

VETAFFAIRS



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Australia honours Vietnam veterans

On 18 August more than 2,000 Australians gathered in the nation's capital to honour the service and sacrifice of our Vietnam veterans.

The National Commemorative Service on Vietnam Veterans' Day was the culmination of a historic year, as we mark the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Some 60,000 Australians served in the war, more than 3,000 were wounded and 523 lost their lives.

For the full feature, turn to pages 26-27.



Budget 2023-24

Federal Budget 2023-24

7



Veteran Employment Program launched

18



ARRTS program proves a military muse

20-21



80th anniversary of the Centaur

25

Darwin Veterans' and Families' Hub opens



The Veterans' and Families' Hubs network has expanded with Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh officially opening the *Mates4Mates Veteran and Family Wellbeing Centre* in Darwin.

This is the second location to be opened by Mates4Mates in the Northern Territory under the Veterans' and Families' Hubs program, with support being provided from its Palmerston site since May 2021. Services will now be provided at both Palmerston and Stuart Park, helping veterans and families across the Top End to access essential services from two locations.

Minister Keogh was provided with a tour of the new hub, which includes mental health and physical recovery clinical services, a gym, a veterans' lounge, as well as space for Mates4Mates social connection activities, including a BBQ area.

'It was my great privilege to officially open the *Mates4Mates Veteran and Family Wellbeing Centre*, part of our national Veterans' and Families' Hubs network,' Minister Keogh said.

'This purpose-designed hub will add to the services already available to veterans in Darwin. This is all about providing a safe space that is culturally appropriate for serving and ex-serving members and their families to come to access services and referrals, exercise, learn

something new, or just have a brew and make connections.'

Mates4Mates is working closely with a range of service providers and partners, including Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling, Soldier On and Kookaburra Kids Foundation, to provide services such as assistance with transition, employment, family, advocacy services and mental health support.

Mates4Mates General Manager Emma Whitehead said the centre wouldn't have been possible without the Australian Government's \$5 million contribution. 'Mates4Mates, is committed to creating centres where veterans and families can come together safely, receive the support they need, and access a range of programs and services that are designed to help them navigate the challenges they might be facing,' Emma said.

'Mates4Mates has served almost 10,000 veterans and family members in the last 10 years and works in partnership with other organisations to provide those impacted by service access to more support services, more often, and in the easiest way possible.'

For more details visit dva.gov.au/vfhubs.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs respects and gives thanks to all who have served in our Defence Force, and the families who support them.

CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| NEWS..... | 2-7 |
| HEALTH & WELLBEING..... | 8-13 |
| WIDOWS' NEWS..... | 14-15 |
| ESO NEWS..... | 16-17 |
| TRANSITION..... | 18 |
| FAMILIES..... | 19 |
| FEATURES | 20-22 |
| BOOKSHELF | 23-24 |
| COMMEMORATIONS | 25-29 |
| AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL..... | 30 |
| NOTICEBOARD..... | 31-32 |



FROM THE DEPARTMENT

Alison Frame
Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs

It is now over seven months since I assumed the role of Secretary – a complex role that is both very rewarding and, at times challenging.

I am thankful to the veterans, veterans' families, ex-service organisations and community groups who have so generously engaged with me and shared their expertise, experience and ideas. They have deepened my understanding of the needs of the veteran community and also highlighted the progress that DVA has made and the opportunities ahead.

My engagements with DVA staff around the country have been similarly insightful. So many of our DVA staff engage directly with veterans and their families, and I have seen first hand their commitment to continuously improving our support to veterans and their families. These interactions and the poignant commemorative services I've had the privilege to attend have shown me the human face of the department's core mission: to support those who serve, or have served, and recognise their service and sacrifice.

Fulfilling this mission is, of course, dependent on our resourcing. The Government's May Budget included an additional \$328.1 million to retain over 480 DVA staff and ensure the department has modern, efficient systems to process claims and payments. (You can read more on pages 7 and 29.)

The vital work of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide continues, and DVA actively supports this through responding to requests from the Commission. Appearing as a witness at the Adelaide hearings, I discussed the positive, significant reform that DVA has undertaken, while also outlining the work that we are doing to improve responses for some veterans and families who continue to experience difficulties accessing our services.

I also shared my priorities, which are to continue our implementation of the Interim Report recommendations and to ensure all DVA staff are supported and well equipped to do this.

We continue to be focused on improving compensation claims processing in order to reduce the backlog as fast as possible. The pace at which we process claims is increasing, and that rate accelerates as we bring more staff online, which in turn means we are getting support to our clients more quickly.

We continue to prioritise older claims, and also newly received claims where the personal circumstances of the veteran need consideration. To make it easier for medical practitioners to provide the required information for a claim, we are simplifying over 200 complex medical forms and reducing the amount of information we request. We have already reduced 19 of the most commonly used medical forms into seven simpler forms.

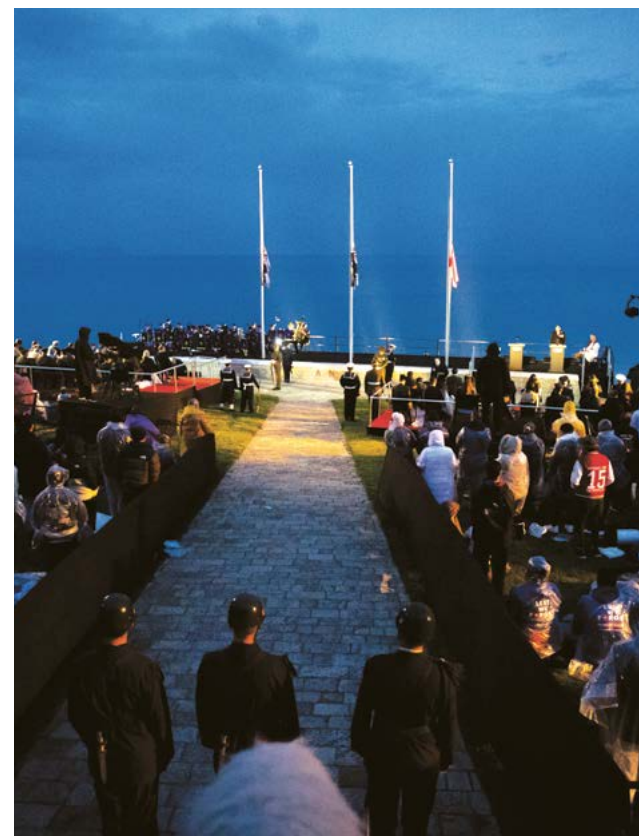
With both the people and the systems needed to tackle the backlog now coming online, it is encouraging to see progress. As at 30 June 2023, the number of staff involved in compensation claims processing activities had doubled since the same time last year. At the end of July, the claims backlog stood at about 30,000 – down by one third from a peak of more than 45,000 claims in September last year.

We know that transition is often a challenging time for veterans and their families, and the Royal Commission has certainly highlighted this. The new \$24 million Veterans' Employment Program will promote the skills and experience veterans offer the civilian workforce and help Australian businesses to create work environments where veterans can thrive. (You can find out more on page 18.)



Addressing the 2023 Female Veterans Policy Forum.

We continue to engage with the veteran community, including through our Female Veterans and Veterans' Families Policy Forums. I valued the opportunity to meet with the groups and witnessed their commitment as they discussed challenging issues such as protective factors for female veteran suicide, veteran homelessness, family violence and others. (You can read more on page 7.)



Anzac Day Dawn Service at Gallipoli (Image: Defence)

This is a year of very significant commemorations. On Anzac Day, I had the immense privilege of attending the Dawn Service at Gallipoli. It was a profound experience, the memory of which will stay with me for some time.

More recently we remembered Australian service in the Korean War, which ended in the Armistice 70 years ago (see page 25). On 18 August, DVA was proud to host a very moving National Commemorative Service in the nation's capital for our Vietnam War veterans, marking 50 years since the end of Australia's involvement in the conflict. (You can read more on pages 26 and 27).

It was with some sadness that we recently bid a fond farewell to our Repatriation Commissioner Don Spinks AM. Don made a significant difference in his four years in the role. Don fostered strong relationships across the veteran and Defence communities and was pivotal in strengthening engagement across the sector. I wish Don all the very best for the future. An announcement on the new Repatriation Commissioner is imminent.

I look forward to continuing to actively engage with the veteran community and seek your input to improvements that will make a difference.



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Department of Veterans' Affairs

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FROM THE MINISTER

The Hon Matt Keogh MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel

Securing a better future for veterans and their families is my key priority.

We're making progress - this year's Federal Budget increased funding to the Department of Veterans' Affairs so it's now better resourced than it has been in three decades.

We've provided funding to maintain hundreds of additional staff, modernise and sustain ageing ICT systems, and ensure more timely payments and access to services for veterans and families - significant investments that will further reduce the veteran compensation claims backlog.

DVA is now making strong progress in reducing this backlog, it's down more than 30 per cent from the peak in 2022.

The Budget also allocated just over \$33 million to triple the Veterans' Access Payment. This increase will make it easier for veterans to see a GP. The increased payment, which comes into effect from 1 November, will help to ensure GPs continue to service veterans with no out of pocket costs.

The Budget also expanded eligibility for the Acute Support Package, which provides support for veterans and their families who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing crisis. This support now includes grand-carers - grandparents who are full-time carers of the children of veterans. The changes came into effect on 1 July.

These initiatives will all enable the department to provide veterans and families the services and supports you need and deserve - quickly.

In the current tight labour market, skilled workers are in hot demand, however many businesses aren't always aware of the great contribution that veterans can bring to the civilian workforce.

The new \$24 million Veteran Employment Program will support employers to build their understanding of the unique contribution that veterans can make to their businesses. This program will also ensure that veterans' formal and informal skills are properly recognised and understood in civilian workplaces and by educational institutions, so they can get a civilian qualification sooner. I will be monitoring the success of this program with great interest.

Our roll out of Veterans' and Families' Hubs across the country is progressing well. In May, I was delighted to officially open the Mates4Mates Veteran and Family Wellbeing Centre in Darwin. It will provide greater access to essential support and services for Defence personnel, veterans and families in the Top End. In June, RSL Tasmania was awarded \$5 million to establish a Veterans' and Families' Hub network across the state.

More recently local organisations around the country have begun to be awarded grant funding

to develop business cases as they seek to establish a Hub in their regions. The Hubs are about bringing together and coordinating services in a place that is welcoming to the veteran community in a way that's tailored to the specific needs of each veteran community they're located in.

