But she wasn't going to accept charity either, for she knew the truth of who these women left behind by war were. They were not helpless – they were well educated, intelligent, articulate, resourceful and resilient women. Women who needed each more than ever. 'Our women don't want to be the objects of charity, pity and patronage ... the most dangerous of all forms of social service is benevolence from above ... we want to give these women hope, to make them proud of being war widows and not ashamed.'

So she did what she did best, she used her voice, she rallied her peers and joining with like-minded organisations created what is now known as the Australian War Widows. In NSW, we have existed for almost 75 years now and with the anniversary of our first meeting, which took place on 4 June 1946, we take a moment to pause and remember who we were, what we have achieved and where we are going.

Over the last few years, we have talked a lot about change – changing needs, changing demographics, changing landscapes of services in the veteran sector. We talk about reform. We talk about transformation – but is that really what is happening, or are we simply returning to our foundations?

For us in New South Wales it is the latter. While we have expanded our membership criteria, and that will mean changes, what it doesn't mean is a loss of who we are and what we stand for. Rather, the expansion of our membership criteria represents the will of those who built this organisation to hand on their legacy to a new generation who needs it, who can use it and who can carry its work on – because the work isn't done.

As the spouse of a veteran wounded in war myself it is hard not to be inspired and not to want to answer the call, to step up to the plate and bring this organisation to a new generation while we can still benefit from the guidance and wisdom of the generation that created this for us.

I've said it numerous times: those who stand behind the Defence Force are the silent majority. They are generally unseen and unheard, yet they are charged with the responsibility of taking care of our nation's veterans. Often, they are isolated in their experiences and challenges; challenges which still seem to disproportionately affect women.

The voices of women and veterans' families have never been more important than now. We hear many stories of veterans who are impacted by their service, but we don't hear the stories or needs of those who carry the burden of service long after that service ends.

They are the stories we want to tell; for those are the stories that will bring about significant and meaningful change and lasting bonds. Those are the stories that unite widows, women, veterans and families.

Just like the war widows of 1946 and beyond, the women and families connected to the Australian Defence Force are no Cinderellas. We are not waiting for someone to come and save us; we don't want pity or charity. We want to be empowered with skills to help ourselves and our loved ones. We need each other and we need a place to belong. We have been gifted that place and it is up to us to keep this legacy alive, to join, to be seen, to be heard and to help each other.

Imagine the future we can build.

Renee Wilson

CEO, Australian War Widows NSW Ltd.



You no longer need to be a War Widow to join our organisation. You just need to have a connection to Defence service and a motivation to accept the gift of membership to this unique and inspiring organisation. If you are not already a member and want to join with us, please call (02) 9267 6577 or email guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au.

Veterans to scooter from Brisbane to Townsville



At some point in 2022, 40 people – mostly veterans – will set off from RAAF Base Amberley near Brisbane on 50cc-scooters for the 2,100-kilometre trip to RAAF Base Townsville.

Nicknamed ‘Scootaville’, the trip has been organised by the RAAF Radschool Association based in Brisbane, partly to celebrate the centenary of the Royal Australian Air Force but also to raise funds for the organisation.

The Association was established in 1999 for graduates of the RAAF Radio School, but its membership now includes veterans from all three services. Its work includes organising reunions for veterans, reuniting old mates, and helping members in their dealings with DVA.

Association Secretary & Treasurer Trevor Benneworth says the trip will take 13 days and involve passing through a variety of iconic Queensland towns including Kilcoy, Kingaroy, Mundubbera, Biloela, Emerald, Barcaldine, Longreach, Winton, Hughenden and Charters Towers. Individual IGA and Woolworth’s supermarkets along the way will provide ingredients for cooked breakfasts, which will be prepared by a mobile kitchen. He says, ‘those who dare to take part will have a hell of a lot of fun’.

While most of the 40 riders have been confirmed for the trip, it is still not too late to register your interest in participating, either as a rider or to show your support along the way. If you are interested in taking part in ‘Scootaville’, then please email Trevor at trev@radschool.org.au. You don’t need to be a veteran to participate or show your support.

The Association is raising funds through corporate sponsorship. If your organisation would like to sponsor Scootaville, contact Trevor at the email address above.

You can find out more about the trip on the Association’s website (www.radschool.org.au/magazines/Vol71/Page13.htm).

This event was originally scheduled for 12 September 2021 but has been postponed due to COVID.

The benefits of sport



Veteran Sport Australia is promoting the benefits of sport, and developing some great resources along the way.

Sport can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the veteran community, including during recovery and rehabilitation. It can also help veterans with their transition to civilian life as many of the qualities they have picked up while serving, such as teamwork and leadership, are qualities at the core of most sports.

Most recently, with the help of \$59,000 in DVA funding from the Supporting Younger Veterans Grants program, it has worked with RSL NSW and Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling on the delivery of an online toolkit to encourage veterans’ involvement in sport and to showcase the benefits of sport.

This toolkit consists of four video modules that provide examples of how sport is being used by the veteran community to assist with reintegration and rehabilitation. The topics include the physical, social and emotional benefits of sport,

Veteran and Invictus Games competitor Scott Reynolds (2nd from right) finds his role as a sailing instructor with Saltwater Veterans important for his ongoing health and wellbeing. Pictured here at Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, Sydney.

the healing power of adaptive sports, the Invictus Games legacy for ongoing recovery, and the benefits of volunteering in sport.

‘It gives you something to focus on,’ says veteran Scott Reynolds, who volunteers in sailing. ‘It [provides the] opportunity to help me to redefine my boundaries and my capacity, whilst giving back.’

Visit the Veteran Sport Australia website (veteransport.org.au) to check out their toolkit, with some further real life examples from veterans who have seen the physical, social and emotional benefits of sport.

There are also some great resources and helpful tips on the Open Arms website (openarms.gov.au) about the benefits of exercise.

RUSIV announces inaugural ethics essay prize

The Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (RUSIV) has announced an annual endowed essay competition for individual Australian citizens on the subject of Defence ethics.

The prize of \$2,000 will be offered.

Original essays of no more than 10,000 words (exclusive of footnotes) are to be submitted in a single pdf file (accompanied by a Microsoft Word file) to the Secretary of RUSIV (secretary@rusivic.org.au) by 1600 hours AEST on 30 November 2021. There is no entry fee.

The style of the essay is to follow that of the *Australian Defence Force Journal* and must be the original work of their individual authors. Copyright in the essays will remain with their authors, although it is expected that the winning entry will be available for publication. A copy of each essay submitted will be held by the Library of RUSIV, whose resources are available to assist entrants with their essays.

The topic for 2021 is: ‘How can the challenges to the Australian Defence Force’s ethical framework be met?’ The purpose of this essay prize is to provide strong support to the development of the Australian Defence Force’s ethics framework.

Judging will be based on criteria including readability, breadth, importance, accessibility and relevance. The decision reached by the independent judging panel will be final. All authors will be notified of the judge’s decision within two months of the submission deadline. RUSIV reserves the right not to consider entries that do not comply with requirements and the right not to make an award if no suitable candidate applies.

More information is on the RUSIV website: (www.rusivic.org.au)

‘Finding an advocate’ page on the DVA website

If you are looking for an advocate, you may like to visit the ‘Finding an advocate’ page on the DVA website. The page includes a link to the Accredited Advocate Register as well as information about how advocates can help you access services and payments.

Visit dva.gov.au and search for ‘advocate’.

RSL Queensland – services helping veterans

RSL Queensland has stood shoulder to shoulder with the Defence family for more than 100 years.

As Queensland's largest ex-service organisation, we support veterans and their families in every corner of the state and our commitment to ensuring the bright future and enduring legacy for all veterans is more important than ever.

We are with you every step of the way

Life always has its ups and downs. But as a veteran or the partner of a veteran, you don't have to face them on your own. Whether it's employment, education, DVA claims or crisis support, RSL Queensland has programs and people at the ready to help you achieve your life goals.

We offer FREE support and assistance with:

- **DVA claims** – If you're injured in Defence, you don't have to navigate DVA claims alone. Let our dedicated team guide you through the process to help you achieve the best outcome.
- **Employment** – Our team works alongside veterans and the partners of current and ex-serving members to determine how best to support their search for meaningful employment. This may include career counselling, training, interview coaching, connections to employers and more.

- **Scholarships** – Higher education opens the door to a range of opportunities, improving your employability and giving you a renewed sense of purpose. Scholarships are available for tertiary study or vocational training for ex-service people, current and ex-Defence partners and veterans' children.
- **Crisis support and homelessness** – Sometimes an ex-Defence member may find themselves in financial distress or without safe, stable housing. In these situations, our team can help get you back on your feet.
- **Wellness programs** – We partner with several other organisations to offer a wide range of programs to improve the wellbeing of the Defence community and encourage social connection.

Learn more at rslqld.org.



Honouring past president of NT Legacy, Jack Hamilton OAM

By Scott Perkins

I was very proud to have taken up the reins as President of Northern Territory Legacy in April. But I was most proud to introduce Meghan Bailey, DVA's Deputy Commissioner in the NT, to the Legacy appeal launch at Darwin's Government House recently so she could present our immediate past President, Jack Hamilton, with his Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant package.

Jack served for more than 30 years with the Australian Army, both the Regular and the Reserves, rising through the ranks from private to major.



After retiring from the Army, Jack ran Coral House (a homeless veterans centre in Darwin) for several years and was chief steward of the Darwin Turf Club. He also gave his time to a wide range of other community service and activities for which he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia.

Most importantly for the ex-service community, Jack served for more than 25 years in senior positions in Legacy NT and was President for more some 23 years. As a result he is, and remains, the face of Legacy in Darwin and beyond, leaving a fine 'legacy' in the form of a well-resourced and active Club supporting some 120 beneficiaries.

Presenting Jack with the Covenant package in the presence of and with the support of the Administrator of the NT, The Honourable Vicky O'Halloran, was a great moment for all of us.

More information on the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant package is available on recognition.dva.gov.au. More information on Legacy is available on its website legacy.com.au.

From left: Craig O'Halloran; Administrator of the NT, The Honourable Vicky O'Halloran AO; recent past President of Legacy NT, Jack Hamilton OAM; current President Scott Perkins

Support for veterans at risk of homelessness

As we move further into winter, cold nights on the street become harder to bear for those without a place to call home. For veterans experiencing homelessness or at risk of it, support is available. RSL LifeCare offers a range of services that can help veterans get off the streets and work towards maintaining a roof over their heads.

Mark, a veteran of the Army, was referred by his DVA advocate to RSL LifeCare's program, RSL DefenceCare, for support when he was given a 90-day termination notice for his rental property.

Our Housing Project Officer worked with Mark to complete a housing application using the Department of Community & Justice's Rent Choice Veterans' program (RCV). The program provides subsidised rental opportunities for veterans who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of it.

In addition to helping Mark submit a successful RCV application, RSL DefenceCare also provided financial assistance to help him afford initial repayments and later access an online course with Open Colleges.

Following a successful 3-year period in the RCV program, Mark is now transitioning to the private rental market with a positive rental history, the life skills to maintain his accommodation, and an opportunity for new employment pathways thanks to his study.

'The support meant that I am no longer struggling, not only financially, but mentally too,' says Mark. 'Since working with the RSL DefenceCare team, I feel more positive and am continuing my studies to see what happens. Also, I know that if I require any help in the future, help is only a phone call away.'

RSL LifeCare provides a range of services to veterans and their families, including:

- DVA claims and advocacy expertise
- Holistic wellbeing assessment and support
- Homelessness assistance
- Employment assistance
- Equine therapy

If you or someone you know needs help, reach out to our team:

- Phone: 02 8088 0388
- Email: info@rsllifecare.org.au
- Web: rsllifecare.org.au/defencecare

RSL
LifeCare

Brothers cycle across Australia for assistance dogs

Brothers Brian and Ian Schumacher recently completed a charity cycle across Australia in support of ACT-based organisation Integra Service Dogs Australia. Integra works with veterans and first-responders experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and is a contracted provider for the DVA Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program.



From left: Brian Schumacher; the Governor-General, His Excellency David Hurley AC DSC; Mrs Linda Hurley; Ian Schumacher. Right: One of Integra's assistance dogs

Brian and Ian left Fremantle on 1 April to begin their 4,697-kilometre cycling journey. The pair rode an average of 110 kilometres a day for 44 days before reaching their final destination, Sydney. They raised more than \$130,000 from public donations and corporate support.

En route to Sydney, the brothers arrived in Canberra on Tuesday 11 May, where they met with Deputy Secretary Vicki Rundle to discuss how the DVA Psychiatric Assistance Dogs program is supporting veterans in need, and with the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) and Mrs Linda Hurley who are joint patrons of Integra.

Brian and Ian belong to a family with several current Australian Defence Force members and first-responders, and share a passion for mental health initiatives.

Their journey was predominately unsupported and they logged their progress on social media with a digital tracker each day.

'We're convinced that [assistance dogs] save lives and that it's an important additional therapy for veterans,' said Brian Schumacher when he arrived in Canberra.

'The Program began in September 2019, and there are already strong indications it is having a profound impact on the day-to-day

lives of veterans,' said DVA Deputy Secretary Vicki Rundle PSM.

'Veterans have reported feeling calmer and to be able to do things that they would not have done prior to having a psychiatric assistance dog, such as going out on their own, visiting the coffee shop and catching up with friends.

'The dogs are trained to the individual needs of their veteran handler and to perform specific tasks to help with recovery and general wellbeing.'

DVA is now working with four providers, and 34 psychiatric assistance dogs have passed their intensive training program and have been placed with veterans. More than 120 dogs are in training across Australia. After the veteran receives their dog, its training continues during their time together and within their own environment.

The program is available to eligible veterans who have a diagnosis of PTSD and forms part of their PTSD management plan, along with financial assistance from DVA for the upkeep of the dog.

A video of their arrival in Canberra is available on the DVA Facebook page (www.facebook.com/DVAAus/) and more information about assistance dogs is available on the DVA website (dva.gov.au).



Kookaburra Kids Connect goes international

Kookaburra Kids aims to empower young people to thrive beyond the impacts of family mental illness, regardless of where they live.

Its Defence Kids program provides these supports especially for those whose parents have served or are serving in the Australian Defence Force.

Through its Kookaburra Kids Connect program, the Foundation has expanded its program beyond in-person camps and activity days so that young people can benefit from its ongoing support regardless of where they live. The newest members to join the Kookaburra Kids Connect sessions are currently living in South-East Asia.

The Foundation supports children aged 8-18 years living in families impacted by mental illness. It provides free evidence-based, age-appropriate prevention and early intervention mental health services, embedded within a peer-based social and activity-based format.

The team works with young people to build their resilience, life-long knowledge and abilities, while helping them learn how to make positive choices for their emotional health and wellbeing so that they reach their full potential.

Its sessions improve the way young people manage their families' mental health, increase their sense of connectedness and foster safe and positive help-seeking behaviours.

The Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation staff and volunteers design and run the sessions within a safe environment where young people can express themselves freely and with a supportive network present.

If you are an existing member of Kookaburra Kids, you can request to join directly by emailing connect@kookaburrakids.org.au or phoning 1300 566 525. If you would like to enrol a young person into Kookaburra Kids programs, visit the Kookaburra Kids website (<https://kookaburrakids.org.au>) or call the above number.

Don't fall for false health ads

DVA advises that veterans should be wary of advertisements and representations made by marketing organisations wrongly claiming to be offering health services funded by DVA.

When it comes to advertising, DVA has strict guidelines that all DVA allied service providers and third-party marketing organisations must comply with.

Veterans should be cautious of any advertisements and representations made by marketing organisations that are not affiliated with DVA, and to not disclose their personal information to any non-healthcare professional.

The misleading online advertising targets veterans by saying that DVA will pay for services like gym memberships, yoga and mindfulness programs through DVA Veteran Cards. This may result in out-of-pocket expenses to veteran clients.

Tactics may include the unauthorised use of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms and DVA's entitlement card logos.

Veterans' Health Week 2021

Veterans' Health Week (VHW) 2021 will run from 16 October to 24 October with the theme of Get Moving (physical activity). Events can be held two weeks before and two weeks after these dates. The funding application form, guidelines and other information can now be found on the DVA website: dva.gov.au/vhw.



PROF JENNY FIRMAN AM

Chief Health Officer

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Protecting your brain

Have you ever run into someone you haven't seen in years and can't recall their name? 'Senior moments' happen to us all as we age. We all experience physical decline but cognitive decline also occurs. This might be forgetting a name, losing your keys or forgetting a word.

As people age normally, it is common to process information and learn new things less efficiently. Mostly this is a normal part of aging. However, it can bring on concerns that this is an early sign of dementia.

In Australia, we enjoy a life expectancy of 82.8 years, the seventh highest among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. This means our aging population is increasing. And because dementia is common in people of advanced age, so is the number of people living with dementia. In 2020, it was estimated that 400,000–459,000 people in Australia with dementia.

Dementia is a general term used to describe when a person has developed difficulties with reasoning, judgement and memory. People who have dementia usually have some memory loss as well as difficulty in at least one other area, such as speaking or writing coherently (or understanding what is said or written), recognising familiar surroundings, or planning and carrying out complex or multi-step tasks. To be considered dementia, these issues must be severe enough to interfere with a person's independence and daily activities.

There are several different types of dementia, with Alzheimer's disease being the most common (60–80%) followed by vascular dementia. Less common types are Lewy body disease and frontotemporal dementia. Among those who are more advanced in age, dementia may have more than one cause – often Alzheimer's disease as well as vascular damage.

While there are different types of dementia, there are some common risk factors – some of which you can influence and some you can't. Increasing age and family history are factors you can't control. We all age and as we do so dementia becomes more common – around

30% of people over 85 live with dementia. Some types of dementia, including Alzheimer's, run in families. In these cases, the risk to you is highest if the relative with dementia is genetically close (a parent or sibling) and whether their dementia started at a younger age (less than 70).

However, there are modifiable risk factors. That means, if we make some lifestyle changes we can reduce the risk of dementia.

"It has been estimated that 35% of the risk for dementia is associated with modifiable risk factors."

Stimulate your brain – 'Use it or lose it'. You can improve your brain function at any point in your life, through paid or unpaid work and through pleasurable activities such as reading newspapers, playing card games, or learning a new language or skill. Reasoning and speed-of-processing training was found in one study to be more important than memory training. Lower education levels are associated with increased risk. Later retirement is a protective factor. So keep working and keep learning.

Better still, learning these new skills in a social setting appears to be beneficial. Social contacts are important to brain function – visiting family and friends, talking on the phone (or in these COVID times over video chat), or getting involved in group or community activities. Wearing hearing aids is protective and can help in maintaining social contacts and cognitive stimulation.

Sustained exercise in midlife and possibly later in life protects you from dementia. A recent systematic review in the *British Medical Journal of Sports Medicine* showed

that exercise in over-50s improved cognitive function. The evidence indicated that exercise that was a mixture of aerobic and resistance exercise of moderate intensity (raises a sweat), for 45–60 minutes each time on as many days of the week as feasible, was the most effective.

Exercise helps control cardiovascular risk factors such as blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes. Another cardiovascular risk factor is smoking. Dementia risk is higher in current smokers compared with past smokers and non-smokers – another good reason to quit. See your doctor and make sure your blood pressure is well controlled. High blood pressure and obesity both increase risk of dementia. Diabetes not only increases cardiovascular risk but also the risk of dementia.

Depression can cause changes in the brain that might increase dementia risk. Certainly, those who are depressed can have poor cognition, and depression can be seen in the early stages of dementia. An Australian study found that treatment with antidepressant medication delayed progression to clinically diagnosed Alzheimer's.

Avoid heavy drinking as this is known to cause brain changes, cognitive impairment and dementia.

A healthy diet has also been associated with reduced risk of dementia and the World Health Organization recommends the Mediterranean diet, which has also been associated with improved mood.

Adequate sleep is also important and two meta-analyses on the effect of sleep and all causes of dementia showed that adequate sleep can reduce risk. Higher risks were seen with less than 5 hours of sleep and more than 10 hours of sleep.



So not surprisingly, looking after your health throughout your life looks after your brain health as well. It has been estimated that 35% of the risk for dementia is associated with these modifiable risk factors. So take regular exercise, maintain a good diet and good social contacts, and see your GP.

If you are concerned about dementia you should talk with your GP. The recommendations here are helpful for those who suffer dementia as well as those who want to look after their health.

DVA provides a range of supports to help you, from (for eligible clients) subsidising visits to your GP and appropriate medication, support to help you manage your diabetes, nutritional advice through a dietician, the Heart Health program (dva.gov.au and search for 'heart health') and physiotherapy and exercise physiology to help you exercise within the limits of your medical condition. Mental health treatment is available to all veterans through Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling (openarms.gov.au) and through Non-Liability Health Care (dva.gov.au and search for 'free mental health care').

Ex-service organisations can assist with social programs and activities to help you keep in contact with other veterans and their families, and your community.

South Australian veterans' music group thrives

DVA Community Support staff recently visited the South Coast Veterans' Music Group, which was established 18 months ago by Brian Thorpe – a volunteer with DVA's Men's Health Peer Education (MHPE) program.

The group is based in Victor Harbour about 80 kilometres south of Adelaide. It is made up of eight veterans who meet fortnightly to receive free guitar tuition from Brian, supported by one or two others who have musical experience.

'It was great to see what Brian has achieved with the group and the progress they have made, considering a few of them were new to playing the guitar, while some had not played in a long while,' said Community Support Adviser Neil Davies.

'The group is a safe, fun, learning environment for veterans. They play, they sing, they banter.

'And there have been other positive spin-offs such as the blokes performing at the South Coast Veterans Association Christmas Show, while Brian

has provided their partners and wives with ukulele lessons too.

'This is truly a great example of a DVA program assisting the mental and social health of veterans and their families.'

Unfortunately, Brian has had to leave the program due to ill health. He was an MHPE volunteer for nine years and achieved a great deal in that time.

But the group will continue and they would like others to get involved with the South Coast Veterans' Association by contacting Wolfe Rohde on 0414 977 818 for more information.

DVA provided funding for the group through a Health & Wellbeing application. The Health and Wellbeing Funding Program allows for projects to receive funding up to \$2000 to promote and maintain the health and wellbeing of the veteran community.

Enquiries about the funding and application process can be directed to CCS.MENTAL.SOCIAL.HEALTH@dva.gov.au.



Brian Thorpe (right, in black) at the South Coast Veterans' Music Group, which he founded.

Men's Health Peer Education in National Volunteer Week

May was a special month for our Men's Health Peer Education (MHPE) volunteers as it was the month we celebrated National Volunteer Week (17-23 May 2021).

This year, MHPE had a total of 46 volunteers receive a lapel badge, certificate and letter signed by the Repatriation Commissioner Don Spinks AM, in recognition of their commitment to the MHPE program.

MHPE reached a milestone this year, attaining 20 years as an ongoing program, whose volunteers do wonderful work in the community, encouraging veterans to improve their health and wellbeing. Thirteen of the current cohort of volunteers from all over Australia were recruited when MHPE first started, and to mark this occasion, DVA had a 20-year lapel pin designed and produced to join the suite of recognition badges for 5, 10 and 15 years of volunteering.

The continued commitment and dedication of our volunteers is appreciated by both DVA and by members of the ex-service community. It is volunteers such as these who have made the MHPE program a success.

DVA would like to recognise and thank all the MHPE volunteers for their energy and commitment.

20 years

- Mr Gerry Bailey
- Mr Malcolm Bush
- Mr David Williams
- Mr Robert Crust
- Mr Don Donnelly
- Mr Lindsay Muddle
- Mr Gary Treeve
- Mr Barry Somers
- Mr Sean O'Mara OAM
- Mr Peter Harvey
- Mr Kevin Moss
- Mr Damian Dixon OAM
- Mr Peter Lawrence

15 years

- Mr Bruce Reedman
- Mrs Alison Bowman
- Mr Syd Cooper
- Mr Raymond Kuschert
- Mrs Veronica Kuschert
- Dr Roderick Bain OAM
- Mr Keith Bleechmore
- Mr Ron Boyce

10 years

- Mr Ron Blanchard
- Mr Warren Churchland
- Mr Allan Edgar
- Mr Robert Postlethwaite
- Mr Graham Rice
- Mr Steve Tulloh
- Mr Ray Mastorgio
- Mr John Vickary
- Mr Geoff Whittet

5 years

- Mr Eric Aitkins
- Ms Judy Bartlett
- Mr Jason Becker
- Mr Graham Clarke
- Mr Ian Jones
- Mr Alastair MacKenzie
- Mr Glenn Woodward
- Mr Terry Byrne
- Mr Tony Sten
- Mr Gary Stone
- Mr Graham Tongs
- Mr Steven Turner
- Mr Ian Taylor
- Mr David Tanner
- Mr Bernard Swales
- Mrs Peta Richards



DR LORETTA POERIO

Senior Mental Health Adviser

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Volunteering to support research

One of the greatest challenges for researchers when it comes to developing high-quality, evidence-based programs for veterans and their families is recruiting participants to their studies. Volunteer participation enables researchers to determine what works, and for whom.

Participating in a research trial to evaluate an intervention is one way that we can make a difference to the lives of others. So, if you are eligible, it would be a valuable gift to your community.

DVA funds a range of research. One study currently in its final phase is an evaluation of assistance dogs in managing symptoms of post-traumatic stress in veterans. The research has been instrumental in the development and launch of DVA's highly successful assistance dog program.

In light of the benefit research can bring, I thought I would let you know about two trials that are currently seeking participants – one is applicable to the general population, while the other is specific to veteran families.

MindOnLine

MindOnLine is a mindfulness program for people with breast, bowel or prostate cancer.

More than one million Australians are cancer survivors, and this is expected to increase substantially over the next 20 years. Three-quarters of cancer survivors experience fear of cancer recurrence and 49% experience moderate to high levels of fear, as well as high levels of depression and anxiety.

There is an urgent need to address this issue and early psychosocial support is critical to preventing this problem from becoming a chronic condition. Early psychosocial support, via mindfulness-based programs, has shown some promise in reducing distress for cancer survivors.

This study will determine the impact of a 9-week online mindfulness intervention compared to usual care, among cancer survivors. If successful, the program will be rolled out as part of care and community support through health services.

Anyone who has completed treatment for prostate, breast or bowel cancer is eligible. You will also need to be over the age of 18, speak and read English, have finished treatment within the last five years and have access to the Internet. Men living with local or locally advanced prostate cancer or those under active surveillance (watch and wait) are also eligible.

The project involves a participant being ran-

“Participating in a research trial is one way that we can make a difference to the lives of others.”

domised to the intervention group where you will receive access to the 9-week MindOnLine program, or to the control group where you will receive your usual care from your healthcare service provider. You will be asked to complete surveys at the beginning of the study, around 9 weeks later and again 6 months later.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Dr Natalie Heynsbergh on (03) 9246 8225, 0419 263 117 or via n.heynsbergh@deakin.edu.au. Or, for more information please visit <https://mindonline.org.au>.

Family carer wellbeing

A study is underway into the emotional and practical support needs of family care-partners of veterans for reducing depression and promoting wellbeing.