Throughout 2023, I've also participated in a number of significant commemorations, close to the hearts of all Australians.

On Anzac Day, I was privileged to represent the Australian Government at Gallipoli as we marked the 108th anniversary of the Allied landings on the peninsula. On behalf of all Australians, I paid tribute to not only those who served in the First World War, but to all of our personnel who have engaged in conflict, peacekeeping or humanitarian operations.

In July, I had the honour of representing Australia in the Republic of Korea to commemorate 70 years since the Korean War armistice. More than 350 Australians lost their lives during the war and in the post-armistice period. I visited our Aussie personnel, stationed in the Joint Security Area of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), met with veterans and their families and paid my respects at the United Nations Military Cemetery and the UN Forces Monument.



At Anglesea Barracks to announce RSL Tasmania receiving a \$5 million grant to build a network of Veterans and Families Hubs



With Assistant Minister Matt Thistlethwaite at BRAVO Electrical and HVAC to launch the Veteran Employment Program



Delivering the commemorative address at the Anzac Day Dawn Service on Gallipoli.

This year is an important year for our Vietnam veterans, as we mark the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. On 18 August - Vietnam Veterans' Day - thousands gathered at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra for a national service to commemorate this anniversary. To each and every one of our Vietnam veterans: We honour you and we thank you.

It is timely to remind all our Vietnam veterans and their families that a Commemorative Medallion and Certificate of Commemoration is available from DVA. More information is available on the DVA website or by phoning 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372). If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to apply.

Finally, we wrapped up formal consultation on the Government's Veterans' Legislation Reform Pathway in May and are in the process of evaluating the feedback and developing draft legislation for further feedback soon.

We are making progress on improving the services and support available to veterans and their families, and I take this opportunity to reassure you that my resolve on this is unwavering.



FROM THE ASSISTANT MINISTER

The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP

Assistant Minister for Defence and Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs

In exciting news, we are just days away from the start of the Invictus Games in Düsseldorf. The Games is an adaptive multi-sport competition for veterans and serving personnel who have been wounded, injured or become ill during their military service.

I was thrilled to announce the co-captains and meet the 31 athletes of Team Australia before they headed off to Germany (see page 9). I am sure you will join with me in wishing all our athletes the very best of luck. Go Aussies!

As many of you now, transition can be a testing time in the life of someone exiting the ADF. One of the best signs of a successful transition is movement into meaningful employment soon after leaving the ADF.

Recently, Minister Keogh and I visited BRAVO Electrical & HVAC, a successful, veteran-owned business in my electorate of Kingsford Smith where eighty per cent of staff are veterans.

Veterans gain vital skills during their time in the military, such as leadership, teamwork, agility, discipline, and the ability to handle pressure – all highly sought-after in today's economy.

BRAVO shows the unique value veterans bring to employers and is an example of what can be achieved when employers are helped to understand the advantages of hiring veterans and supported to retain them. The Government's new \$24 million Veteran Employment Program reinforces our commitment to veterans, recognising their diverse skills and facilitating their transition to civilian life.

Back in April, I had the honour of representing Australia at the Anzac Dawn Service at the Australian National Memorial in France, near the village of Villers-Bretonneux. It was on the Western Front that Australia suffered its greatest losses in the First World War. This year also marked the 105th anniversary of the Battles of Villers-Bretonneux, where Australian and British troops defended and then took back the town from the advancing German forces.

I was proud to pay tribute to the service of the hundreds of thousands of Australians who answered our nation's call, and the hundreds more thousands who have answered it since.

Just two days earlier, I was delighted to be at the launch of The Legacy Centenary Torch Relay at Pozières – a place steeped in Australian sacrifice. For 100 years, Legacy has supported the families of Australian service personnel who have died or lost their health as a result of their service. I was lucky to catch up with the relay again recently in Tamworth (NSW) and at Hyde Park in Sydney. It was a great honour to carry the torch on a small leg of the relay and count among the 1,500 torch bearers who are taking the torch on its six-month journey to visit all 44 Legacy Clubs in Australia (and 45 world-wide).

The Australian Government is proud to have provided a one-off grant of \$400,000 to support Legacy's centenary commemorative activities. On behalf of the Government and our veteran community, I thank Legacy for the wonderful work it has done over the past 100 years!

Letter to the editor

My mother Enid May Greenfield turned 102 on 11 May 2023. She has just been awarded The Civilian Service Medal 1939-1945 through the Prime Minister's Office (Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat). The award is for service in the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) where she volunteered at Batlow picking apples and other fruit with her sister Vivien Tracey.

This award was only brought to my attention via my mother-in-law, Norma Speechly, last year through your magazine. This honour has only been awarded since 1992, and I am gratefully thankful to both your department and my mother-in-law for bringing it to my attention.

Many Thanks
Alan Greenfield



Get in touch

Vetaffairs welcomes Letters to the Editor by emailing vetaffairs@dva.gov.au or writing to GPO Box 9998 Brisbane QLD 4001. All letters must carry the sender's full name, address and contact telephone number. Letters may be edited and not all letters may be published due to space constraints. We may not be able to reply to your letter personally but we will try to. Letters are published in good faith and Vetaffairs takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the content.

Free flood cover for veterans and ADF members

Anywhere it can rain, it can flood. Be sure you're covered with DVA's Defence Homes Insurance Scheme.

Heavy rain that turns into flood can devastate homes and infrastructure, and even cost human lives. Last year, more than 10,000 people were left homeless across the Northern Rivers region of NSW when the Wilson River broke its banks. Throughout south-east Queensland, more than 20,000 homes were inundated.

The Insurance Council of Australia estimates the cost from this series of floods at \$4.3 billion – the fourth highest damage bill from a natural disaster in Australia's history.

Even one inch of flooding can cause significant damage and cost you thousands of dollars to fix. Unlike many insurers, Defence Service Homes (DSH) Insurance includes automatic flood cover at



no additional cost, protecting policyholders against damage caused by weather events such as rain, storms and floods.

DSH Insurance covers you for all kinds of flooding, including from lakes, creeks, dams and canals. You are insured for loss or damage caused by water from floods, tidal waves and storms. You will also have peace of mind knowing that a DSH Insurance policy covers you for temporary accommodation if you are displaced from your home due to a flood while structural and interior damage to your property is repaired.

DSH Insurance offers replacement cover in the event of a total loss – a stress-free option to

prevent you from being potentially underinsured.

To make sure we get your premium right we assess your individual flood risk at the address level. This involves calculating the premium using local flood mapping data, and property factors such as building wall and roof type, elevation and the cost to rebuild.

You can get a Home Building Insurance quote online in minutes at online.dsh.gov.au with flood cover included in the quote at no additional cost. As always – terms and conditions apply. Visit our website at dsh.gov.au/insurance or talk to our customer service team today on 1300 552 662.

Annual increase to travel allowances

Travel allowances for transport, meals and accommodation under DVA's Travel for Treatment Program increased on 1 July 2023 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 entitled 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 program is to assist with travel expenses to the closest practical provider for an entitled person and their medically required attendant, not necessarily to reimburse the entire cost incurred. For further information on closest practical provider requirements and attendant travel, please visit the DVA website (search for 'Claim travel expenses under the RTS').

The Travel for Treatment Program is available to holders of:

- Veteran Gold Cards and Veteran White Cards (for specific conditions) eligible under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*. They are entitled to assistance with travel expenses when travelling to receive treatment for an accepted service-related condition or for treatment of a specific condition covered under Non-Liability Health Care.
- 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* who are entitled to assistance with travel 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.

New travel allowances from 1 July 2023

| Type of allowance | Measure | New allowance from 1 July 2023 | Travel with a medically required attendant † |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Private vehicle | Per kilometre | 41.8 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 | \$172.70 | x2 |
| Commercial accommodation capital city – single* | Per night | \$205.20 | x2 |
| Entitled person and medically required attendant – commercial accommodation – shared* | Per night | \$280.90 | x1 |
| Subsidised accommodation – single* | Per night | \$107.90 | x2 |
| Private accommodation* | Per night | \$53.80 | x2 |
| Meal allowance – more than 50 km but less than 200 km from entitled person's home to the treatment location | Per day | \$17.20 | x2 |
| Meal allowance – more than 200 km from entitled person's home to the treatment location | Per day | \$34.90 | 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 (x1). If they each have a single room, the allowance for both rooms is paid (x2).



More NSW veterans receiving automatic rego renewals

More veterans living in New South Wales no longer need to attend a Service NSW centre in person to re-establish their eligibility for vehicle registration and driver's licence concessions each year.

DVA clients who benefit from this system upgrade, courtesy of Transport for NSW, are those falling under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*. Specifically, it is for veterans who are SRDP-eligible (Special Rate Disability Pension), those assessed with 50 or more impairment points, and Wholly Dependent Partners.

Eligible NSW clients simply need to ensure their DVA file number is recorded in the Transport for NSW system to automatically receive their concessions. To check if your DVA file number has been recorded, contact Service NSW on 13 77 88. If it hasn't, the operator can process the request over the phone and validate your details. Alternatively, you can attend a service centre for assistance.

For new concession clients, please call Service NSW or attend a service centre and provide your DVA file number to be set up in the system; you may also be eligible for a pro-rata refund on your transaction. Once established in the system, concessions will automatically be applied to licence and registration transactions.

There are no changes for eligible clients assessed under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* – you already receive these benefits.

In another great outcome for eligible NSW veterans, your vehicle registration will also automatically renew each year if you meet the eligibility criteria. To activate this benefit, make sure your DVA file number is recorded, your compulsory third party (CTP) insurance has been received and a vehicle eSafety check has been completed (if required).

You can find more information about your entitlements in the veterans' guide on the Service NSW website (service.nsw.gov.au/guide/veterans) or on the app.

The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal

The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal is an independent statutory body established under the *Defence Act 1903* to consider Defence honours and awards matters.

The Tribunal provides an avenue for veterans to seek review of eligibility for a defence honour, a defence award, or a foreign award, after an application has been refused by Defence.

A reviewable decision is a decision to refuse to recommend a person, or a group of persons, for a defence honour (such as a gallantry or conspicuous service award), a defence award (such as a campaign or long service award) or a foreign award.

The service that is the subject of the reviewable decision needs to have been with, or at the direction of, the ADF and rendered after 3 September 1939 (the beginning of the Second World War).

It is important to note that the Tribunal can only review Defence decisions. This means that an initial application for an honour or award needs to be made to Defence, and refused, before seeking review in the Tribunal. A person seeking review in the Tribunal must be either:

- the person who made the original application to Defence, or
- one of a group of people who made that application to Defence.