We know that family carers often put their own needs behind the needs of those they care for, and they also tend not to seek help for their own health concerns. This puts them at increased risk of poor physical and mental health outcomes. There has been limited research in this area to understand the impacts on carers' psychological and physical wellbeing and the practical and emotional supports required by family carers of veterans.

Anyone who self-identifies as a family carer for a veteran, anywhere in Australia, is eligible to participate in this study.

There are two parts to the project:

- Part 1 is an online questionnaire. You may complete this questionnaire anonymously.
- Part 2 will involve a recorded interview, using Zoom, of a group of people who indicated, in the online questionnaire, that they consent to be contacted. For those completing the interview, a \$50 gift card will be mailed to you, in appreciation of your time.

This research is being conducted through the University of South Australia. Please contact Dr Dannielle Post if you would like to discuss the project: dannielle.post@unisa.edu.au or 08 8302 1831. Or for more information please visit: redcap.link/Family_Carers_Survey_Breakthrough_UniSA

Reconnecting after deployment or absence

Life in the military can include time apart from family and friends due to deployment, training or commitments such as Reserve duties. For families and friends, this means coping with long periods when a loved one is away, sometimes in dangerous or uncertain circumstances, and being only able to communicate occasionally.

Being away from each other can alter the dynamics of personal, family or community life. While it is natural to think that things will go back to the same as before, it is important to acknowledge the changes that all members of the family may have undergone:

- older children may have stepped into more mature roles
- spouses will have managed the household and become more independent.

Reconnection following an absence can take time, patience and self-awareness to build understanding and manage challenges.

Talking about these things with your family, an Open Arms Peer and/or a clinician could be beneficial.

For more information on how to successfully reconnect after a long absence visit the Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling website (openarms.gov.au) and search for ‘reconnecting’.

Seeking support

Open Arms is Australia's leading national provider of high quality, free and confidential counselling and support services for Australian veterans and their families.

If you or someone you know wants someone to talk to, even if it's just a chat, Open Arms is available 24/7 by calling 1800 011 046. The service is

free and confidential and there is always a team member who understands the military experience available to answer your call.

Head to health (headtohealth.gov.au) provides access to information about mental health care services, as well as links to online self-help programs for families, children and parents.

Your GP (healthdirect.gov.au) can help you develop a mental healthcare plan if you or a family member is struggling with mental health issues.

The National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line 1800RESPECT (1800respect.org.au) is also available on 1800 737 732 if you are worried about you or your family's situation.

For information on additional services that may be available to you or your family members, visit the DCO Deployment page (defence.gov.au/DCO/military-life/deployment/default.asp).

Launch of new online tool for transitioning ADF

Former Governor-General Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO recently launched Go Beyond – a new online tool for transitioning Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel.

 gobeyond.org.au

Go Beyond is an evidence-informed program that is the result of six years research by the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation (GMRF) with funding provided by RSL Queensland. Its pilot program, completed last year, was conducted by Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling and the veterans' charity Mates4Mates.

Go Beyond is available for free to all ex-serving members of the ADF.

According to the GMRF, the six-year study called *Service to Civilian Life* was the first of its kind undertaken in Australia, and one of the largest studies examining military transition in the world. It involved interviewing 100 veterans, partners and health professionals to establish the main factors for a mentally healthy and successful transition. These findings were validated by a quantitative survey involving 700 veterans.

Go Beyond comprises two parts. The first is a five-minute online survey called Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure, or M-CARM. This quickly identifies how transitioning personnel are adjusting to civilian life. It also forms the basis of the Go Beyond's second component: a tailored online training program,

which comprises learning modules, research, worksheets, practical exercises and ways to move forward.

“The six-year study was the first of its kind undertaken in Australia, and one of the largest in the world.”

‘Go Beyond connects veterans with interactive online education modules that explain the factors impeding their adjustment,’ said RSL Queensland General Manager Veteran Services, Robert Skoda.

M-CARM and the modules themselves are also written very much with veterans in mind – using terminology they're familiar with.

‘We are very proud of this research and its contribution to the improved transitions of military personnel,’ said GMRF's CEO Miriam Dwyer.

‘I cannot overstate the need for this tool,’ said Dr Andrew Khoo – GMRF's Psychiatric Adviser, and a member of DVA's Clinical Reference Group.

‘In soldier-speak, when you're in contact [with the enemy], you're

looking for a target indicator – where the bullets are coming from,’ said Tim Thomas, a former Commando who's served in East Timor and Afghanistan. ‘Go Beyond was a perfect target indication for the perfect enemy – the stuff I didn't know and the stuff I needed to know. I couldn't get that anywhere else. It's unique.’

‘The fact that the modules are personalised is very important,’ says Dr Kerri-Ann Woodbury, a former nursing officer in the Army and now a healthcare academic. ‘Otherwise it could be very overwhelming for people to be faced with half a

dozen modules that aren't necessarily relevant.’

The Foundation is in the early stages of developing a similar tool for personnel who are about to transition from the ADF.

Go Beyond is available here: gobeyond.org.au

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling is Australia's leading national provider of high quality mental health assessment, clinical counselling and support services for Australian veterans and their families. If you or someone you know needs support, call Open Arms on **1800 011 046** – 24 hours a day, seven days a week or visit openarms.gov.au.



From left: Prof Jenny Firman AM, DVA's Chief Health Officer; Ms Miriam Dwyer, CEO of Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation; Dr Stephanie Hodson CSC, National Manager, Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling.

Recognition of veterans' contribution to Australia's workforce

The finalists and winners of eight award categories in this year's Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Awards will be announced in coming weeks.

These awards acknowledge the great diversity of organisations of all types and sizes that employ and support veterans and the partners of current serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said that these

awards are important in acknowledging the organisations that support veteran employees, and this year's veteran winners bring their own unique and inspiring stories of success.

This year's awards attracted 125 nominations across the eight award categories, from a diverse range of organisations across the private and public sector. A testament that Australian businesses and government are recognising the value that veterans bring to the workforce.

The date of the announcements is yet to be finalised so keep an eye on the Prime Minister's Veterans Employment Program Awards website, which will include a full list of winners and finalists (www.veteranemployment.gov.au).



Australian Government

PRIME MINISTER'S
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AWARDS 2021

Defence well engaged with DVA

MAJOR GENERAL STUART SMITH AO DSC (RETD)

Defence Engagement Commissioner



After visiting bases across Brisbane, Darwin, Adelaide and Perth over recent weeks, I can confirm that Defence personnel are well engaged with DVA.

I have listened to base commanders, unit leaders, transition managers and personnel undergoing transition about their experience with DVA. It has been heartening to hear that 98% of personnel possess a DVA MyService account and White Card.

The high proportion of serving personnel registered with DVA is testimony to efforts by the department, in partnership with Defence, to engage with Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel at the point of enlistment. Known as the Early Engagement Model, the intent is to ensure personnel avoid delays in accessing DVA administered health and wellbeing services when they transition from the ADF.

I noted three emerging themes when discussing DVA services with Defence leaders involved in managing personnel transitioning from the ADF. The first was a stronger awareness of veterans' entitlements among soldiers, sailors and aviators. This is evidenced by a growth in the number of personnel registering their service-related injuries and illnesses with DVA should they need rehabilitation support when they leave the ADF. In fact, 55% of the 20,100 initial liability claims registered with DVA during the past 12 months are from Defence personnel. A challenge for DVA is to meet this growth in registrations, and additional financial and personnel resources have been allocated to the department in the 2021-22 Budget to do so.

A second theme was a strong level of cooperation between DVA and Defence transition management personnel. DVA's Veteran Support Officers (VSOs), the ADF's Member Support Coordinators (MSCs), and ADF Rehabilitation personnel are demonstrating effective partnerships at Darwin's Robertson Barracks, Perth's HMAS *Stirling* and Adelaide's RAAF Edinburgh. In addition to prioritising support for personnel undergoing shorter notice medical or administrative transition from Defence, these partnerships are assisting ADF personnel to plan ahead for their transition from Defence from a wellbeing perspective. They are providing education and training beyond the traditional Transition Seminar events to encourage personnel to consider their housing, employment and social network options for the future, so that they might follow their service to nation with service to society.

The desire to serve society was a capstone theme in all my discussions with ADF personnel undergoing transition. I was fortunate to conduct some of these discussions at Veteran Wellbeing Centres in Adelaide and Perth, and recognise the potential these centres have for providing pathways for ADF personnel and their families to connect with society. The presence of a local ex-service organisation at one Wellbeing Centre is providing an

opportunity for veterans to continue their service through local community projects, and this might be an example for other centres.

In addition to observing the current level of cooperation between Defence and DVA, base visits allow me to develop an understanding of the current nature of service experienced by ADF personnel. The emerging nature of service is characterised by short-notice domestic support and prolonged regional deployments in the Indo-Pacific. The next generation of veterans is therefore likely to have a different set of experiences compared to be our Middle East generation of veterans.

I was also able to visualise the likely impact of the 2020 Defence Strategic Update

and 2020 Force Structure Plan on Defence and DVA. It is important to understand the impact on current DVA support services, such as DVA VSOs and Open Arms peer engagement teams, wherever there is likely to be an increase in the number of ADF personnel at a regional base.

I have scheduled visits to bases in Sydney, Townsville, Tindal and Woomera in the future. These visits are vital for the Repatriation Commission to advise DVA on improvements to supporting serving personnel and their families now, and for the future.



Defence Engagement Commissioner Major General Stuart Smith AO, DSC, (Ret'd), speaks with HMAS *Stirling* Commanding Officer, Captain Gary Lawton, RAN during a visit to *Stirling* in Western Australia.



From left: Research Officer Defence Engagement Shareen Singh; DVA Support Officer Belinda Crawley; DVA Deputy Commissioner Western Australia Peter King; Squadron Leader Nicholas Bird; Defence Engagement Commissioner Major General Stuart Smith AO DSC (Ret'd); Wing Commander Grahame Williams; Senior ADF Officer Wing Commander Andrew Brandham; Wing Commander Grant Taylor; Warrant Officer John Markham at RAAF Base Pearce, Western Australia.

Improving transition for ADF members and their families

The Joint Transition Authority (JTA) was announced by the Australian Government in October 2020, based on a recommendation in the Productivity Commission report, *A Better Way to Support Veterans*. The JTA's purpose is to better prepare and support Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families as they transition from military to civilian life. Though part of the Department of Defence, the JTA is partnering with DVA and the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC).

The JTA is currently reviewing the transition system to identify where improvements can be made, including opportunities to better integrate services and share information. Part of that process has involved consultation with ex-service organisations, state and territory governments, academia, industry, and above all, veterans and their families.

To date, one of the key issues the JTA has identified and addressed is the systematic sharing of transition data across Defence, DVA and CSC. Further, a new Defence Transition Manual is under development. This will assist officers involved in a member's transition to navigate the transition process within Defence. This will enable decisions that better support transitioning members and their families. Connection points with DVA and CSC will also be included.

The JTA's Director General is Brigadier Wade Stothart DSC AM CSC who has previously overseen the Army's workforce generation systems, including transitions and employability classifications.

Brigadier Stothart points out that while the majority of veterans do transition well, it's important to recognise that some do not and the JTA is looking at ways to improve the transition experience for all members and their families but with a focus on those who may need additional support.

Since taking on the job last year, he has noticed four key aspects of the transition process that he sees as critical in supporting a successful transition.

'The first is early preparation,' he says. 'If you leave everything to the last minute, there's a lot to get through. You need to start early, develop a deliberate plan and then gradually complete all of the preparatory activities that will contribute to a smooth and successful transition.'



Director General of the Joint Transition Authority, Brigadier Wade Stothart DSC AM CSC

'The second thing would be to make sure you have time to do it. It's one thing to start early and get a number of things done, but you will need dedicated time focused on your transition. We recognise the importance of the command chain in supporting transitions and, specifically, allowing members time to complete all the necessary transition requirements.'

'Involvement of family is another key consideration. Often it is not just the service person who's going through transition; their families transition as well. Families are a protective factor for the health and wellbeing of the service person and vice versa.'

'Finally, we need to demystify military skills to help with accreditation and education so they are easily transferable to civilian employers or academic institutions.'

Brigadier Stothart adds that for personnel leaving the ADF, there's not only the transition process but also the emotional aspects to be considered.

'Major changes have occurred in the transition space since 2017,' he says. 'Prior to that, support was granted on the basis of your length of service. Now, it's a needs-based approach. Some of the most vulnerable cohorts of veterans are those under 30 who have served for less than 4 years. Anecdotally, we also understand that 3 to 4 years after an apparently successful transition, some members may lack a sense of purpose. But if we know these things, we can prepare people for them or identify ways to address the issue.'

'Everyone's transition will be different. There are some impressive support services and programs available within Government and by ex-service organisations. What is best for individuals depends

on their needs. We want a transition system that builds self-agency and independence.'

While many aspects of the transition process are mandatory, some are not. The JTA is considering what additional components of transition preparation should be mandatory. Already in place is the ability for those who have transitioned to reach back into the ADF for support up until 24 months post their transition date. Brigadier Stothart is supportive of an overlap in services between Defence and DVA as long as they are not duplicative.

'We view this as a great opportunity to work together to continue to improve the experience of transition for veterans and their families,' says Carly Partridge, an assistant secretary at DVA who works closely with the JTA. 'We know this can be a challenging time for some ADF members and it is rightly our priority to do all we can to make this an easier and simpler experience, and empower them to successfully transition to civilian life.'

'Key to a good transition is meaningful employment or engagement,' Brigadier Stothart says. 'So not just a job but the right job or some other kind of meaningful engagement. And that's just one of 5 or 6 factors that contribute to our wellness. Others include health, social connection, relationships, financial security and housing. The really good work that's going on now is thinking about our lifetime responsibility for wellness of all our veterans.'

'But it's also about culture within the chain of command to support people, and to adopt a long-term view of caring for people.'

'We are working hard to engage with and involve families more. We need to take a broad definition of families. It's not just the partner and children. How do we keep on educating families on services available to them specifically, and how do we let them know how they can speak to us if they need to? It makes me think about opportunities where we can, as Defence, directly engage with families.'

'Whether they've had a smooth journey is another question, but ultimately most veterans move into civilian life and are productive, capable, contributing members of their communities. However, some have difficulty and some feel they are not well supported. Quite rightly, they have raised these concerns. While much has been done to improve transition, we know there is much more to do.'

'I think our veterans have tremendous skills and experiences that would allow them to continue to make an invaluable contribution to our communities and nation.'

Anyone wishing to engage with the JTA can email jta.engagement@defence.gov.au

A year in review

COMMISSIONER GWEN CHERNE

Veteran Family Advocate



It has been almost a year since I became the first Veteran Family Advocate. Even with all the COVID-19 restrictions, I have managed to travel to all states and territories except Victoria. I have had more than 7,600 interactions with veterans and their families and the organisations that support them. So there is a lot to follow up!

Something that may seem obvious, but is key to successfully supporting veterans and families, is that we must take a systems approach to supporting veterans. The research shows that including families leads to better outcomes for the veteran, and that we should see veterans as part of a family, not as a singular entity. Families come in all shapes and sizes, so programs and services should be inclusive of what I call the veteran's interdependent relationships, be those with parents, children, step-parents, aunts, uncles, siblings, etc. Families should not be an afterthought. Part of my role is ensuring families are provided with services and supports in their own right.

As you may be aware, the Government announced its 2021-22 Budget on 11 May, with specific announcements supporting the processing of claims, rehabilitation and a wellbeing focus that identifies risk factors and prioritises support for those in crisis. So, what does the Budget mean for veteran families?

Family Support Package – eligibility for families extended – For families experiencing crisis (like a mental health episode, family conflict or relationship breakdown) support is now extended to all forms of service if the veteran is under 65 and eligible for incapacity payments, special or intermediate rate of Disability Pension or receiving the Veteran Payment.

Eligibility for widows/widowers extended – if the veteran suffered a service-related death or suicide they are eligible for support for 4 years from the date the claim is accepted.

Flexibility introduced – individual support financial caps have been removed and replaced with an annual cap so the family can choose which support or service they need.

Wellbeing Centres for veterans and families expanded to include locations in **Tasmania** and **South-East Queensland**.

Funding for around 440 additional Australian Public Service staff to **help reduce the backlog of claims**, bolster capability and support continued improvement.

Budget is a great time to look at how responsibility for supporting our veterans and our families is shared across the whole of government. I am passionate about advancing the agenda for the recognition, understanding, and provision of support that our Defence and veteran families need across both the public and private sectors.

It is neither feasible nor in the best interests of our families for DVA or Defence to duplicate supports that all families in Australia need access to, like mental health care, suicide awareness, family and domestic violence support, family assistance, carers assistance, education and more. What is vital for both departments to do is step in where the system does not adequately cater for the unique experience of military life.

It is important to recognise that government isn't always the best, or first way, to meet our community's needs. Many of the great initiatives that make a big impact are either run out of our ex-service organisations (ESOs), or have their start there. This builds the evidence base that our decision-makers in Parliament need to justify spending taxpayer dollars.

In my engagements this year I have seen firsthand that ESOs are continually changing and adapting to meet the needs of veterans and their families. Veterans' families can now participate in activities, sport, education, scholarships, retreats, camps, online courses and more. I am hopeful that DVA's Wellbeing Centres can offer a first port of call for families and veterans to learn what is available and help guide them to services and programs that best fit their needs and interests.

In many ways we are still at the beginning of this journey. While there has been a great deal of progress, there are still gaps in services for groups who require more support. From my discussions with families around Australia, I believe mental health support and assistance with transition will be two areas that future policy will need to focus on.

I recently attended the opening of Fussell House at Concord Repatriation General Hospital in Sydney. Fussell House is a 19-room residential accommodation facility available to current and former Australian Defence Force personnel **and their families** as they access comprehensive mental and physical health services at the world-class National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare.

Fussell House provides veterans and their families from across Australia with a home away from home at Concord as they access the care and support they need. The facility offers private and shared spaces and includes family suites, individual rooms, family lounge areas, kitchen, laundry and utility rooms and outdoor BBQ area. This practical support will go a long way to assist veteran families. You'll find an article on Fussell House on the next page.

I also had the honour of attending an event at the Australian War Memorial announcing that a sculpture called *Every Drop Shed in Anguish* will be installed on the grounds of the Memorial. The sculpture is intended to honour the sufferings of war – both seen and unseen. The droplets will represent blood, sweat and tears and will be a powerful way for veterans and families to reflect on both the physical and mental wounds of war and service. There's an article on the sculpture on page 29.

In the wake of the recent announcement of a Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, I worked with families to contribute to the Terms of Reference. The discussions were powerful and gave me a chance to hear from families directly impacted by suicide in our community. The Royal Commission is an important opportunity for us to be heard, learn, continue to improve systems, and provide the restorative justice many in our community need in order to heal.

If you are interested in hearing more about what I am up to, I have started bi-monthly snapshots that highlight what I am doing, where I am going and what I am hearing. If you would like to join the mailing list to receive these snapshots please email me at vfa@dva.gov.au.

Till next time,
Gwen



At the opening of Fussell House with Mr and Mrs Fussell parents of the late Lt. Michael Fussell.

Individual resilience in relationships

by Dr Kerri-Ann Woodbury

Relationships can be fulfilling, amazing, and energising; but sometimes they can be heartbreaking, full of sorrow, and draining. It is important to remember that relationships will go through cycles of ups and downs, and expecting them to always be effortless is unrealistic. Good relationships need attention and nurturing, but not at the expense of either individual in the relationship. Resilience at an individual level is important, as it is through being the best version of yourself that allows you to bring that best version into your relationship.



Dr Kerri-Ann Woodbury

Resilience, at its core, is about dealing with adversity and positive adaptation: that is, it's required to respond to different adversities, ranging from daily annoyances through to life-changing traumas. Resilience, with regard to relationships, can then be explained as the attitudes and behaviours that promote coping strategies and protect individuals and their intimate relationships from the potential negative effects of whatever is going on. That might be deployment, posting, long separations due to courses, or mental or physical ill health.

While coping strategies are integral to resilience, coping is not the same as resilience. While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they in fact refer to quite separate concepts. Resilience influences how an event is appraised, whereas coping refers

to the strategies employed following the appraisal as a stressful encounter.

Many people enter intimate relationships with the hope of finding a safe place, a shelter from the storm of external stress, a haven to plan for the future and gain emotional equilibrium. Although the negative effects of military life on relationships are well documented, it has also been shown that overall, military couples are remarkably resilient. Furthermore, military life, with its frequent physical separation, can provide a space for individual growth and constructive changes in intimate relationships.

There are a number of services available and places of support where current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force personnel and their loved ones can seek support for their relationships. However, it's not

always easy to find them, and many people in need of counselling and other such services only do so when their problems have reached a critical stage, which can often be too late for positive resolution.

DVA provides support to veterans (dva.gov.au and search for 'mental health support'), while Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling (openarms.gov.au) offers counselling to both veterans and their families.

Other organisations, such as Soldier On, Mates4Mates and Relationships Australia might also be able to assist you.

Here are a few starting points for individuals to reflect on when thinking of their personal levels of resilience as part of a couple:

- How to recognise and draw on social supports
- How to regulate emotions and mood in times of stress
- Distress tolerance
- Communication styles, and potentially how best to alter these so couples can feel better understood by each other.

Relationship maintenance and growth is an ongoing process that lasts the duration of the intimate relationship. Think of it as preventative maintenance: you wouldn't wait until your car runs out of fuel to look at fixing that problem. Focusing on your individual resilience is not selfish or egocentric; it is for the betterment of yourself and therefore your relationship.

Dr Kerri-Ann Woodbury holds a PhD, which investigated the effects of deployment with the Australian Army on intimate relationships. She is a veteran who served as a Nursing Officer in the Australian Army. She currently works in the health sector of tertiary education, and continues her collaboration and involvement with the Defence and veteran communities.

We welcome articles written by members of the veteran community. Please email vetaffairs@dva.gov.au if you have a story in mind. Please note that responsibility for the accuracy of such articles rests with the author.

Veteran health boost as Fussell House opens in NSW

Veterans and their families will have improved access to health care with the opening of Fussell House at Concord Repatriation General Hospital in Sydney on 18 June.

The 19-room residential accommodation facility is available to current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and their families as they access comprehensive mental and physical health services at the world class National

Centre for Veterans' Healthcare (NCVH).

Fussell House is named after 25-year-old Lieutenant Michael Fussell who was serving with the Special Operations Task Group in Afghanistan when he was killed in action by an improvised explosive device.

'We can never fully repay the debt we owe to Lieutenant Fussell, but this facility will provide an enduring way for us all to honour his memory and sacrifice for our nation in ongoing support of our veterans and their families,' said then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Darren Chester.

'I am proud to open this facility, which was made possible by a \$6.7 million investment from the federal government in our ongoing commitment to put the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families first.'

Fussell House provides veterans and their families from across Australia with a home away from home at Concord as they access the care and support they need. The facility offers private and shared spaces and includes family suites, individual rooms, family lounge areas, kitchen, laundry and utility rooms and an outdoor BBQ area.

The NCVH is operated by a multidisciplinary team of health professionals at Concord Hospital and offers a unique model of care, integrating a range of specialist outpatient services for mental and physical health and rehabilitation to assess, manage, treat and support the health and wellbeing needs of veterans.

For more information and details about how to access the services offered by NCVH, visit the National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare website (www.ncvhconcord.com.au).

Diggers and war dogs

By Suzanne Curry

Since the Second World War, our dogs have served in Korea, Borneo, Vietnam, Singapore, Somalia, Bougainville, East Timor, Solomon Island, Afghanistan, and Malaysia. They currently serve with the Combat Engineer Regiments, Army Military Police, RAAF, Special Operations Engineer Regiment, Special Air Service Regiment and the 2nd Commando Regiment.

The story of Marcus epitomises the enormous courage, unwavering loyalty and sheer hard work of our war dogs.

Marcus (Tracker dog D6N06) was a black Labrador. In 1966, aged about 10 months, Marcus began his training with Private Denis Ferguson (Fergie) at the School of Infantry in Ingleburn, near Sydney.

Fergie was responsible for every facet of Marcus's life and well-being. Bonding with the dog was the first priority – walks and play. Morning routine started with a run, grooming and obedience training, followed by a thorough clean-out of Marcus's kennel. Marcus would be walked around the roads of Ingleburn to harden his paws and to familiarise him with traffic. Days were spent at the rifle range during live firing. Tracker training started from following fresh 5-minute-old tracks until Marcus could

follow a track up to about 16 kilometres, and more than a day old.

In May 1967, Marcus and Fergie deployed to South Vietnam, joining the 2nd Battalion Royal Australian/New Zealand Regiment at Nui Dat.

Tracking teams were small, normally consisting of two dogs and two handlers, a visual tracker (trained to determine everything from the number of insurgents to what they were armed with), two cover-men plus a machine-gunner and signaller. The cover-men's job was to bodyguard the dogs and their handlers.

The team's main roles were to follow up enemy trails or to locate suspected enemy hideouts after a contact. They would be airlifted by helicopter into an area of operation. Once on the ground, Marcus would follow the scent (e.g. a Viet Cong footprint), taking off at speed until their location was found. He would then stop, nose extended facing the suspected enemy. At this point, Marcus and Fergie would fall back while the rest of the section behind them would search the area, often finding wounded enemy or recently occupied bunker systems that would otherwise have been missed.

Marcus's job was one of the most dangerous jobs in the war and his team



Above: The Australian Defence Force Canine Operational Service Medal, front and back

Right: The commemorative service Suzanne organised. At centre is Allan Wood who served in Vietnam in the 4th Royal Australian Tracker Platoon.

Unlike his handlers, Marcus was in Vietnam for the entire duration of the war. He had 5 handlers (Denis Ferguson 1967-68), Alvin Petersen (1968-69), William Wright and Wayne Dixon (1969-70), Denis Ferguson and Shaun Dobson (1970-71).

By the end of the war, Marcus was exhausted. He had seen the worst of war. During a particularly hard night-time attack, trapped by a barrage of mortar and machine gun fire, Marcus suffered shell-shock.



needed to have absolute confidence in his ability to 'sense' the enemy before actual contact was made. Peter Haran, a handler himself, wrote that Marcus was a 'very fine tracker dog with a big heart and a very gentle nature – he would never give up' (Peter Haran, *Trackers – The Untold Story of the Australian Dogs of War*, 2000).

Marcus worked hard. When Fergie completed his 13 months deployment, Marcus was handed to his second tracker, Private Alvin Petersen. Handing over was very stressful for the handlers and it must have been bewildering and stressful for the dogs too. Fergie was required to completely ignore Marcus so he would immediately bond with his new tracker.

His eyesight was failing.

Marcus was never repatriated to Australia. He was left in Vietnam. Fergie demanded his return to Australia but it was rejected. Abandoning Marcus haunts him to this day.

Marcus was given to Lieutenant Colonel Val Brown RNZIR, Commander in Chief, New Zealand Force, in Saigon. He died of natural causes shortly before the withdrawal of troops in December 1972.

Since the Vietnam War, pressure was bought to bear and our war dogs are

now repatriated. Today, organisations such as the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dog Association (ADFTWDA) and the Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation work tirelessly in promoting the work of military dogs.