The Tribunal cannot review:

- applications to amend the eligibility criteria for defence honours, defence awards, or foreign awards
- applications for Australian awards that are not defined as defence honours or defence awards under the *Defence Regulation 2016* (such as unit citations or badges)
- applications to create a new honour or award, or
- eligibility for repatriation benefits.

More information about the Tribunal, including how to make an application for review, can be found on its website: defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au. Alternatively, you can phone the Tribunal Secretariat on (02) 6266 1019.



Energy rebate to provide bill relief

The Commonwealth, state and territory governments are working together to provide targeted and temporary electricity bill relief to eligible households.

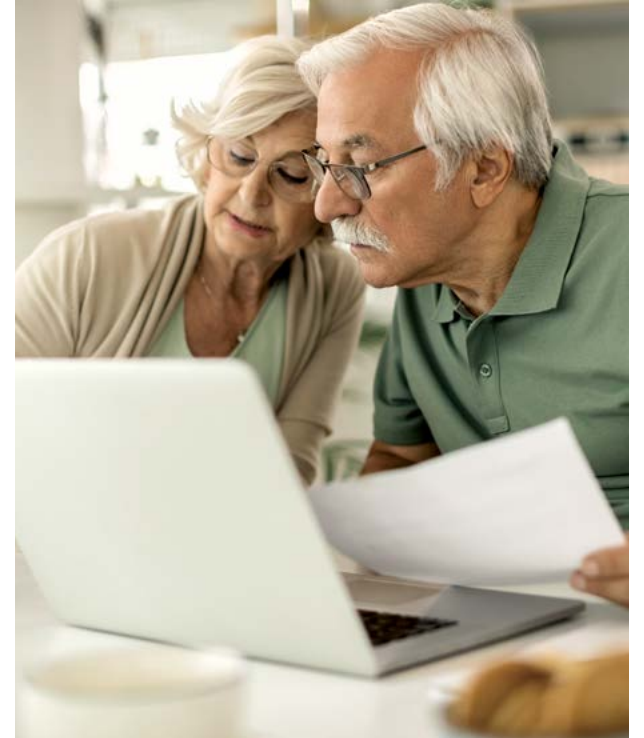
You can get bill relief if you are the primary electricity account holder or, for some energy providers, another named account holder on your electricity account. You must also hold a Pensioner Concession Card, a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card or a Veteran Gold Card.

Your household can only get one bill relief rebate, even if there is more than one eligible person living there. You can only get this bill relief for your principal place of residence. How much you get depends on where you live, with between \$175 and \$500 available to targeted households and \$325 to \$650 available to small businesses.

If you are eligible, are not named on the bill and you pay for electricity, contact your electricity provider to discuss your options.

If you live in Queensland or Western Australia, you do not need to take any action because these state governments are including this energy bill relief in their state rebate programs, which are being given to all households.

If you currently receive energy concessions, in most cases the electricity provider will automatically apply the bill relief to your electricity account and you do not need to do anything. This will reduce the amount you owe on your next bill. How and when this happens depends on where you live as each state and territory may do things a little differently.



If you don't receive energy concessions, please go to energy.gov.au/bill-relief to find a link to your state or territory with instructions about what to do. This could be to contact your energy provider or your state/territory government with your concession card type and the DVA file number on it. Give them consent to check your card online for payment of the rebate.

If you get your electricity from your strata or landlord in a caravan park, apartment building, retirement home or village and your household is eligible for the bill relief, you will not automatically receive the rebate. However, you will be able to access a direct payment through your state or territory government.

Please check energy.gov.au/bill-relief for the latest information.

Modernising DVA – MyService changes

DVA is working to further modernise our technology, improving the efficiency of the claims administration system and the experience for veterans. This program of work will deliver important updates to MyService, the primary point of access to DVA's online services.

The MyService changes will make it easier for you to do your DVA business online:

- You can submit claims and track their progress through MyService, add documents and other information to support your claim, as well as view the outcome.
- We are working towards expanding the types of documents and information you can provide when submitting claims in MyService. These updates will be progressively rolled out in the coming months.
- You can access official letters in MyService that confirm your DVA payments and concession entitlements.
- You can set your preferences in MyService to receive correspondence through your myGov inbox and access a range of DVA letters.

- When you receive a letter from DVA in your myGov inbox, myGov will automatically send you a message to let you know you have mail, and you can access it on any device wherever you have internet access.

Did you know that you can manage your income support needs, update personal and contact details and view a digital version of your Veteran Card online? You can also book transport, apply for free mental health treatment and claim travel reimbursements for approved medical treatment.

For more information on the range of options, including how to register for MyService using your myGov account, visit dva.gov.au/myservice.

The department is committed to providing simple, accessible and modern online services for our veteran community. If you need help navigating the online environment, we're here to help. Call us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).





Participants at the Veterans' Families Policy Forum

Forums inform DVA policy

In June we hosted the Female Veterans & Veterans' Families Policy Forums over two events in Canberra. In previous years, the forum has brought together women veterans and veteran family members to work on shared challenges. This year, two separate events allowed DVA and our participants more time to explore their unique perspectives in depth.

Each policy forum brought a group of passionate and informed community members together with senior DVA leaders and policy-makers. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Matt Keogh MP, and DVA Secretary Alison Frame attended each forum and took the opportunity to engage in discussion with the forum members.

Key topics explored at this year's events included:

- protective factors for female veterans at risk of suicide
- female veteran physical and mental health needs
- family and domestic violence
- the draft Defence and Veteran Family Strategy
- housing insecurity and homelessness in the female veteran and veteran families communities
- the Veterans' Entitlements Legislative Reform Pathway.

The forums take a 'solutions focus', so for each of the topics explored the participants worked on practical solutions to make a meaningful difference.

Participants were invited to present to the forums on initiatives they are driving in their communities. These insight presentations covered diverse and powerful topics, including the effects of traumatic brain injury, homelessness supports, recent medical research, recent experiences of transition from the ADF, and a range of new ex-service organisation projects.

DVA uses the information and insights from the forums to directly

inform our policy and programs, and the ongoing improvement of DVA supports and services.

Thank you for your ongoing support, for continually engaging with us to assist in the future for all veterans and families to come up with our ideas, real and viable solutions for future generations to come.
(Forum participant)

DVA would like to thank all those who attended the forums for their time, energy and passion. A report summarising the discussions and feedback will be available on the DVA website later in 2023. Keep your eye out on our social media and latest news for updates.

Budget 2023-24 supports veterans and families



The Australian Government is investing an additional \$328.1 million over four years to support the more than 340,000 veterans and dependants accessing services through DVA. This builds on the \$537.5 million invested in the October 2022 Budget as part of the Government's commitment to ensuring a better future for veterans and families.

The 2023-24 Federal Budget makes significant investments that will further reduce the veteran compensation claims backlog.

An investment of \$64.1 million in 2023-24 will retain over 480 DVA staff who are working to deliver frontline services to veterans and families and \$254.1 million over four years has been provided to modernise and sustain ageing IT systems to ensure more timely payments and access to services for veterans and families through DVA.

These investments support the Government's response to the interim recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Funding has been provided for technology upgrades at the Sir John Monash Centre, with \$7.4 million over four years (\$8.3 million over six years) to maintain cutting edge multi-media technology that gives visitors to the centre an interactive and immersive experience of what our diggers went through during the First World War. (For more information about this initiative, see page 29.)

Other measures in the Budget 2023-24 package supporting health and wellbeing include:

- \$500,000 over four years to expand eligibility for the Acute Support Package introduced in the October 2022 Budget to include grand-carers - grandparents who are also full-time carers of children of veterans
- \$2 million over two years to allow DVA to continue important mental health awareness and suicide intervention training for volunteers supporting veterans.

For more information, visit dva.gov.au/budget2023-24.

Advocate to help a mate

Just like Simpson and his donkey, Australians have a long history of helping their mates. Did you know that you can help your mates by volunteering with an Ex-Service Organisation (ESO) as an advocate?

Advocates associated with an ESO provide free, valuable advice and assistance to veterans and their families who are in need.

There are two veteran advocacy categories:

- Wellbeing advocates help veterans and families access a broad range of government and community services such as health and housing support to maintain wellbeing.
- Compensation advocates help veterans and families submit compensation claims to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Some advocates can also assist with appeal processes.

You don't need to be a veteran to become an advocate and you can train in both categories.

The Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) provides free training available to ESO-associated advocates, supporting them to provide free quality advice to veterans and families. The program is a partnership between



DVA and ESOs. ATDP provides a nationally accredited Course in Military Advocacy delivered by Major Training Services.

The course consists of six elective Units of Competency across two major streams: Wellbeing (2 Levels); and Compensation (4 Levels). You can choose which Units of Competency you'd like to complete depending on your interest.

If you are interested in becoming an advocate, simply contact your local ESO. You can use the ATDP Advocacy Register to find the ESOs in your area at advocateregister.org.au

Veterans and their families can also use the ATDP Advocacy Register to find an advocate to access support. For more information about the training program, please visit the ATDP website: web.atdp.org.au

High blood pressure in veterans



PROF JENNY FIRMAN AM

Chief Health Officer

Department of Veterans' Affairs

One of the most common things checked by doctors in routine consultations is blood pressure. In Australia, we know that one third of the adult population has high blood pressure (hypertension) and cardiovascular disease causes about 25% of all deaths each year. Many of these deaths are preventable through early detection and treatment. Reducing high blood pressure can help to prevent stroke, coronary heart disease, chronic kidney disease and the abnormal heart rhythm known as atrial fibrillation.

If you needed another reason to be vaccinated for COVID, recent research in the UK has shown that in a large study looking at more than 16,000 people with the virus, those with high blood pressure had a 22% higher risk of hospitalisation and death than those with normal blood pressure. Those whose blood pressure was well controlled by medication had a similar risk to those without high blood pressure.

Your doctor will check your blood pressure as part of an overall cardiovascular risk check. They will also check your lipids (this includes cholesterol), whether you have diabetes, your smoking history, your family history and your age. Unfortunately, the risk of cardiovascular disease increases with age – a non-modifiable risk factor.

While there have been improvements in the population in some of these risk factors, the vast majority (about 95%) of Australian adults still have at least one modifiable risk factor, and

two-thirds (66%) have three or more risk factors at the same time.

If your doctor finds that your blood pressure is high, they will often want to check this again at the next visit, or ask you to do some measurements at home, or to undergo ambulatory blood pressure measurement. The latter involves wearing a blood pressure monitor for 24 hours that records the pressure at regular intervals while the wearer goes about their usual activities during the day, and at night while asleep. This provides the best information about blood pressure and can be very useful for those people with 'white coat' hypertension whose blood pressure goes up whenever they are in a clinical setting, such as visiting their doctor.



In Australia, we know that one third of the adult population has high blood pressure (hypertension) and cardiovascular disease causes about 25% of all deaths each year.

If your doctor finds your blood pressure is high, lifestyle interventions can help and are usually the first step, depending on cardiovascular risk. This means not smoking, eating a healthy diet (lots of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, low-fat dairy, fish, nuts, legumes etc), being physically active (minimum of 2.5 hours of exercise per week), reducing salt, reducing alcohol and maintaining a healthy weight.

If blood pressure is not reduced sufficiently, medication may be needed. In the 1960s and 1970s there were far fewer medication options

available, and we are fortunate today that there are three main types of medication available that can control blood pressure in most people.

Commonly, more than one antihypertensive is required to reach your blood pressure goal and there can be differences in how each person may respond to each medication. Research has shown that two medications at a lower dose can be more effective than a single medication at a higher dose, with reduced side effects. Fortunately, combined medications are readily available, so the overall number of pills does not need to increase. For a minority, even three medications may not control their blood pressure sufficiently and they may require specialist advice regarding further medication.

In the 1960s and 1970s there were far fewer medication options available, and we are fortunate today that there are three main types of medication available that can control blood pressure in most people.

In addition to routine consultations, your doctor can provide you with a Heart Health Check if you are aged 45 and over under Medicare. DVA covers this and also provides the one-off Veteran Health Check (dva.gov.au/health-check) that includes checking cardiovascular risk, as does the Annual Veteran Health Check that is available annually for 5 years after transition from the ADF (from 1 July 2019).

You may also be eligible for the DVA Heart Health Program (dva.gov.au/heart-health). This aims to increase your physical health, fitness and wellbeing by providing practical exercise resources, nutritional advice and healthy lifestyle coaching for 12 months. The program is free and open to all veterans and peacekeepers with operational service and those covered under the ADF Firefighter Scheme who have not previously participated in the program.

Everyone should know their blood pressure and check it regularly. If you are prescribed medication, it is important to take it every day. Whether you take your medication in the morning or night, the most important thing is to take it as prescribed. The cardiovascular disease death rate fell by 82% between 1968 and 2015 and that is due to the availability of improved clinical treatment, widespread use of medication to reduce cholesterol levels, and more effective blood pressure medications.

Making sure you address cardiovascular risk factors can help you to enjoy a long and healthy life as you age.



Clockwise from top: Team Australia for Invictus Games Dusseldorf 2023 (Photos: Defence)
 Flight Sergeant Nathan King (left), Able Seaman Taryn Dickens and Assistant Minister for Defence and Veterans' Affairs, Matt Thistlethwaite, during the announcement of the co-captains of Team Australia for Invictus Games
 Team Australia's Wheelchair Basketball competitors in action ahead of the Invictus Games

Team Australia heads to 2023 Invictus Games

A message from Invictus Australia

It is an exciting year for Defence and veteran sport, with the Invictus Games to be held from 9 to 16 September in Düsseldorf, Germany.

Earlier this year, Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Matt Keogh announced the incredible 31 competitors who form Team Australia and will compete in the games, coming up against more than 500 participants from 21 countries.

The Invictus Games is an international, adaptive multi-sport competition for former and current serving military personnel who have been wounded, injured or become ill during their military service. Team Australia competitors will take part in a range of adaptive sports including athletics, indoor rowing, powerlifting, road cycling, sitting volleyball, table tennis, swimming, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby.

Assistant Minister for Defence and Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Matt Thistlethwaite, announced Flight Sergeant Nathan King and Able Seaman Taryn Dickens as the co-captains of Team Australia at the team's fourth training camp in June.

The pair will lead the 31-strong team comprised of serving and former serving military personnel. More than 90 of the team's family and friends will also join them at the games.

Aircraft technician Flight Sergeant King is participating in his second games in order to refocus his training and continue his recovery from a sports accident that left him in intensive care for six weeks and with limited use of his left leg.

Flight Sergeant King said the role of co-captain was an honour as he wanted to use his second Invictus experience to assist in mentoring new competitors. 'To come back, my focus was on being a mentor for the team from what I'd learned from the first games. But to have that platform of co-captain, it's a great honour,' he said.

Able Seaman Dickens, a Weapons Rate Electronics Technician who is now assigned to HMAS *Harman*, expressed her enthusiasm and astonishment at being named team leader. 'I am both shocked and extremely honoured to be named as a co-captain,' she said. 'The reaction I got from the team surprised me again, but it's really humbling to hear the support in the room when something like that happens. That is the first time I've been announced as a captain of anything, so it's pretty cool.'

Amid the announcement of co-captains, the Assistant Minister, Chef de Mission Brigadier Phil Winter, and Invictus Australia Chairman James Brown also presented official team shirts, and enjoyed some celebratory cake.

There was also a flurry of training activities and preparation for competitors at the Sydney Academy of Sport and Recreation. Competitors spent

time honing their skills in their elected sports, bonding as a team and discussing strategies with their coaches. This included an exhibition game of wheelchair basketball for the Assistant Minister and other guests.

Participating in veteran sport and physical activity is an important contributor to health and wellbeing, particularly during recovery and rehabilitation from injury or illness. Sport brings people together, instils mental resilience, provides opportunities to connect with broader communities and helps to create new friendships.

The Invictus Games demonstrate the power of sport to positively influence the recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration of former and current serving Defence veterans who have been wounded, injured, or become ill during their service. This philosophy underpins Invictus Australia's work to impact a broader audience of veterans and families.

Team Australia is delivered in partnership between Invictus Australia and the ADF, with DVA providing funding to underpin Invictus Australia's support of the team, as well as expansion into local communities. We can't wait to get behind all of the competitors, coaches and volunteers who will represent Australia at the next Invictus Games in Düsseldorf!

Visit our website, invictusaustralia.org, to find out ways that you can get involved or support our veteran community.



Is anger thwarting your life goals?



DR LORETTA POERIO

Senior Mental Health Adviser

Department of Veterans' Affairs

I want to talk about anger – a much-misunderstood emotion which helps us cope in many ways, but can also be used for less helpful purposes. Anger is useful in providing us the energy to deal with threats, whether physical or psychological. It becomes less helpful when anger becomes the habitual response to a world that is perceived as threatening.

This can lead to problematic anger, with adverse impacts on us personally, our relationships, employment and social standing. Being able to regulate – note, I did not say control – our emotions is a core requirement for our physical and mental wellbeing.

Emotions have been conceptualised as falling into four basic groups: happiness, sadness, fear, and anger, which are linked to three core experiences: reward (happiness), punishment (sadness), and stress (fear and anger). In this model, fear can explain the flight response; anger the frustration of thwarted goals; joy the sense of achievement; and sadness the experience of loss. Basic emotions evolved to ensure our survival, with fear and anger enabling us to flee for safety or fight to defend ourselves from danger.

Emotions range along a continuum rather than being an on/off phenomenon. The anger continuum ranges from mild annoyance through to intense rage that can lead to physical violence. It is the result of a chain reaction of physiological changes within our body connected to the flight-fight response. Central to this is the amygdala, the part of our brain that scans for, and reacts to, perceived threats in our environment. Importantly, these physiological changes include blocking access to the logical and rational problem-solving parts of the brain. This is the part of the brain that can calm us down when our emotions escalate and we become prone to reacting rather than reflecting. Does this sound familiar?

A number of myths surround our view of anger, one of which is that venting anger is good for us. Research shows that venting can actually

The thing about anger is that it can be seen as the tip of a very big iceberg, hiding a range of emotions that we may not be comfortable expressing.

escalate feelings of anger and the potential for aggressive behaviour. Suppressing anger is also not recommended: the old pressure cooker analogy comes to mind here.

Being able to take a step back (such as by counting to 10, or going for a walk), reflecting, and then appropriately expressing what is happening for you in a way that engages your higher-order problem-solving skills (pre-frontal cortex) may allow you to bring a different perspective to the situation. Then perhaps you can begin working through the issues that are triggering the strong emotional response.

The thing about anger is that it can be seen as the tip of a very big iceberg, hiding a range of emotions that we may not be comfortable expressing. Anger can hide experiences of fear, disappointment, embarrassment, shame, worry, sadness, and loss, among others. A poor communication style can also contribute to feelings of anger through being misinterpreted and engendering a lack of trust in the world and people around you.

Research in this area has found a strong association in military populations between anger and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as well as other mental health conditions. An Australian study looking at current and ex-serving military members found significant anger issues present in the population who seek treatment for PTSD. Further, studies of US and Australian veterans have indicated an association between problematic anger and suicidality. There is much more to learn about the role that anger, and especially problematic anger, plays in recovery from a range of mental health conditions.



If you, or those you love, think that anger could be managed better, then the suggestions below may be useful:

- The first step is to increase awareness, both of the situations that trigger your anger and your body's early warning signs (heart pounding, jaw clenching, chest tightening). This will provide information to manage difficult situations in your life more appropriately.
- Acknowledging the issue that has triggered your anger to yourself and others. You may do this by writing down what is going on for you. Writing is a great way to engage the logical, problem-solving parts of the brain. It also provides a way to externalise your concerns and so clarify them to yourself.
- Learn strategies to manage anger, such as learning to tolerate and accept feelings of discomfort as part of life, relaxation, taking time out, problem-solving, reframing and learning assertiveness skills. For example, learning to visualise a situation that would trigger anger and rehearsing how you could deal with it without becoming angry. Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling service runs a range of courses, including 'Doing Anger Differently'. It also offers a range of fact sheets. You can contact Open Arms on 1800 011 046 or visit openarms.gov.au to find the full list.

These are the first steps to changing your behaviour. Acknowledging that this is an issue for you is key, as is the motivation to change. If anger is thwarting your ability to meet your valued goals, perhaps now is a good time to change strategies.



An evidence-based program that's saving lives

The Veterans' Medicines Advice and Therapeutics Education Services – or Veterans' MATES – program supports improved health outcomes for the 150,000 veterans who are prescribed medicines each year.

This preventative healthcare program focuses on preventing adverse health outcomes for veterans who take multiple medications, such as hospitalisations or unwanted increased side effects.

The program uses de-identified health care billing information linked to DVA Veteran Cards to determine where medications can have an unforeseen impact or cause complications. They then use this information to directly contact veterans who could be at risk so they can get the most appropriate care and manage their health more effectively.