ADFTWDA

ADFTWDA was founded to promote awareness of the use of Military Working Dogs (MWDs) within the ADF as well as cementing the common bond between those who serve in Combat Tracking Teams and also to provide help for those in need.

It has worked tirelessly to have medals struck to acknowledge the contribution of Military Working Dogs. In 2007, approval was granted. Since 2008, two medals are now awarded:

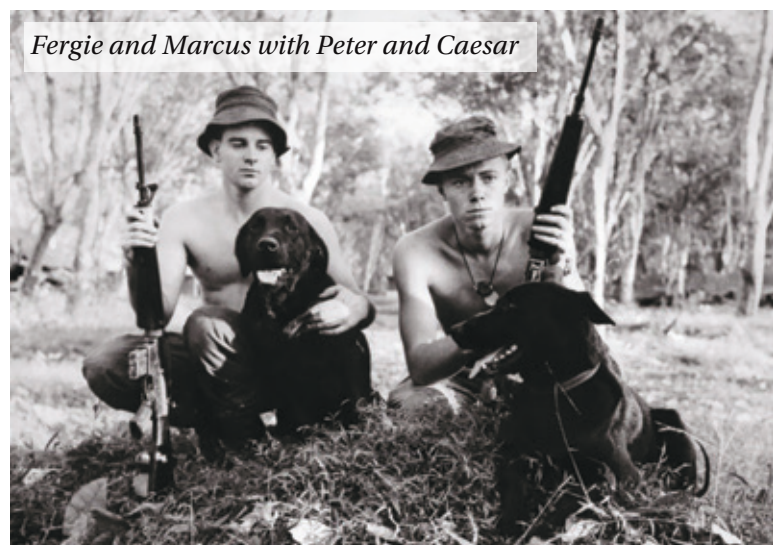
- The Canine Service Medal, for MWDs that have served for at least 5 years.

- The War Dog Operational Medal, for MWDs that have served on overseas operations for a period of 28 days.

Both have been posthumously awarded to all the MWDs from the Vietnam War, including Marcus.

The ADF Defence Canine Operational Service Medal

Introduced on 8 June 2017, the ADF is the first defence force in the world to implement recognition of this nature.



Fergie and Marcus with Peter and Caesar

Suzanne Curry is a writer of natural history with a lifelong interest in dogs. On 6 June this year, she conducted a Commemorative Service at the Australian Trackers and War Dogs Memorial Park in Hobart to mark National Military Working Dog Day.

We welcome articles written by members of the veteran community. Please email vetaffairs@dva.gov.au if you have a story in mind. Please note that responsibility for the accuracy of such articles rests with the author.

Entitlements and services for veterans living overseas

Health care entitlements

DVA Health Card arrangements are primarily designed to support entitled persons seeking treatment within the Australian health care system.

If you are travelling overseas, there are varying arrangements you may be able to access for necessary treatment for your accepted conditions.

DVA has reciprocal arrangements in place with the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand. Treatment can sometimes be provided under reciprocal arrangements for accepted conditions (contact us on overseas.treatment@dva.gov.au if you don't know what this is). Apart from the reciprocal arrangements, you cannot use your DVA Veteran Card outside Australia.

In a country where there are no reciprocal arrangements, support may be provided through a reimbursement system from DVA for your accepted conditions.

In these circumstances, you may be able to claim expenses for your medical care overseas if a medical professional has assessed that you have a clinical need for treatment for an accepted condition. The care and costs must be similar to, or the same as in Australia.

If you can't pay for a health professional to treat your accepted condition or injury while you are overseas, you should get in touch with:

- the DVA officers we gave you contact details for (after you notified us about your travel plans)
- your nearest Australian High Commission, embassy or consulate.

In an emergency, Australian officials can contact us to arrange payment. This payment can only be for your accepted condition or injury.

How to claim

To claim for medical care overseas, you will need to do one of the following:

- fill out the claim form (dva.gov.au and search for 'claim out-of-pocket')
- send us a signed letter requesting a refund of your treatment costs

You should make your claim within 6 months of the date a health professional treated you.

Contact us

Phone: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

Outside Australia phone +61 2 6289 1133

Email: overseas.treatment@dva.gov.au

For more information, see the DVA website (dva.gov.au and search for 'Medical care while overseas').

What we can't fund

We can't fund the following while you are overseas:

- medical evacuation
- travel to and from appointments
- treatment overseas when your reason for travel was to receive the treatment
- We can't pay for your treatment overseas if we cover you for care in Australia under our:
 - Non-Liability Health Care program
 - provisional access to medical treatment arrangements.

Mental health support

If you are a veteran or family member currently living or travelling outside Australia, and you are in need of mental health support, you can contact your nearest Australian embassy, high commission or consulate, or call the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) on +61 2 6261 3305. Further information can be found on the Smart Traveller website (www.smarttraveller.gov.au and search for 'Medical assistance overseas').

If you require assistance connecting with these supports, you can contact Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling at (www.openarms.gov.au/contact).

COVID-19 - Overseas financial assistance

If you are unable to return to Australia due to COVID-19 restrictions and you are experiencing financial distress, you may be eligible to access financial support from the Australian Government.

More information is available on the Smart Traveller website (www.smarttraveller.gov.au)

Incapacity payments

Incapacity payments are compensation for economic loss due to the inability (or reduced ability) to work because of an injury or disease that has been accepted as service-related under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) or the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA).

Incapacity payments may be payable to a veteran residing overseas. However, they will be required to submit medical evidence and may need to participate in a rehabilitation program.



Pension payments

If you're a DVA client residing or travelling overseas for an extended period, you can have your regular pension payments made into a designated overseas bank account. If travelling overseas you must complete and sign the relevant forms and return them to DVA:

- 'Notification of Overseas Travel' (form D578), which should be sent to DVA General Enquiries; and
- the relevant 'Bank Account Details for Overseas Resident' form (depending on the country) to enable to DVA to proceed with payments overseas. This form (which needs to include the receiving bank's stamp) may be sent directly to Income.Support.Payments@dva.gov.au, or telephone 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) and ask to speak to Income Support Payments staff if you have any questions.

The Reserve Bank acts as DVA's agent for all overseas payments, and pension payments for overseas clients are made every four weeks into your nominated bank account. Each four-weekly deposit is the total of the amounts you are entitled to for the previous two fortnights. With overseas payments, you will not pay any fees at the Australian end. However, note that fees may be imposed overseas, either by an intermediary bank or by the destination bank. You will need to enquire about this with your preferred overseas bank.

More information

For information on service pensions, income support supplement and the Veteran Payment, see the DVA website (dva.gov.au and search for 'Travelling and living overseas')

Veterans lead the way in disaster resilience



Former Army operations and capability officer, Adam Moss, facilitating a community-led resilience activity in Gympie, Queensland.

Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) is an organisation comprised predominantly of current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). DRA challenges veterans to draw on their skills and experiences to help communities impacted by natural disasters.

‘The numerous inquiries and commissions that followed the Black Summer bushfires of 2019/20 made one thing clear: people cannot expect to have a fire truck parked out the front of their house during a major emergency,’ DRA CEO, Geoff Evans says. ‘We must shift the emphasis to building individual and community resilience to future disaster events.’

‘ADF members are naturally adept at identifying threats and protecting assets. This is what community resilience comes down to.’

DRA will typically deploy a drone to map a community and then overlay that imagery with data and community knowledge to develop a threat assessment and mitigation plan for that community. ‘Once we understand the threats and what needs to be protected, we can work with the community to mitigate those threats,’ Geoff says.

According to Army veteran and DRA’s Director of Field Operations, Thomas Howell, the role of DRA is expanding to include mobilising groups of community volunteers who want to help themselves.

‘Whereas traditionally we have drawn on the planning, operations, leadership and other abilities veterans bring with them to help people recover from disasters, increasingly we are seeing veterans leading teams of community volunteers in resilience-building activities,’ says Thomas.

Take the challenge

DRA requires veterans to draw on their military expertise and apply their experiences to a disaster environment.

‘Service in DRA is not easy, disasters are not easy,’ says Geoff. ‘I have the best-trained volunteer workforce in the world. People trained for war thrive in the mayhem of a disaster environment. They always make it work.’

DRA membership brings with it inherent benefits for veterans. ‘After deploying overseas and leaving the Army, I was at a bit of a loss,’ says DRA member and former Army medic, Davina Pye. ‘I was surprised at how quickly I felt at home within DRA. The feeling of being able to help someone on their worst day and make it just that little bit better for them is amazing. It is what keeps me coming back.’

The expectation that disasters will become both more frequent and more intense represents a significant challenge to the nation. DRA aims to meet this challenge by placing veterans at the forefront of communities in need. Are you up to the challenge?

Further information is on the DRA website (disasterreliefaus.org).

Vetaffairs Crossword

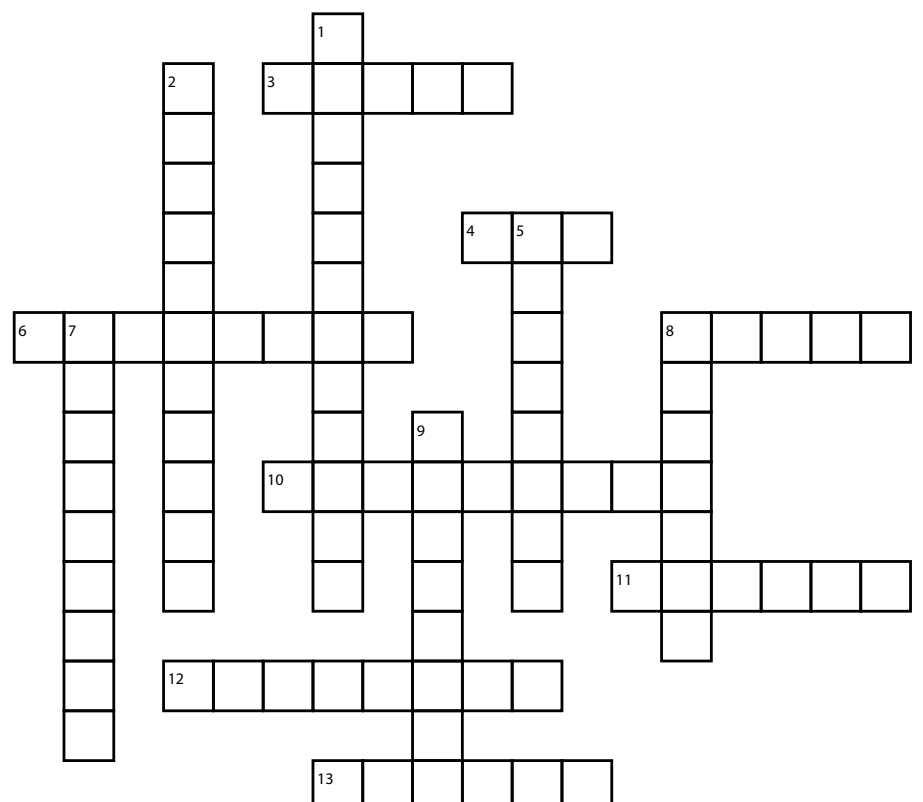
We hope you enjoy another *Vetaffairs* crossword. You will find the solution on page 24.

ACROSS

3. Two-up is played with these (5)
4. Predecessor to Australia Post (3)
6. Bond of loyalty and shared experience (8)
8. This HMAS was sunk on 1 March 1942 during the Battles of Bunda Strait (5)
10. Exchange of gunshots (9)
11. Simpson used this to carry the wounded (6)
12. Episode of irregular, unplanned fighting (8)
13. Naval kitchen (6)

DOWN

1. Compulsory service in the armed forces (12)
2. Place of conflict (11)
5. WWII fighter-bomber made of balsa wood (8)
7. Mounted projectile weapons (9)
8. Army unit traditionally commanded by a 2nd lieutenant (7)
9. Structure built for the purpose of commemoration (8)



“Our work was top secret...and we were very well aware how important secrecy was because it was drummed into us every day.”

WWII code-breaker Joan Sanders Majithia turns 100

by Sue Smethurst



Joan Sanders Majithia and Dalip Singh Majithia in their younger years.

It's been 75 years since Joan Sanders Majithia was formally discharged from the Women's Royal Australian Navy Service. But despite the passage of time, she still keeps her war-time secrets close to her chest, steadfastly honouring the pledge she made when she enlisted.

However, as she prepared to celebrate her 100th birthday, the family of the former WRANS Writer convinced Joan the time was right to reflect on the extraordinary covert role she played during the Second World War.

‘Our work was top secret,’ says the centenarian from her home in Delhi, ‘and we were very well aware how important secrecy was because it was drummed into us every day.’

Then 23-year-old Joan Sanders joined the war effort in 1944 to ‘do her bit’, full of excitement about the prospect of travel and adventure. However, she ended up serving much closer to home, in a role she never imagined.

Talented with numbers, Joan was picked to join a top-secret codebreaking unit formally called Fleet Radio Unit Melbourne (FRUMEL) but known as Monterey, after the apartment building on Queens Road, St Kilda, Melbourne in which it was located. Monterey was a collaboration between Australian, US and UK naval forces – in effect, Australia's version of Bletchley Park.

The apartments inside the building had been gutted by American forces to create a series of secret decoding rooms. A team of 80 women worked around the clock in small teams intercepting Japanese messages. They would translate the messages and decode them, then alert Allied command to the Japanese plans.

The unit operated between 1942 and October 1944 and is widely credited for playing a significant role in the Allied victories in the Pacific.

‘It was very exciting because we all felt we were contributing something special, and of course we swore we wouldn't tell another soul what we were doing. The work was very time-consuming and intense, we worked 8-hour shifts, sometimes on the night watch. I liked the night watch because we could get up to a little bit of mischief,’ she laughs.