The program has been very successful, reaching more than 300,000 veterans over the past 18 years, and helping 67,500 veterans access necessary care, including the prevention of hospitalisations, and potentially harmful drug interactions and negative side-effects.

There has been recent media reporting relating to concerns about the use of veterans' data through the Veterans' MATES program.

While there has been no systemic data breach, this program uses de-identified veterans' health data. This data is only identifiable if the veteran is potentially at risk and would benefit from a review of their medication use.

All data used by the program is governed by privacy laws and is strictly confidential. It is only used to support improved health outcomes for the veteran community.

More information about the MATES program and the use of personal information can be found at veteransmates.net.au.

The Veterans' MATES program is a collaboration between DVA and the University of South Australia and is led by an internationally recognised team of experts, with a recent report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) calling the impact of the program 'significant'.

In fact, 84% of GPs who gave feedback on the program said that at least one of their veteran patients required a review of the medicines they use.

Dr Brad Murphy is a GP leading a veteran-centric health centre, and a veteran himself. He considers that 'opportunities to review best practice in [my] clinic, especially in regards to medications, allow me to optimise patient care on an individual level.'

Associate Professor Woodward of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians urges all veterans to 'consider the benefits of this really good program. Your healthcare team want to ensure you receive information if you are at risk'.

Dr Graeme Killer, a former RAAF doctor of 24 years, and the Australian Medical Association representative on the Veterans' MATES editorial committee, says: 'Use of multiple medications or "polypharmacy" is a risk for many people in Australia. The fact that veterans and their doctors have support in managing this often complex area is such an advantage.'

Veterans' MATES is a good program, delivering real life health benefits for Australia's veteran community.

For more information about the program, visit veteransmates.net.au, or contact DVA at VETMATES@dva.gov.au.

Supporting veterans with chronic health conditions

DVA's Coordinated Veterans' Care (CVC) Program is designed to support eligible veterans diagnosed with one or more chronic health conditions to better manage their ongoing health care needs.

Veterans may be eligible for the CVC program if they are either a Gold Card holder and have one or more chronic health conditions, or a White Card holder with a chronic mental health condition accepted by DVA.

The CVC program encourages veterans to play an active role in managing their health and wellbeing. For people with chronic health conditions, the program provides support in managing complex care needs and can help to reduce the risk of unplanned hospitalisation.

The CVC program is modelled on person-centred care, meaning care is tailored to the needs of the individual, working collaboratively with a core care team consisting of a GP and a care

coordinator (typically a practice nurse). Working with their team, program participants are actively involved in developing a comprehensive care plan, and supported to achieve their health goals and better manage their chronic health conditions.

If you have a chronic condition

If your GP or health professional has been treating the same health condition regularly for six months or more, or if you've been self-managing the same ongoing health condition for longer than six months (including mental health), you may have a chronic health condition. You can talk to your GP if you think you have a chronic condition and discuss if the CVC program is suitable for you.

Having one or more chronic health conditions can have negative impacts on your daily life. It can reduce your independence, limit your ability to participate in activities and require ongoing

medical care. While chronic conditions occur more frequently in older people, they can affect people of any age, and you can experience both physical and psychological symptoms. Treatment can include a variety of interventions such as lifestyle management, medication, therapy and surgery.

The good news is that in many cases making healthy lifestyle choices helps prevent, delay and manage the symptoms of diagnosed chronic health conditions. If you have been diagnosed with one or more chronic health conditions and meet the eligibility criteria, you may be eligible to access ongoing care under the CVC program through your GP.

More information about the CVC program, including eligibility, is available on the DVA website (search for 'CVC program') or by calling 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).



Vietnam veterans celebrated with Open Arms 40th anniversary

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling has provided mental health support to ADF personnel and their immediate families for over 40 years. Founded by veterans for veterans as the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service, the nationally accredited mental health service aims to improve the lives of those who have served by offering military-aware and trauma-informed care while breaking down barriers.

In June, the Canberra Open Arms office celebrated 40 years since it opened its doors, and the anniversary has led many to reflect on the role Vietnam veterans played in establishing the service.

Alongside the 40th anniversary of the Canberra office of Open Arms, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. As Australians commemorate the sacrifices made by those who served in our longest 20th century conflict, Open Arms plays a significant role in preserving their enduring legacy.

Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Thistlethwaite met with several Vietnam veterans at the celebration and expressed his gratitude to those who were instrumental in advocating for this vital mental health service.

'We are thankful that these veterans and families fought for this vital service, which today helps so many,' Minister Thistlethwaite said.

He emphasised that the veteran community, whether veterans themselves or family members, should take pride in Open Arms.



Front row L-R: Commander Ward Gainey (Ret'd), President of the Vietnam Veterans Federation; Sam Vecchio, President of the NSW branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia; Assistant Minister Matt Thistlethwaite; Sam Morrison, Open Arms Peer and Community Advisor; Amaly Khalaf, Clinical Psychologist and Open Arms Regional Director ACT & SNSW

'Open Arms embodies the mateship and selflessness of the veteran community. The military-aware and trauma-informed service that Open Arms provides is here for anyone who has served one day in the ADF, and their immediate family,' Minister Thistlethwaite said.

Open Arms National Manager Leonie Nowland is the daughter of a Korean War veteran, and knows first-hand how important mental health support can be for both veterans and veteran families.

'I am so proud to be involved with Open Arms and witness how it can be a lifeline for those struggling with mental health issues,' Ms Nowland said. 'Any veteran, or veteran family member, can take comfort in the fact that free, specialised support is available to them, day or night,' she said.

'As Open Arms continues to deepen and mature its support, it is a testament to the resilience and dedication of Vietnam veterans who fought for the establishment of this critical mental health service.'

With over 35 centres across the country, Open Arms continues to provide vital support to more than 34,000 veterans and their families, and has become an invaluable resource for those in need of mental health assistance.

If you're looking for counselling and support services for yourself, or your immediate family, you can call Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling 24/7 on 1800 011 046 for free and confidential advice. For more information, visit the Open Arms website openarms.gov.au.

Do you have diabetes? DVA can help

Whether you've recently been diagnosed, or you've been living with diabetes for some time, DVA has information and services to help you manage and live well with diabetes.

If you hold a Veteran Gold Card, or a White Card with diabetes as a DVA-accepted condition, here are some of the ways DVA can help:

- Health checks with your General Practitioner (GP). DVA funds an annual health assessment with a GP through the Veterans' Health Check. This check is an important opportunity to access early intervention care and appropriate referrals to a range of allied health professionals.
- Coordinated Veterans' Care Program. DVA offers access to ongoing care and management of diabetes and other conditions for eligible Veteran Gold Card holders through this program.
- Reimbursement of diabetes memberships. DVA will refund the cost of your membership in your state or territory diabetes organisation.
- Co-payment for some products purchased through the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS). Once registered, you can access a range of subsidised diabetes products from your local pharmacy. DVA helps by funding your NDSS co-payment for these subsidised products.
- Access to DVA-funded diabetes products, delivered to your door. You can also choose to receive your diabetes products from DVA.

The DVA Rehabilitation Appliances Program has an Australia-wide network of suppliers who can deliver diabetes products to you at no cost.

- Diabetes footwear. DVA's Medical Grade Footwear program can supply eligible clients with diabetic footwear.

Your GP or specialist can help you get access to these products and services.

Diabetes affects more than one million Australians. A diagnosis of diabetes may be quite overwhelming but plenty of support is available. Visit your GP if you think you might have or are at risk of having diabetes, or if it's been a while since you've checked in.

For more information about accessing these services and supports please visit dva.gov.au/diabetes or call 1800 838 372.

Get involved in Veterans' Health Week 2023



Veterans' Health Week (VHW) is a major annual event on the veterans' calendar that many in the community look forward to. This year, VHW will be held during 8–15 October with the theme *Mental Wellness Matters*.

VHW shines a spotlight on the importance of health and wellbeing, and encourages veterans and families to get involved in events and activities in their local communities.

DVA provides funding to eligible ex-service organisations and

community groups to deliver fun and engaging events to their local Defence and veteran communities right across the country. With the help of these events, VHW aims to improve health and wellness outcomes by increasing awareness of issues that are commonly experienced by the veteran community, connecting them to health literacy information, programs and support.

Events and activities held in VHW 2023 will help to equip veterans and families with the skills to better cope with the daily stresses of life, keep on top of their mental health, and make meaningful connections and contributions to community.

VHW events and activities will include yoga, golf, walking and running clubs, watersports, coffee catch ups and more. They will support veterans to learn how they can make and instill healthy lifestyle choices as part of their daily lives to improve their mental wellness now and in the future.

Learning how to access support and taking proactive steps to improve mental wellness is particularly important for veterans and all those in the veteran community who are exposed to, and experience, higher levels of trauma and mental ill health than those in the general population.

VETERANS'
Health Week

8-15 OCTOBER 2023

MENTAL WELLNESS MATTERS

More information, including on how to register for events, is available on the DVA website at dva.gov.au/vhw.

September signals Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month and is a timely reminder to have important conversations about men's health.

If you are a male, aged 60 or over, there is a strong possibility you, or one of your mates, has or will be, diagnosed with prostate cancer at some point in their life.

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia. It affects men in older age groups and is rare in men under 50 years of age. Research published by the Cancer Council shows that by the age of 85, one in six males will have been diagnosed with prostate cancer.

However, it's not all doom and gloom. Ninety per cent of males are

diagnosed early and the likelihood of survival is good. Depending on the type and stage, some men don't need treatment and will be closely monitored instead.

If you've been diagnosed by your doctor with prostate cancer and hold a Veteran White Card you might be eligible to receive fully funded cancer treatment under DVA's Non-Liability Health Care (NLHC).

Cancer treatment covered under NLHC may include allied health, GP care and specialist care, scans and blood tests, as well as treatment options such as chemotherapy, radiation therapy, surgery or hormone therapy.

Prostate cancer can cause symptoms such as blood in your urine, a weak or interrupted stream, needing to urinate often, pain while

urinating, incontinence, pain in the back, or weak legs or feet. However, these symptoms may have other causes, so talk to your doctor if you have any of these symptoms.

There is no single or simple test for prostate cancer. If you don't have symptoms, talk to your doctor about the pros and cons of the tests available in your individual circumstances. Your doctor or health

professional can help you to make an informed decision about being tested.

For more information about prostate cancer testing and treatment visit the website of the Prostate Cancer Foundation at pcfa.org.au.