‘Nothing bad! But we could do our knitting or chat. During the day there was absolutely no chat and the chatterboxes who got too friendly with the Americans were swiftly taken away.’

The Monterey codebreakers played a vital role in the Battle of Midway in 1942, their work leading to the destruction of a Japanese convoy of more than 5,000 army reinforcements and the death of Admiral Yamamoto, which proved a devastating blow to Japanese morale.

The women were acutely aware of the threat of Japanese invasion.

‘We knew that the Americans would shoot us if the Japanese landed,’ Joan says, ‘because the Americans knew what the Japanese would do to us if they found us and we'd be better off dead.’

“We all felt we were contributing something special, and of course we swore we wouldn't tell another soul what we were doing.”

Joan was born in India where her father served with the British Army, but the family moved to a remote sheep farm in Victoria's western districts when she was 18 months old. She was working as a clerical assistant with a chartered accountancy firm when she enlisted in May 1944. She trained at HMS *Lonsdale* but with her aptitude for numbers and problem solving, she was quickly deployed to Monterey.

‘I can still hear the officer shouting to us all, “Pick up your feet now! Stand to attention!”’, she smiles. ‘We were up very early and it was always quite hectic and not a minute was wasted. In winter our hands were blue with the cold.’

After the war, Joan was visiting an uncle at the Melbourne Club when she was introduced to handsome Indian Air Force fighter pilot Dalip

Singh Majithia. They married less than a year later on 18 February 1947 at his family's estate in Gorakhpur. The couple made a home in Delhi where they raised their two daughters, Kiran and Mira.

Dalip Singh Majithia, a highly decorated squadron leader who earned a reputation flying a Hawker Hurricane on the Burma front, turned 100 last year. He is India's oldest living fighter pilot and still hits 120 golf balls every morning to keep fit.

Many of Joan's colleagues took the secrets of Monterey to their graves, but in 2010 the veil was lifted when British Prime Minister David Cameron officially acknowledged their efforts. Those living received a sparkling gold pin with a note that read: ‘The Government wishes to express its deepest gratitude for the vital service you performed during World War II’.

‘The mood was always sombre,’ says Joan. ‘Everyone was terribly involved in doing what they could for the war effort and we had great perspective about what was happening around us, but of course we had fun too. I made some wonderful lifelong friends at Monterey.’

Joan turned 100 in July. It is likely that she is one of only two surviving members of the Monterey team.

‘My mother told us about her life in Australia,’ says Joan's daughter Kiran. ‘We knew the romantic story of her meeting our father and her coming to live in India. She told us she was very happy to have got a job in the Navy Office during World War Two, what fun it was and how she had made life-long friends, but that was all she ever said about it. My mother took her vow of secrecy very seriously. Even my father knew nothing about what she did during those years. We are very proud of her and my father for the service they gave during the war.’

Sue Smethurst is an award-winning author and journalist. She has written nine books, her most recent book The Freedom Circus was published by Penguin Random House in November. She is currently researching the story of the Monterey women and their role in the war and would love to hear from any WRANs who served at Monterey, or their families. She can be contacted at www.suesmethurstmedia.com.

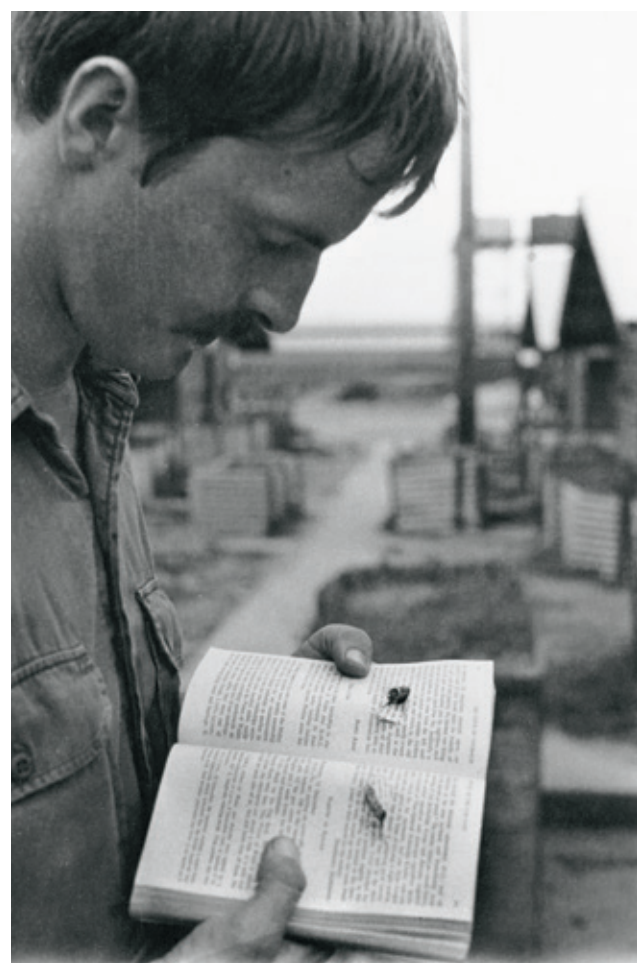
Vetaffairs Crossword solution

Across: 3 coins, 4 PMG, 6 mateship, 8 Perth, 10 firefight, 11 donkey, 12 skirmish, 13 galley.

Down: 1 conscription, 2 battlefield, 5 Mosquito, 7 artillery, 8 platoon, 9 memorial.

50th anniversary of Operation Ivanhoe, Vietnam

DVA will hold a National Commemorative Service to mark the 50th anniversary of Operation Ivanhoe and the Battle of Nui Le at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra. The service will take place on Monday, 20 September 2021 at 10.30am and will be live broadcast nationally on ABC TV.



Above: 2nd Lt Graham David Spinkston contemplates a copy of Taste of Courage which had prevented an enemy AK-47 round from hitting his left leg as he led 12 Platoon, D Company, 4RAR/NZ, in a bunker contact against 3 Battalion, 33 North Vietnamese Army Regiment, on 21 September 1971. The book is held in the collection of the Australian War Memorial. (AWM P07256.007)

Right: An M113A1 Armoured Personnel Carrier and Iroquois helicopter on Route 2, near Cam My. Pictured are Trooper Brian Malcolm Mercer (front left), Maxwell Kenneth Mooney (front right), and an unidentified member of A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment. The picture was taken during Operation Ivanhoe, 1971. (Robert Cox Collection)

In September 1971, Australian forces were entering the final stages of their decade-long involvement in the Vietnam War. With elements of the Australian Task Force already returning home, enemy forces – particularly the battle-hardened 33rd North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Regiment – sought to establish themselves in Phuoc Tuy Province.

Operation Ivanhoe was intended to prevent enemy forces from gaining a foothold. Launched on 19 September 1971, it was a search-and-destroy sweep of the area south of the Courtenay rubber plantation. Operational personnel comprised members of the 4th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (4RAR/NZ – the ANZAC Battalion), the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, armoured personnel carriers from A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, engineers from 1st Field Squadron, Royal Australian Engineers along with artillery support from 12th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery and air support from No. 9 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), 161 (Independent) Reconnaissance Flight and United States aircraft. Unfortunately, the Australian tanks that had supported previous operations had departed from Vung Tau to return to Australia less than a week before.

The last major offensive operation of Australia's war in Vietnam, Ivanhoe saw Australian forces engage in a series of heavy contacts with the 33rd NVA Regiment.

This included the last major battle fought by Australian forces in Vietnam – the Battle of Nui Le on 21 September 1971. Throughout the day and into the night, soldiers from 4RAR/NZ's B and D companies were engaged by NVA troops across two locations about four kilometres apart. In support of the fighting on the ground, United States aircraft and helicopters from No. 9 Squadron RAAF provided substantial and effective air support, while artillery burst among the NVA positions. Overhead, helicopters from 161 (Independent) Reconnaissance Flight dropped urgently needed ammunition, and monitored activity on the ground below.

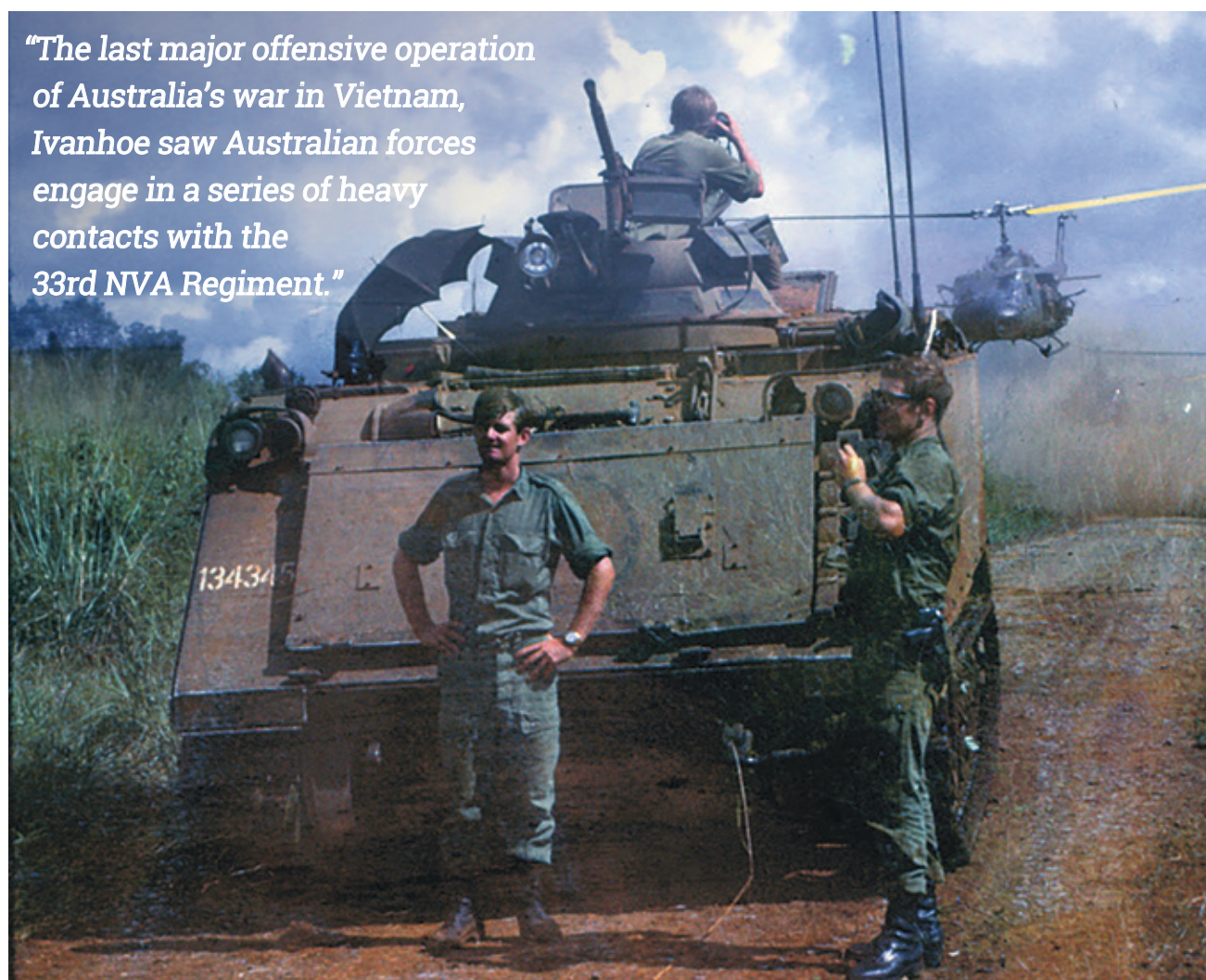
The intense fighting that day came at a cost. Five Australian servicemen were killed and many more were wounded. Clearing patrols went out at dawn the following day but the enemy had left during the night.

During the operation, crew from A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment were also engaged in contacts with the NVA, resulting in a number of Australians wounded.

The National Commemorative Service will commemorate all those who served during Operation Ivanhoe, including the 6 Australian servicemen killed. It is an opportunity to reflect on the qualities of courage and perseverance that characterised Australians' service in Vietnam.

Details about the service are available on the commemorations page of the DVA website (dva.gov.au/recognition).

"The last major offensive operation of Australia's war in Vietnam, Ivanhoe saw Australian forces engage in a series of heavy contacts with the 33rd NVA Regiment."



The next edition of Vetaffairs will provide comprehensive coverage of the National Commemorative Service.

Veterans honoured at Operation Overlord ceremony



The Last Post is sounded during the National Service commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Operation Overlord including the Battle of Long Khanh at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra.

COMMEMORATIONS

On 7 June, veterans, their families and members of the wider Australian community gathered in Canberra to honour those who served on Operation Overlord, including the Battle of Long Khanh, in the Vietnam War. The battle took place 50 years ago.

The National Commemorative Service was held at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial and was organised by DVA in consultation with representatives of Vietnam veterans, including many who served on Operation Overlord.

The commemorative address was delivered by the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), who lauded those Australians who have served their country, and spoke of the Anzac tradition that began at Gallipoli and has been upheld by each generation since.

'This commemoration is an important occasion to remember and honour those who died serving our nation during Operation Overlord and the Battle of Long Khanh, and to recognise all those who served during the operation and more broadly in the Vietnam War,' said His Excellency.

'And [it is] an opportunity for the post-Vietnam War generations to contextualise that service and consider how it informed the nation we were, and influenced the nation we became and the nation we want to be in the future.'

'We have come to ascribe four words to the Anzac legacy: endurance, sacrifice, courage and mateship. As we heard during the call to remembrance, those who served during Operation Overlord and the Battle of Long Khanh demonstrated each of these in a way that would make our forebears proud.'