For more information about funded prostate cancer treatment, including eligibility, call us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).



Enhancing wellbeing and inclusiveness through transport assistance



Directors of Australian War Widows Queensland and Eastern Star Foundation (ESF) at the unveiling of the new minivan funded through an ESF grant.

A message from Australian War Widows QLD

Thanks to the generous support of the Eastern Star Foundation, Australian War Widows Queensland (AWWQ) has made significant strides in enhancing the wellbeing and social inclusiveness of its members who were facing transportation challenges. With an additional grant of \$50,000 this year from the foundation, AWWQ continues to have a positive impact on the wellbeing of war widows across the state.

One of the key initiatives undertaken by AWWQ was the acquisition of a 12-seater minivan. This minivan has become a lifeline for our members, providing personalised transportation services to attend the organisation's outings

and events. The availability of this vehicle has not only enhanced the overall enjoyment of the events, but has also significantly reduced the stress associated with travelling to and from venues. For many members in their golden years of life, this service has proven to be invaluable.

Judy Smith, State President of War Widows Queensland, expressed immense gratitude towards the Eastern Star Foundation for its generous grant. Judy emphasised the crucial role that transportation plays in facilitating social interactions and promoting social inclusion, making the transport assistance program a vital lifeline for many members.

'With the support of the Eastern Star Foundation, AWWQ has been able to make a tangible difference

in the lives of war widows,' she said. 'The organisation holds group meetings across Queensland, spanning from Cairns to Currumbin. Since receiving the grant, we have been able to distribute over two thousand Cabcharge tickets to members who face transport difficulties attending events and meetings due to the loss of their driver's licence.

'One of the primary objectives of AWWQ is to promote fellowship and provide avenues for social interaction through regular gatherings. This initiative has not only fostered social interaction, but also allowed members to forge meaningful connections within the organisation, enriching their lives and combating social isolation.'

Last year, AWWQ proudly celebrated its 75th anniversary with

an exciting calendar of events. We were particularly thrilled to commemorate the first-ever War Widows Day on October 19, a day dedicated by the Queensland Government. Queensland became the first state in Australia to receive this honour, and the dedication has since been embraced by New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia.

AWWQ is having another eventful year, with the highly anticipated annual Friendship Day event in Redlands in August. This gathering brings together members from all corners of Queensland to celebrate the bonds of friendship.

For more information, you can contact the Australian War Widows QLD Head Office on 07 3846 7706.

WA Premier's Anzac Student Tour Awards



Mark McGowan, former Premier of Western Australia, with students and other special guests at the presentation of student ambassadorships.

A message from Australian War Widows WA Inc.

One of the highlights of our year at Australian War Widows WA Inc. is hosting the ceremony to announce the successful participants in the annual Premier's Anzac Student Tour. An annual competition open to all Western Australian students in Years 8 to 11, the tour is a unique opportunity for student

ambassadors to investigate the Anzac legacy.

On 2 March, our community centre was abuzz with dignitaries, students and their families. Mark McGowan, former Premier of Western Australia, gave the official address and was more than happy to make himself available for photos with the students and their families.

Joshua Patrick, a Year 10 student from Northam Senior High School, responded to the Premier's address on behalf of the students. His speech was heartfelt and he demonstrated maturity way beyond his years. It was evident that he, together with the other students, truly understand the 'Spirit of the Anzacs'.

Other guest speakers included Ms Meredith Hammat, Parliamentary Secretary and Member for Mirrabooka, representing the Minister for Education; Ms Melesha Sands, Deputy Director General, Schools, Department of Education; and Mr Duncan Anderson, State President RSL (WA). Mr Neil Darby, Assistant Executive Director, Statewide Services, Department of Education, was MC for the event.

A delightful afternoon tea followed the presentations, which gave students and their families a chance to mingle with guests and to relax and enjoy their success, prior to departing on their tour to Sydney and New Zealand.



A call to war widows in Melbourne

We are looking for Victorian war widows in the inner-city northwest suburbs of Melbourne who would be interested in connecting with other war widows in the area. If this applies to you, please contact the Australian War Widows National Office on 0427 735 871, or email wwidowsnat@bigpond.com to register your interest.

WIDOWS' NEWS

War Widows Day recognised in WA

A message from Australian War Widows WA Inc.
On Monday 24 April 2023, former Premier Mark McGowan, announced that October 19 would be recognised as War Widows Day in Western Australia. Plans are being made for an official reception on War Widows Day, where it is hoped as many war widows and widowers as possible will attend this memorable occasion.

War Widows Day officially recognises and acknowledges the sacrifice of war widows from all conflicts whose husbands and loved ones gave their lives for our country. It finally affords war widows the gratitude and respect they deserve.

War Widows Day should prompt all Western Australians to reflect on the grief and loss felt by thousands of women over the last 100 years or so. Hopefully it will remind them that the freedom and liberty we enjoy in Australia today is due to



L to R: Mrs Kay Hair; Ms Emily Cook; Paul Papalia, Minister for Veterans Issues; Mark McGowan, former Premier; Mrs Hazel Donald; Mrs Sue Wilson; Mrs Jan McLeod

the ultimate sacrifice made by the husbands and loved ones of war widows and their families.

Western Australia now joins Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia in having an official War Widows Day in their state. Australian War Widows is looking forward to having a National War Widows Day announced prior to 19 October, the birth date of its founder Mrs Jessie Vasey OBE CBE.

There have been many dynamic and dedicated women over the past 76 years who have shaped

Australian War Widows WA Inc. into what it is today. Members are extremely proud of their husbands' service and extremely proud to be an Australian War Widow.

Australian War Widows WA provides information and support for war widows from all theatres of conflict. Should you, or anyone you know, need assistance or support please contact our office on 08 9371 7470 or email us at warwidowswa@bigpond.com.

SA war widows honoured with day of commemoration

A message from the Australian War Widows (SA)
South Australia will formally recognise the contribution and personal sacrifices of war widows and widowers with an annual day of commemoration on 19 October.

The declaration of a special day is a small token in recognising and honouring widows and widowers of those who made the ultimate sacrifice by serving in the ADF. It also highlights the ongoing work of Australian War Widows (SA) Inc and their dedication to the wellbeing of families who have lost a loved one to war service for Australia.

The announcement took place at the Port Pirie RSL Museum Club on 16 March by the South Australian Veterans' Affairs Minister, Geoff Brock, in his home electorate.

The War Widows' Guild of Australia was established in 1945 by Jessie Vasey, whose birthday has been chosen as the commemoration date. The organisation is dedicated to supporting war widows from all conflicts by providing friendship, support and advocacy for those who have been affected by loss through service.

'It is important that we acknowledge these families in our community that have faced

unthinkable grief but who – in true Defence family style – demonstrate resilience and strength after losing a loved one to service,' said South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas. 'On behalf of all South Australians, I thank the widows and widowers in our community for their service and for the immeasurable sacrifices they have made.'

'On 19 October 2023, we will come together to honour these respected members of our community and pay tribute to their dedication, service and sacrifice.'

Diane Carr, President of Australian War Widows (SA) Inc said: 'Our community is made of strong and supportive women and men who have experienced terrible loss, but who want to continue to make a difference in the lives of all Defence families. We are very grateful that the South Australian Government has chosen to honour these people and commemorate War Widows Day on 19 October each year.'

Further details about commemorative activities to mark the first War Widows Day on 19 October 2023 will be publicised in the coming months and on our website: warwidowssa.org.au.



AWWACT State President Robynne Mitchell (6th from right) and other VIPs attend the ceremony. (Image: RSL LifeCare)

28th Field of Remembrance dedication ceremony and Anzac Day Service

A message from Australian War Widows (ACT) Inc.

For the last 28 years, on the Friday prior to Anzac Day, the ACT Branch of the Australian War Widows has held an Anzac Day service in the grounds of the Sir Leslie Moreshead Manor, El Alamein Village, Lyneham.

This year, the service was well attended, including by representatives of the Chiefs of Navy, Army and Air Force, the federal and ACT governments, as well as several embassies, and high commissions and ex-service organisations.

The Master of Ceremonies, Richard Cruise, led the service and widows Mrs Patricia Quiggin and Annette Sadler recited prayers. Wreaths were laid and families were given the opportunity to lay a cross for their loved one on the Field of Remembrance.

Following the service, refreshments were provided by RSL Life Care in the dining room of the Sir Leslie Moreshead Manor. We thank Ms Kerry Morris of RSL LifeCare for organising this memorable event each year.

Members of the ACT Branch of Australian War Widows are working with the ACT Government to recognise War Widows Day in the ACT on 19 October 2023. The chosen day is the birthday of the founder of War Widows Guild Mrs Jessie Vasey. Queensland and New South Wales had their inaugural day in 2022.

For more information, contact State President Robynne Mitchell at actwarwidows@outlook.com.



From left: Vice President Jan Milham, President Diane Carr, Secretary Maria Barclay, Helen Adamson, Julie Broome, and South Australia's Minister for Veterans' Affairs Geoff Brock holding 'Bilbo' at the Soldiers' Biscuits display.

Former sailor gets hands dirty in post-disaster ops

A message from Disaster Relief Australia

Friendship, comradery and being there for communities on their worst day are but a few of the reasons Peta-Maree Grant volunteers with Disaster Relief Australia (DRA).

A former Radio Operator with the Royal Australian Navy, Peta-Maree joined DRA's South Queensland team in 2018. Since then, she has become an integral part of the organisation. As a volunteer, Peta-Maree uses her skills and experience from the ADF to unite with fellow veterans, emergency responders and civilians and deploy to disaster-hit communities domestically and around the globe.

Peta-Maree's 'day job' with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services sees her involved with disaster response in numerous ways, including incident management, co-ordination and control centre operations.

Her voluntary role with DRA, however, gives her the opportunity to assist on the 'front line' after a disaster and to 'get her hands dirty' on the ground.

For Peta-Maree, it is a chance to work side-by-side with serving and former members of the ADF and provide practical, life-changing, and direct help to communities who have lost everything in floods, fires, or extreme climate events.

'There is no organisation like Disaster Relief Australia,' said Peta-Maree. 'We are there when the waters have receded and the fires are out.

We are there when many people need the most help and support – the recovery phase.

'Our work can be as practical as removing damaged furniture or clearing fallen trees, but the difference this can make to someone and how they feel about their situation is unbelievable. To know you have played a role in that is life-changing and it is addictive.'

The highlights of volunteering with an organisation such as DRA are numerous and they are significant.

In addition to the essential role it plays in the recovery of a disaster-hit community, DRA offers a unique support network for veterans and first responders, who can often feel adrift after leaving the ADF or an emergency service. The structure and nature of DRA operations echo military operations and provide the opportunity for veterans to continue to serve and use their hard-earned skills and discipline.

For Peta-Maree, volunteering with DRA is an opportunity to spend time and build valuable relationships with fellow veterans and first responders, as well as civilians who come from every walk of life.

While the experience of deploying on an operation is unrivaled, the buzz and opportunity of volunteering with DRA does not begin and end with deployment. DRA offers ongoing training opportunities to its volunteers, which Peta-Maree has also taken advantage of. She has



Peta-Maree Grant hard at work as a DRA volunteer

trained for Strike Team leader roles and to work within DRA's Incident Management Team, which is responsible for overseeing an operation. She has also undertaken a mental health course and consequently, has a much better understanding of PTSD.

In Peta-Maree's opinion, there is no other organisation like DRA. It ticks every box.

'For all the communities I have helped and new skills I have gained, I have also made some fantastic and lifelong friends and, once again, found the comradery I felt in the Navy,' she said.

To find out more about DRA, and to join up, go to disasterreliefaus.org.

Friendships for life forged on the RSL Remembrance Ride

A message from the Returned & Services League of Australia

In May 2023, a group of committed veteran cyclists successfully completed the RSL Remembrance Ride, a 457 km ride of the Central West Cycle Trail in NSW.



Each day, the group rode for around four hours, and by night, they camped in towns along the trail. At each destination, they held a commemorative service at a local memorial, cenotaph or RSL. These services highlighted the importance of remembering those who went before us and the imperative of supporting returning service personnel struggling with post-operational physical and mental trauma.

The annual RSL Remembrance Ride began in 2022 to provide an opportunity for veterans to challenge themselves in a mentally supportive environment, connect with other veterans and the veteran communities in the towns along the route, and raise funds for the upkeep of war memorials.

'The RSL Remembrance Ride has been an outstanding opportunity to cycle with fellow veterans from all services, said former Navy Chief Petty Officer Dave Cunningham. 'There was a camaraderie forged as we rode through an amazing variety of tracks and landscapes that left an indelible impression on the riders. An unexpected bonus has been the opportunity to learn

the history of different towns from the locals. This ride has been the experience of a lifetime.'

Former Army Major Shane Douglas saw a post on the RSL Australia Facebook page promoting the event. He hadn't ridden a bicycle since suffering a nasty crash in 2017. He was hesitant as he has been dealing with physical and mental health issues after being medically discharged from the Army, but his wife encouraged him to give it a go.

'I'm so glad I took her advice,' Shane said. 'The ride was fantastic! It's given me that extra motivation to continue on this fitness pathway. Thanks to a special bunch of people who made this tour so memorable. Thanks again for allowing me to participate, and I look forward to the next RSL cycle tour, where hopefully I'll be a lean, mean cycling machine!'

Planning is underway for the next RSL Remembrance Ride in early 2024. The RSL Remembrance Ride is part of the RSL Active program, which supports sports and wellbeing events and activities for veterans.

To learn more, visit rslaustralia.org/rsl-active.

Supporting the work of Keith Payne VC AM



Keith Payne VC AM

A message from Rick Meehan OAM JP, Keith Payne VC Veterans Benefit Group (KPVCVBG)

The KPVCVBG was established in 2018, under the guidance of Australia's oldest Victoria Cross (VC) recipient, Mr Keith Payne VC AM DSC (US) SS (US). The work of the Group is to continue the many years of work he has done advocating for veterans, both serving and in retirement.

The Group is made up of veterans from all three services, as well as different trades, ages, genders and deployments, which makes for a dynamic and experience-filled mix. As an old soldier, Keith is very supportive of our organisation and puts the veterans and families first and foremost.

'I'm extremely proud,' said Keith. 'They are covering all the bases as much as possible, looking after the veterans. Some time ago, I approached Rick Meehan OAM and Fred Campbell to carry on my life's work looking after veterans. I'm not getting any younger. They started locally and their reach is always expanding. They are doing a fantastic job and it's a model that should be copied right throughout Australia. I must congratulate both men on their work and achievements looking after veterans.'

On a local level, our group holds a bi-weekly 'walk to talk' session in the Shoalhaven (NSW), which enables veterans, family and friends to mix with like-minded people. We have close affiliations with the two main navy bases (HMAS Albatross and HMAS Creswell) and the Parachute Training School in the region.

We hold an annual Digger Day Rugby game, which includes a visit by many of our VC, George Cross and Cross of Valour recipients from around Australia and the world, who are flown in by the Fleet Air Arm.

We are heavily involved in NAIDOC Week, with a focus on commemorating local Indigenous servicemen. In addition, we have added the loss of the destroyers HMAS Voyager and USS Frank E Evans commemorative ceremonies to our extensive list of activities. Given a number of our members are Fleet Air Arm members and were on board HMAS Melbourne during one or both of these sad events, the commemorations are very fitting and moving.

Our group was at the forefront in discovering 16 forgotten First World War veterans who were laid to rest in the Nowra General Cemetery and

other local cemeteries in unmarked graves. With the support of a local historian and DVA, 15 of the graves have now received proper war graves over the plot with the graves rededicated by Navy chaplains from HMAS Albatross.

Several years ago, we received a substantial grant from DVA to establish the Veteran Surfing Project, aimed at using surfing and the ocean as a way to support veterans with post-traumatic stress (PTS). This project was a huge success in providing support for our veterans. Every year, we also participate in DVA's Veterans' Health Week initiatives, all of which bring veterans together and are an opportunity to promote health and wellbeing.

On a more strategic level, as well as engaging with many other ex-service organisations, our Group engages with various ministers and government officials. We have extremely strong ties with DVA. All staff we have dealt with are very supportive and helpful when we submit grant applications and follow up on our activities. It's been an absolute pleasure to work with them.

Australians honour Gurkha VC

As Chairman of the KPVCVBG, I had the honour to attend the funeral of Captain Rambahadur Limbu VC MVO in Nepal while Keith attended the Coronation of King Charles III. Limbu VC was the last living Gurkha recipient of the Victoria Cross.

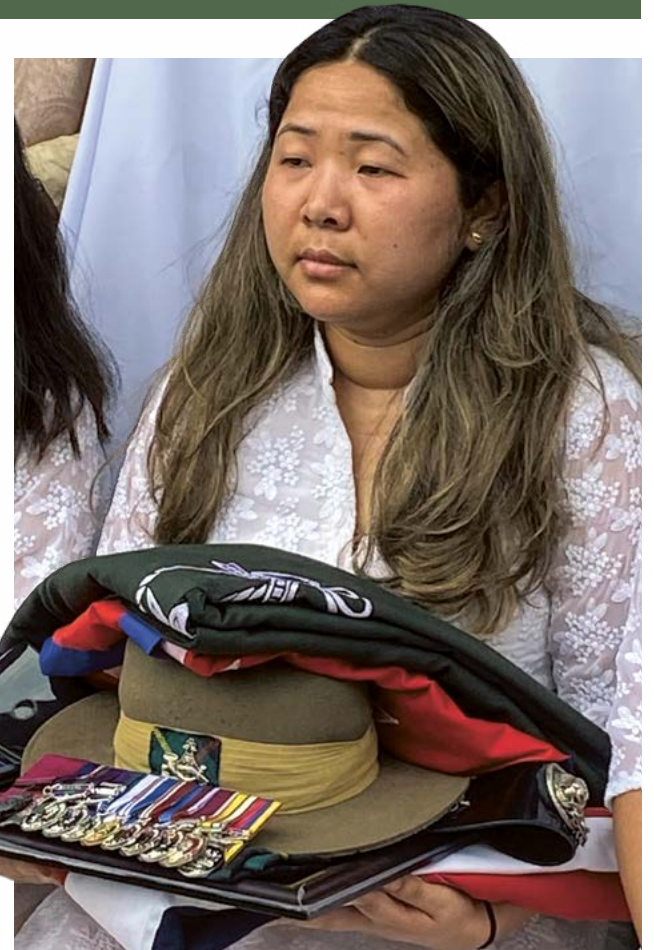
Limbu and Keith had been friends for more than 50 years and were both members of the VC and George Cross (GC) Association in London. The first time they met was in Malaya, where Keith was serving, just after Limbu's heroic action in Borneo which earned him the VC.

The funeral was well attended by many nations with representatives from military and government circles, with King Charles III sending his own representative. I was accompanied by Fred Campbell OAM (Vice Chairman KPVCVBG) and as the only Australian representatives, it was a great honour to represent Keith - and more so Australia.

'It was important to me that I and Australia were represented at his funeral,' Keith said. 'It was my pleasure and with great respect to have two very fine Australian representatives go to Nepal and see my old mate Limbu VC put to rest and receive the gratitude from the Gurkha people whilst they were doing it. I have the greatest admiration for both men who represented Australia as unfortunately there was no other person from Australia representing the award of the Victoria Cross at the funeral.'

I had previously been to Nepal to represent Keith at the 84th birthday of Limbu. This was a prestigious event as the age of 84 is regarded as a milestone by the Nepalese as it signifies 1000 full moons of a person's life, which elevates the individual next to God.

Limbu was well known and respected in his community. During his life, with the support of the British actor Joanna Lumley, he and the



Limbu VC's eldest granddaughter Prerana Limbu holding his medals at his funeral in his home town of Damak, Nepal.



From left: KPVCVBG Chairman Rick Meehan OAM and Vice Chairman Fred Campbell OAM laying a wreath on behalf of Keith Payne VC and Australia.

Gurkha Welfare Trust successfully lobbied the British for equal pensions and welfare support for retiring Gurkha soldiers.

Limbu also set up his own trust (Hon Capt. Rambahadur Limbu VC MVO Trust) in his own home town of Damak. Here he established a temple and school, improved roads and provided welfare for those less fortunate than himself. He was a man who really cared for his community.

On 30 August 2023, Keith Payne will turn 90. A special black-tie gala event has been organised at the Australian War Memorial to honour his remarkable career and to showcase the outstanding work he has done in supporting veterans with PTS. We encourage all veterans to reach out to our group for any veteran-related matters or to simply be involved in any of our activities.

New Veteran Employment Program

A new \$24 million Veteran Employment Program (VEP) is set to boost veteran job opportunities and help businesses benefit from the diverse skill sets that veterans offer.

With more than 6,000 veterans transitioning from the ADF every year, they can bring the fantastic skills they have gained in the ADF to the civilian workforce. Skills like leadership, teamwork and the ability to work under pressure.