Operation Overlord was initiated to prevent the North Vietnamese from gaining a foothold in Phuoc Tuy province. Named after the Second World War Allied invasion of Normandy, with whose anniversary it coincided, Overlord encompassed a large area of territory reaching north from the Courtenay rubber plantation into Long Khanh Province.

Early on 5 June 1971, Australian and New Zealand troops were deployed in the first phase of the operation and two days later, on 7 June, the Australians were engaged in some eight hours of fighting, which ended in an enemy withdrawal – this engagement became known as the Battle of Long Khanh.

Operation Overlord ended on 14 June, with the enemy driven from base areas in Phuoc Tuy. The Australian Task Force's combat elements had been engaged for ten days.

Units involved in the battle included:

- HQ 1st Australian Task Force
- The 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR)
- The 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (4RAR/NZ)
- Armoured personnel carriers from A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment
- Centurion tanks from C Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment
- Sappers from 1st Field Squadron, Royal Australian Engineers
- Artillery support from 12th Field Regiment
- Air support from No. 9 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force and The 161 (Independent) Reconnaissance Flight, and
- The 2/8 Battalion from the United States 1st Air Cavalry Division
- US Army Battery C, 5/42 Artillery

Memories of the battle were shared during the service by Robert Prideaux, Section Commander, 6 Platoon, Bravo Company, 3RAR. Mr Prideaux recalled a helicopter being shot down and crashing with the tragic loss of two Australian lives and the rescue of the survivors. The Ode of Remembrance was read by Eddie Tricker, D & E Platoon, Headquarters 1st Australian Task Force.

In total, 10 Australians were killed during Operation Overlord, and each was named and honoured during the commemorative service. Many next of kin and friends of those who died made the trip to attend, and laid wreaths at the memorial as part of the service.

The Commanding Officer of 3RAR during the Battle of Long Khanh, Colonel Peter Scott DSO (Ret'd), delivered the Call to Remembrance during the service and paid tribute to his men.

'This operation was different from previous operations conducted over the previous five years, but the result was the same,' he said. 'Complete domination of the enemy, matching the exploits of the Australian soldiers in World War I and II and in Korea.'

Referring to the Battle of Long Khanh he said, 'The action on this day was the most intense for



The Battle of Long Khanh commemorative coin.

the Australians in 1971', adding that with the entire taskforce deployed for the operation everyone contributed to its success. 'I am immensely proud to have been the commanding officer of 3RAR, and stand here on behalf of the whole of the taskforce', he said.

The National Commemorative Service was the centrepiece of activities commemorating Operation Overlord and the Battle of Long Khanh. Veterans from units involved in the battle gathered in Canberra to honour their mates and connect with each other.

Other activities that took place during the week included Last Post ceremonies for those who lost their lives in the operation, which took place at the Australian War Memorial, and the release of a postage-paid envelope and a postal numismatic cover and coin to mark the 50th anniversary.

An official launch of the Battle of Long Khanh commemorative coin was held at the Royal Australian Mint on 8 June, and many veterans were proud to attend.

Those who were unable to attend the National Commemorative Service were able to watch it live on the ABC and through DVA's Facebook page. The service is currently available to watch on the ABC streaming service iView. You can also watch a short video of the event on the DVA Facebook page: facebook.com/DVAAus.

To download the Order of Service, visit the DVA website (dva.gov.au and search for 'Operation Overlord').

You can order the commemorative coin through the Royal Australian Mint website, www.ramint.gov.au and the postage-paid envelope and a postal numismatic cover are available via Australia Post, <https://auspost.com.au/shop>.



Far left: Attendees at the National Commemorative Service, with the Governor-General His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) and Her Excellency Mrs Hurley at centre.

Left: Commanding Officer of 3 RAR during the Battle of Long Khanh, Colonel Peter Scott DSO (Ret'd) launching the Battle of Long Khanh commemorative coin.

Then, now and in perpetuity

NSW Garden of Remembrance, Rookwood General Cemetery, Sydney.



The Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) is the Australian Government's agent of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) and is responsible for maintaining war cemeteries and individual war graves within Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

The OAWG is also responsible for the provision of official commemorations for eligible veterans who have died post-war and whose deaths are accepted as being linked to their war service.

The eligibility criteria for post-war official commemoration provided by the Australian Government applies to someone:

- who is a Victoria Cross recipient;
- in receipt of a Totally and Permanently Incapacitated pension at the time of death and where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict;
- in receipt of an Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) and where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict;
- in receipt of a Temporary Special Rate pension (TSR) or Intermediate Rate pension (INT) and where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict;
- who is a multiple amputee on a maximum pension rate under Section 27(1) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*;
- who is an ex-prisoner of war; or
- whose death has subsequently been accepted by the Repatriation Commission as being due to their war service.

The OAWG can be made aware of a deceased veteran's eligibility for an official commemoration via two methods:

- If the veteran **was** a client of DVA and meets the eligibility criteria provided above, a DVA delegate will advise the Director War Graves once next of kin / a family member has notified DVA.
- If the veteran **was not** a client of DVA the next of kin / a family member makes contact with DVA's Victoria Deputy Commissioner who will assess whether the veteran's death was war-caused. Write to:
 - Victoria Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, GPO Box 9998, Brisbane QLD 4001; or
 - email PRIMARY.CLAIMS@dva.gov.au requesting that the death be investigated and a determination made. A copy of the death certificate and service record will also need to be supplied.

The Director War Graves will be notified by the DVA delegate when an assessment has been accepted, and will then write to the veteran's spouse, next of kin / family to offer an official commemoration.

The different types of commemoration available are:

- Memorial Plaque in a Garden of Remembrance;
- Placement of ashes – plaque on a niche wall or in a garden;
- Burial in a cemetery – plaque on a concrete beam or plinth in a lawn area; or
- Burial in a cemetery – monumental.

For eligible post-war dead, the Government meets the cost of providing the physical commemoration, so long as:

- the cemetery authority or trust governing the particular cemetery agrees; and
- the next of kin / family member or burial licence-holder complies with and pays for any additional undertakings, including the initial payment and renewal of grave plot tenure fees.

An official commemoration may be located in a civil cemetery, lawn cemetery, ashes placement, niche plaque or at one of the 10 Australian Government Gardens of Remembrance located around Australia, in each state and territory capital as well as Launceston and Townsville.

More than two-thirds of official commemorations of both war dead and post-war dead within Australia are in the form of a plaque at a Garden of Remembrance. These are tranquil, green sanctuaries where individual plaques are placed on walls, amid flowers and plants that thrive in the area. Shelters and quiet places to sit encourage loved ones and friends to stay to reflect and remember. Eligible veterans are commemorated in the company of those with whom they served, and in a place of beauty and peace that is under constant care.

Not all veterans or their families take up an offer of official commemoration and these choices and decisions remain with them. Of the more than two million Australians who have served our nation in our defence force since Federation, more than 1.6 million are not eligible for official commemoration. The responsibility for their commemoration rests with their families.

However, for those veterans who are not eligible for official commemoration, the OAWG can provide permission to incorporate the relevant service emblem on a privately arranged plaque or headstone.

If you are wondering about eligibility for a post-war commemoration, have a look at the OAWG's 'Being prepared' page on the DVA website (dva.gov.au, select 'Recognition' then 'Office of Australia War Graves') or call us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).



FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE, THIS WE WILL DO.

COMMEMORATIONS



Community once again at the centre of Anzac Day

The Anzac Day legacy was proudly on display in local communities across Australia. As a nation we collectively said ‘we will remember them’ – the fallen, those who currently serve, our veterans and their families.

Thousands of Australians either attended in person or watched the live broadcast of the Dawn Service and National Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial. Meanwhile, many more paid their respects at the end of their driveways, at local memorials or community commemorative services, or simply in their lounge rooms.

While overseas services were scaled back, Australians were still remembered at small local ceremonies in places such as Turkey and France.

The Virtual Poppy Wall was flooded with messages of remembrance, including from many schoolchildren, such as 13-year-old Elli who wrote, ‘Thank you to the brave Anzacs who helped serve this country in the wars. How much they did for us and the sacrifices they made will never be forgotten’.

DVA’s digital Anzac Day kitbag was downloaded thousands of times, with aged-care workers and scout groups among those to put these resources to good use.

The stories from our veteran community were on the airwaves, social media, online and TV. They included the story of Joe Flick, a proud Indigenous Australian whose grandfather served. Joe now devotes his time to remembering the service and sacrifice of all Indigenous service men and women.

Another story was that of modern-day veteran Alison Lee, who recalled an Anzac Day experience while she was serving. Alison had the honour of raising the Australian flag at the American base where she was posted. This allowed her to start a conversation with American soldiers about Anzac Day and what it means to Australians.

As we continue into 2022, regardless of what future challenges may present, the Anzac Day legacy will endure.



Above: Alison Lee, who raised the Australian flag at the US base where she was posted

Above left: The Dawn Service at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra

New AWM sculpture to recognise the sufferings of war and service

Following three years’ work with veterans, their families, ex-service organisations and the departments of Defence and Veterans’ Affairs, a new sculpture will be placed on the grounds of the Australian War Memorial (AWM) recognising the suffering caused by war and service.

At an event at the AWM on 16 June, then Minister for Veterans’ Affairs Darren Chester said the sculpture would provide a permanent place in recognition of those who have experienced and witnessed the ongoing traumas that can result from military service.

‘I have spoken with many veterans’ families and friends, including those who have lost someone to suicide, about how military service has affected them and how this can be better recognised at the

Australian War Memorial,’ Mr Chester said.

The project was driven by families of the late Jesse Bird and Peter Cafe, veterans who have experienced mental and physical wounds related to their service, and ex-service organisations, with consultations conducted with the wider community to inform the process.

Members of the stakeholder committee unanimously selected artist Alex Seton’s proposal, *Every drop shed in anguish*, which will be a field of sculpted Australian pearl marble droplets – up to one metre high – located in the Memorial’s Sculpture Garden.

‘Every droplet has a unique shape, defined by its delicate surface tension, as if about to burst,’ Mr Seton said. ‘Their rounded liquid forms suggest blood, sweat

or tears — for every drop ever shed in anguish.’

Attention is rightly given to those who died during war. However, those who were left with both mental and physical suffering from wounds and injuries sustained in service, or exposure to intense trauma or life-threatening conditions, often feel forgotten. By providing overdue recognition and understanding of the impact of service on our veterans and their families – including those left behind – it is hoped that this work of art will assist somehow in recovery.

The sculptural installation will provide a place in the AWM’s Sculpture Garden for visitors to grieve, to reflect on service experiences, and to remember the long-term cost of war and service.

‘This sculpture will be an enduring recognition



An artist’s impression of *Every drop shed in anguish*

for those affected by military service and serve as a reminder to us all of the impact of service on some of our personnel and their families, but importantly, provide them with hope and healing,’ said Mrs Bird.

‘The sculpture is intended to honour the sufferings of war and service – both seen and unseen,’ said Commissioner Gwen Cherne, Veteran Family Advocate, who attended the event.

The Government will provide \$1.2 million to cover

the cost of the sculpture’s installation.

The commission will take two years to craft and be a significant work of site-specific, contemporary art and a major addition to the AWM’s collection.

Subject to final approval by the National Capital Authority, the installation is expected to be completed in the second half of 2023. For more information on this project, you can visit the *Sufferings of War and Service* page of the AWM website (awm.gov.au).

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Peacekeeping stories to be told at the AWM

In September 1947, four Australians were deployed to Indonesia to act as UN-appointed military observers. They were the world's first peacekeepers. Since then, not a day has passed without an Australian peacekeeper serving somewhere in the world. Australia has made an estimated 40,000 individual deployments to more than 60 peacekeeping operations in more than 30 countries and disputed zones.



Members of the Australian contingent to the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC), February 1992.

By any measure, this is a story integral to Australian military history; but it remains relatively unknown by the general public. Many do not know of the hardships and dangers that Australian peacekeepers have faced, or their successes.

Australian War Memorial Director Matt Anderson is determined to ensure a permanent gallery space is created to speak to these stories. 'We owe it to every veteran of every generation to have their service recognised at the Memorial,' he says.

'We need to tell the stories of our contemporary operations and the overlooked contributions Australian servicemen and servicewomen have made in the defence of peace and on humanitarian deployments.'

Dr David Sutton, a senior historian and curator working on the development of new peacekeeping galleries at the Australian War Memorial, is hoping to contribute to this change. 'We are uncovering, through our research, amazing stories of Australian peacekeepers serving all around the world,' he says.

'Part of our challenge is that the Memorial has only been actively collecting peacekeeping material for a relatively short period of time. I encourage anyone who has served on a peacekeeping operation to get in touch by emailing: gallery.development@awm.gov.au.'

It is anticipated that a permanent display will open in 2024.

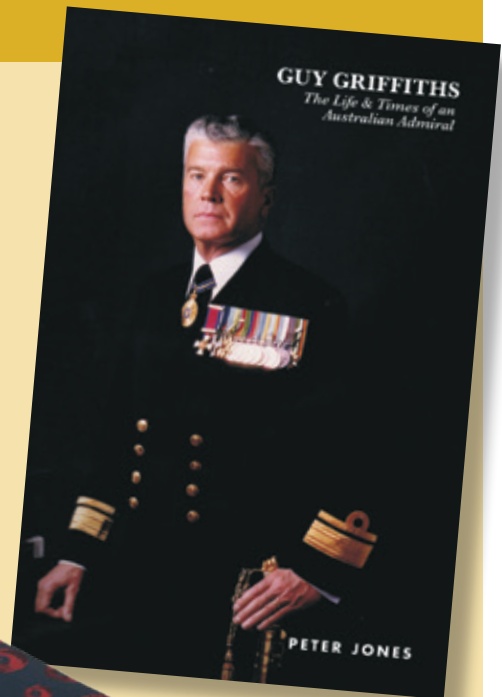
ITEMS FOR SALE

Guy Griffiths: The Life and Times of an Australian Admiral by Peter Jones

The authorised biography of Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths AO, DSO, DSC, RAN.

In his long career in the Royal Australian Navy, Guy Griffiths participated in its emergence as a capable middle-power force. He personally experienced the RAN's darkest days in the face of the Japanese onslaught and its finest hour in the Philippines Campaign of the Second World War. He also took part in its close involvements in the Korean War and then the Vietnam War.

Soft cover, photographs, 292 pages.



Flanders Poppy tie

Designed exclusively for the Australian War Memorial, this Flanders Poppy tie is ideal for special events and everyday wear. Featuring a red poppy pattern on a navy background, the crush-resistant fabric keeps the tie looking smart throughout the day.



Men's accessory set

Created in the likeness of the iconic Flanders Poppy, this men's accessory set is suitable for any commemorative occasion. The set includes a pair of cufflinks, a tiebar and lapel pin. Fashioned from red and black enamel, the set is presented in a black velvet gift box.



Notebook and pen set

Embossed with a poppy design, this stylish notebook features the iconic poem 'In Flanders Fields' by Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae on the rear cover. The lined A5 notebook includes a ribbon page-marker and is accompanied by a twist-style poppy pen using black ink.

ORDER FORM (please print clearly)

To order, simply complete the order form and post your cheque/money order or credit card details to (please allow up to 6 weeks for delivery): eSales Unit, Australian War Memorial, GPO Box 345, Canberra ACT 2601. Phone (02) 6243 4555 (select option 2). Or shop online at www.awm.gov.au/shop.

| | PRICE | NO OF ITEMS | TOTAL |
|---|------------------------------|-------------|-------|
| Guy Griffiths: <i>The Life and Times of an Australian Admiral</i> by Peter Jones | \$39.95 | | |
| Flanders Poppy tie | \$39.99 | | |
| Men's accessory set | \$49.99 | | |
| Notebook and pen set | \$14.99 | | |
| *Postage & handling (per delivery address) 1-3 items \$10.00; 4-9 items \$15.00; 10 or more items \$20.00 | | | |
| | *Postage and handling | \$ | |
| | Total amount | \$ | |

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Please provide your email address if you would like to receive the Memorial Shop e-newsletter for updates about new releases, special offers etc

NOTICEBOARD

NAVY

Fleet Air Arm—Op Bursa recognition

In October 2020, the Governor-General approved the award of the Australian Service Medal with clasp Counter Terrorism/Special Recovery, to personnel of HC723, HU816 and HS817 Squadrons, who participated in Operation Bursa in Bass Strait in the 1980s. Those people who believe they may qualify, can visit the website below for eligibility criteria and the application procedure.
Contact: Op Bursa Team
✉ Op.Bursa@defence.gov.au
🌐 www.faaaa.asn.au/operation-bursa-recognition/

R55980 - BOWKETT, George Douglas

On behalf of a relative, I am seeking information on former shipmate, George Douglas Bowkett. I believe they served together as cooks on HMAS *Vampire* during the 1960s. George may also have been known by his nickname 'Buck'. His last known whereabouts was Yeppoon, QLD.
Contact: Michael Lucas
✉ michael-lucas@netspace.net.au

Seeking Dave Adams ABMTP

Dave served on HMAS *Stuart* in 1972-73. Looking to make contact.
Contact: Ray Golden, Ex ABMTP
☎ 0458 104 232
✉ rpgolden@hotmail.com

Seeking Paul Frederick Dux RAN

I'm ex-US Army and, in the spring of 1970, I was on R&R in Hong Kong. I befriended an Australian sailor on shore leave from HMAS *Melbourne*. His name was Paul Frederick Dux and he went by the nickname 'The Duck'. As the evening progressed Dux decided he was going to go AWOL and I swapped clothes with him. Over the years, I have lost the uniform but still have Dux's head gear and would love to catch up with him.
Contact: David Layne
✉ d.layne@mchsi.com

Seeking 'Get The Bloody Job Done'

135th Assault Helicopter Badge for Memorial at Garden Island Naval Base, Perth.
Contact: PTE Ralph Hoger
☎ 08 9529 2405
✉ 2plus1@iinet.net.au

Seeking RAAF and Navy friends for Townsville Central Primary School reunion

Dianne Bennett ex-Navy - Darwin and ? 1960s; Jackie Madsen ex-RAAF - Melbourne and Darwin mid to late 1960s.
Contact: Andrea (Ivett) Jeffress or Janice Blank
☎ 07 4121 5854
✉ gazandymbol@gmail.com or js1108@icloud.com

ARMY

Return to Wewak 1970 booklet

I have this booklet, a smaller version in Pidgin English and some photos to give away. My late husband served with 2/4th Infantry Battalion.
Contact: Valerie O'Grady
☎ 07 5499 6353

Tristan Salvadori

Seeking to contact Tristan.
Contact: Judith Salvadori
✉ judithsalvadori@bigpond.com

Seeking Eric William Anderson

Eric graduated from OCS in June 1964 into RAAMC. As the class representative, I am seeking his contact details for our mailing list.
Contact: Peter Ingram
☎ 0422 412 586
✉ pmerryll74@gmail.com

15/88 Amiens Platoon Survivors of Grenade Accident 7th Feb 1989

Looking for former IET members of 15/88 Amiens Platoon, Depot Coy, School of Infantry, Singleton NSW - 1988/89, to let them know about the recent awarding of a Chief of Army Gold Group Commendation to the entire platoon. Please visit the website.
Contact: John Mark
☎ 0458 044 535
✉ johnmark@crandallmark.com.au
🌐 <https://crandallmark.com/1588amiens/>

Seeking Chris McKenna

Chris served with the Defence Cooperation team in Timor around 2007. I am keen to catch up and share some McKenna family history matters with him.
Contact: Bill Townsend
☎ 0426 639 205
✉ bill_townsend2003@yahoo.com

First 1ATF LAD - Vietnam

Missing members of the first HQ 1 Australian Task Force LAD who served in 1966/67.
Contact: Maurice Barclay
✉ mauricebarclay5@gmail.com

Looking for WRAAC - Jan Auburn (nee Hampton)

Frankie Reading, WRAAC at RMC early 1960 is seeking to contact Jan for catch-up.
Contact: Peter Perry
☎ 0418 959 001
✉ pp646193@bigpond.net.au

Seeking Colin Maxwell

RAAOC 2COD Broadmeadows, 1970. Paul Mosely and John Swan would like to contact you, mate.
Contact: John Rhyhan (Swanie)
☎ 0411 813 715
✉ swanie35@outlook.com.au

Seeking information on Frederick Mason AFV School 1942-1943

My late father enlisted in Jan 1942 and went to the AFV School at Puckapunyal, then transferred out to the Australian Base Supply Depot at Tottenham, Melbourne. Shortly after, he transferred to the AIF and then into 4 Aust

Base Supply Depot, Brisbane. I am seeking any information or photos relating to the AFV School 1942-1943 and 4 Aust. Base Supply Depot 1944-46. Also wondering if any organisation or group may have specific information on the school or depot in those years.
Contact: Kingsley Mason
☎ 0409 824 743
✉ kingsleywmason@gmail.com

Seeking former School of Artillery members

Seeking WO2 Steve 'Polly' Farmer and Sgt Steve Boyd who served with me at North Head in the period 1988-90.
Contact: Brian Flewell-Smith
✉ gunnerbfs@gmail.com

Second Military District Sergeants Mess Welfare Fund

Seeking information on a welfare or similar fund established by the Sergeants Mess at Victoria Barracks, Sydney for Permanent Army members pre-WWII. My father was a member. The title of the fund above may not be correct.
Contact: Peter Johnston
☎ 0408 981 691
✉ petelaine@bigpond.com

Seeking New Members - 8th and 9th Battalion RAR

Persons eligible include partners, spouses, widows and other next of kin of members or former members of the 8th and 9th Battalion RAR.
Contact: Ennio Tavani
☎ 0419 900 780
✉ tavanie@yahoo.com.au

Seeking Robert Charles Davidson

Robert volunteered for Vietnam and was living at 10 Berry St, North Narrabeen, NSW. He would be now aged 73-75. I last saw him on the *Conflict* TV show. Would love to make contact.
Contact: Mick O'Donnell
☎ 07 4966 4460

Seeking Kevin Grula

Craftsman 2794747 RAEME attached 1 Fd Sqn Wksp/Nui Dat, 1971. 50th Anniversary reunion October 2021.
Contact: Stephen Gray
☎ 0408 657 122
✉ sgillmore@bigpond.com

Australian Personnel in South Vietnam 1973

Looking for any personnel who stayed on after the end of the Vietnam War and may have been part of the Saigon Embassy Guard or other duties right up to the end of March 1973.
Contact: Richard Barry OAM
☎ 02 6792 3114
✉ richyvon47@hotmail.com

National Service - 3 year Army Reserve

Wanting any official documentation pertaining to the automatic three-year commitment in the Army Reserve on completion of two-year National Service. Looking for specific obligations and government power during this

time. Please no assumptions. Copies of MBI's or RO's would be excellent.
Contact: Richard Barry OAM
☎ 02 6792 3114
✉ richyvon47@hotmail.com

Seeking contact with Capt S Anderson

ATO at 311 Supply Coy Ammo Pl Wirlinga 1988-89. Believed to have joined the SA Police after leaving the Army.
Contact: James Trevaskis
☎ 0427 797 717
✉ jamitrav@hotmail.com

1 Fd Sqn Wksp Members

Seeking the following 1 Fd Sqn Wksp members: 42878 John (Pres) Kennedy, 4719065 Robert Hawkins and 2787894 John Salter.
Contact: Mick Leonard
☎ 02 6059 2771
✉ mick.jude@bigpond.com

AIR FORCE

Seeking Air Force Ring

The ring contained a blue stone encircled with the lettering 'Royal Australian Air Force'. On one side was the RAAF insignia and on the other side was a kangaroo in the circle. Wondering if they are still around.
Contact: Paul Noble
✉ 53 Bloodwood Cres, Molendinar, QLD, 4214.

Seeking relatives of airmen in RAAF air crashes on Mt Disappointment, VIC

In memory of the 8 RAAF airmen, a memorial is to be unveiled in August 2021. Seeking relatives of Leslie Langusch, Norman Greasley, Ralph Erskine, Kenneth Wood, Phillip West, Roy Hall and William Falahey.
Contact: Trevor Vient
☎ 0457 871 325
✉ tvient@bigpond.net.au

Seeking Barry William Williams

B Flight 3 NSTU RAAF Canberra - Jan/June 1956.
Contact: John Miller
☎ 0458 100 147
✉ blue_crane@bigpond.com

Identity of anchor

I believe anchor was one supplied to Catalina FB Aircraft in wartime. It is made of 2" folded stainless steel with wide shaped patterned blades with holding ring. Weighs 76kgs. Inscribed with 'Northhill Co Inc Los Ang Cal US pat 2075857'.
Contact: Alec N Howard, 19 Oakwood Rd, Rathmines, NSW, 2283.
✉ friendsofrathmines@gmail.com

Seeking Mickey Dodd and Wayne O'Dowd

Ex-RAAF Box Packers, both known from BSEDN. Mickey was posted to BSRIC in the early 80s.
Contact: Paul Noble
☎ 0411 401 776

Seeking Terence Scott - 38649

Served in Vietnam 1967 in 7RAR. Lived in West Preston, Victoria and went to school at Marist Brothers, Preston. Born in 1947 and may have passed away in 1971.
Contact: Rino Frigo
☎ 03 9436 8935

MISCELLANEOUS

Australian WWII Bomber Pilot story - RAF Italy

Voice from the Stars - A Pathfinder's Story by Tom Scotland DFC. A moving account of a RAAF Pathfinder's WWII air battles and escapades over Europe. Offered here to vets and families for the cost of postage and packing only. This is \$5.50 within Australia.
Contact: Peter Scotland
✉ info@writerspen.com.au
🌐 www.writerspen.com.au

Seeking Emma

About 14 years ago, a woman called Emma was trying to get in contact with Kevan Harrald who went through the SAS at WA's Swanbourne Barracks back in 1963. I am his widow and I would like to get in contact with her.
Contact: Gabriella E Mordan
☎ 0419 825 917
✉ gabi.mordan@hotmail.com

Seeking flags

The Australian Flag Society is seeking photographs of the Australian flag at war or any other military flags.
Contact: Nigel Morris
☎ 0431 149 177
✉ nigelrmorris@hotmail.com

Nowra and District TPI Social and Welfare Club

Are you a Military TPI looking for social interaction? Come and join us. We are seeking new members. We hold our meetings at the Nowra Ex Serviceman's Club on the third Tuesday of each month at 11.00am, as well as having regular social outings and lunches. Spouses and partners are very welcome.
Contact: Leanne Wehmeier, Secretary
☎ 0419 464 313
✉ leannew70@bigpond.com

Our Spirit book

This is a unique book of the creative works reflecting the service stories of 28 ADF women from the 1960s to today, together with a timeline of 'firsts' for ADF women. Supported by DVA Saluting Their Service Grant Program and the Women Veterans Network Australia, edited and published by Jennifer Crane BSSc, MLitt and Melanie Bird CSC. Book price \$20 (including postage). Orders and queries to email address below.
Contact: Jennifer Crane
☎ 0434 726 703
✉ ourspiritcollection@hotmail.com
🌐 <https://ourspiritcollection.weebly.com/>