The Veteran Employment Program (VEP) will support veterans find good quality jobs by boosting recognition of their skills and experience while supporting further education and training for veterans wanting to move into the civilian workforce.

The VEP was launched by Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh at the BRAVO Electrical & HVAC workshop in Sydney.

BRAVO Electrical & HVAC is a specialised electrical company and a contractor of choice for Defence Marine Engineering. As a proud Veterans' Employment Commitment signatory, they recognise the tremendous value and advantages of actively hiring veterans. Their unwavering dedication is evident from their impressive 80% veteran employment rate.

The VEP includes two new grants programs designed to support veterans transitioning into employment and tertiary education opportunities.

The Recruitment Advisory Service for Employers of Veterans Grant Program will support employers to create veteran friendly workplaces by providing support, education and resources to attract, recruit and retain veterans. The grant will provide \$800,000 over three years to a single organisation. This funding will enable the organisation to provide advice, support the development of tailor-made policies and procedures for workplaces, and create a range of products to enhance veteran recruitment and retention.

The Veteran Recognition of Prior Learning - Tertiary Support Grant Program will provide funding in three rounds over three years to universities to establish or enhance recognition of prior learning frameworks to better reflect the skills and knowledge veterans gain during their service. This will mean veterans who want to pursue a university education can do so more easily.

This is in addition to the Department of Defence enhancing its recognition of prior learning program, to include the granting of micro-credentials for the vocational skills that veterans acquire during service.

The goal is to better recognise the pre-existing capability veterans have and make it easier for



Ministers Keogh and Thistlethwaite at BRAVO Electrical & HVAC

them to demonstrate their existing skills, gain official qualifications and be competitive in the labour market.

In 2024, a new advertising campaign will be launched promoting the great benefits veterans can bring to the civilian workforce. For more information about the Veteran Employment Program go to veteranemployment.gov.au.

Screen Warriors skilling up for the film industry

Since being cast as Will Scarlett in a school production of Robin Hood at 10, Lieutenant Commander Claire Baldwin (pictured at left) knew she wanted to be an actor. Despite joining the Navy after high school in 2005 and becoming a maritime warfare officer, she found the theatrical bug never went away, and in 2015 she transferred to the reserves to pursue an acting career.



Claire was one of the first participants in a program designed to help veterans transition from Defence into the film and television industry.

The Screen Warriors Program aims to recruit, train and assist veterans to transfer skills into a career they may not be aware they would flourish in. At the program's inaugural Introduction to Filmmaking Course in March, thirteen participants were given a taste of the jobs their military skills could lead to in the world of filmmaking.

According to Claire, the course staff seemed 'a little bit spun out' at how readily the participants were able to work together. 'I don't think the staff had ever seen 13 strangers come together and produce something viable quite so quickly,' she said. 'As Defence members, we are trained to work well in teams and collaborate quickly with people we've never met to get the job done - and that's exactly what we did.'

The program covered jobs in the technical side of the film industry, including production and unit management, location scouting, assistant directing, accounting, transport and logistics. The participants also tried out some of these roles on one of the training film sets, and prepared, rehearsed and filmed a short scene in 90 minutes.

The high-level training and experience delivered to Defence personnel equips prospective candidates with the skills required in the many logistical aspects of production. For instance:

- **Are you a Transport Supervisor or Driver?** Your licences and technical experience could have you working in the screen industry almost immediately.
- **Have you ever been a Recon Officer?** Then you are highly suited to being a Locations Manager.

- **Are you a Logistician?** Then you could be a Unit Assistant or depending on your experience a Unit Manager.
- **Have you ever commanded and administered troops?** Then you could be an Assistant Director.
- **Have you ever been in an administration or operations role in a headquarters?** Then you could be a Production Coordinator, a Production Manager or a Production Accountant.

The two-day in-person course is held four times a year in Sydney. It is free of charge and is available to serving and ex-serving ADF personnel and families. For more information on how to become a Screen Warrior, a screen industry employer, or to find out when the next course is starting visit veteransfilmfestival.com/screenwarriors.

(Article courtesy of Department of Defence. Read the full story at dva.gov.au/vetaffairs)

Putting families at the centre

COMMISSIONER GWEN CHERNE

Veteran Family Advocate

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Reflecting on my three years as the inaugural Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner, I'm reminded that change takes focused effort and often comes about through small iterative steps. While we still have work to do in making sure families are not add-ons or after-thoughts, I've seen a lot of change take place in how veteran families are supported. More and more families are front and centre in the development of policies, programs and services.

When I was appointed, my vision was to raise the voices and perspectives of veteran families and help the Government better understand their experiences and needs. I sought to integrate an understanding of families and the importance of including them in all aspects of DVA policies, services, legislation, operations and decision-making. None of this can be done without cultivating productive relationships across government and the veteran community.

Families come in all shapes and sizes, so programs and services in DVA, ex-service organisations (ESOs) and in the wider veteran ecosystem should be inclusive of the wide range of veteran families – be those parents, children, step-parents, aunties, uncles, siblings, support people, mates etc. The research shows that including families leads to better outcomes for veterans. None of us are islands. Our programs and services should take this into consideration and be flexible whilst ensuring the veteran family unit is at the centre. Below are some recent successes:

Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package. Eligibility has been expanded from the original package. The most recent Federal Budget saw eligibility expand again as of 1 July to include children of veterans in full-time care of their grandparents. Through the package, families who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, crisis can access a wide range of support from child care and household assistance to help covering the cost of education.

Family Policy Team. DVA has increased its family policy team from 1.5 full-time equivalent to 8 members, which focuses exclusively on developing and enhancing policies, supports and services for veteran families.

Education Schemes. We have established a streamlined and comprehensive approach to oversee education schemes, tailored to meet the needs of today's families.

Parents and expanded eligibility. I am advocating for ESOs to extend their support and services to parents, including those of deceased ADF personnel. There is currently little to no support for mothers and fathers, grandparents and siblings, who also need support, healing and social inclusion.

Gaps. Identified gaps in services for various groups such as children, carers, parents, bereaved families, and survivors of family and domestic violence. I provided policy recommendations and valuable input for new proposals to be considered by government.

Eligibility improvements. As a member of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, I helped make a change to the eligibility rules for dependants of veterans under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*. This change ensures eligible young people (under 25) who are intending to remain in education, but are unable to study full-time because a medical practitioner has provided a diagnosis of mental illness or injury, continue to be entitled to relevant benefits, including access to a Gold Card.

Defence and Veteran Family Wellbeing Strategy and National Action Plan. I am working with Defence, DVA and Defence Families Australia to finalise the strategy and the action plan that will sit under it. They will guide how the Government provides support to veterans and families for the next four years.

Family employment. Veteran families are skilled, qualified and experienced in many occupations and industries, yet they still often face barriers to meaningful employment and are

often underemployed. It's important to empower families by giving them the appropriate support, tools and information to enable them to thrive. Our work in this area will give us tangible recommendations on how to provide more effective employment pathways for veteran families.

Data and insights. We are advocating for a Defence and veteran family indicator on education enrolment forms in all states and territories in line with South Australia. A tick box that identifies both children of current and former serving families will level the playing field for children who can be disadvantaged because of their parent's service and the transient lifestyle required.

In my engagements, I have begun to see the community listening to veteran families and then changing and adapting to better meet their needs. Veteran families can now participate in activities, sports, education, scholarships, retreats, camps, online courses and more. Yet, more work is needed. Veteran children, adult children, carers, dual-serving families, LGBTQAI+ families, CALD families, are all types of families who have unique experiences and whose needs must be better understood and addressed.

I am proud of how far we have come and am energised when I look ahead to what we can achieve in the future. If you're interested in hearing more about what I'm up to, I encourage you to sign up to my regular snapshots by emailing vfa@dva.gov.au or by following my social media platforms.

With participants of the Veterans' Families Policy Forum.



Artistic licencence



Mark playing aboard HMAS Adelaide in the Philippines for a touring school group in 2017.

It's a familiar story: when Mark Ham was medically discharged after 25 years in the Navy he felt, so to speak, at sea.

'My personality was associated with the service,' he says.

Raised in Newcastle, Mark joined the Navy soon after quitting a maths degree. He joined the Navy band as a trombonist, then studied at the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney before leaving the Navy to become a professional musician. But work began to dry up when the Global Financial Crisis hit, so Mark re-enlisted.

The next 12 years were fruitful. Mark rose to the rank of Warrant Officer. On the way he became the senior non-commissioned officer in charge of the band, went to sea several times, and deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. He enjoyed some moments of great pleasure and professional pride, including playing for orphans in Cambodia.

He also served as a mentor in the ADF's Arts for Recovery, Resilience, Teamwork and Skills (ARRTS) Program. The four-week residential

program is held twice a year – in May and November – at the University of Canberra. It is available to ADF personnel, and a small number of veterans who have transitioned in the previous three years. The program is for those who are experiencing service-related health and wellbeing issues. No previous experience in the arts is required and most costs are covered by the program.

The ADF ARRTS program offers three streams: music and rhythm, creative writing, and visual arts. Mark mentored in the music stream for several years and found it very rewarding.

'Some of the work that comes out of it is incredible,' he says. 'It often left me open-mouthed ... I remember one guy who came in – the program is voluntary but this bloke really looked like he didn't want to be there. He was being medically discharged for PTSD and he looked like he wanted to kill us. But as soon as we struck up the first chord, his whole face changed. That's the power of music. It evokes such strong emotions.'

The purpose of the program is to build confidence and resilience in those who are in need of a reset.

'It's an inclusive and supportive environment without rank and uniform, so each individual can feel comfortable expressing themselves,' says Brigadier Wayne Goodman, Head of ARRTS.



Mark at home working on his next novel with a collection of musical instruments from around the world adorning the grand piano.

'Exposure to new experiences and sharing stories, fears and concerns with like-minded peers assists with re-integration into families, the community and the workforce. Many participants report that one of the main outcomes they get from this program is that they have a renewed sense of purpose and self-worth.'

Mark found the ARRTS program very useful when it was his turn to transition. He left the Navy for a second time in early 2022 because of mental health issues and joined as a participant rather than a mentor. He chose the program's creative writing stream and has been writing ever since, even completing a novel – a thriller called *Careful what you wish for*. He is now looking for a publisher, though he's keen to point out that for him it's all about the process, not the outcome.

'The great thing about writing is that it gives you a routine,' he says. 'And in writing I've found

FEATURES



ARRTS participant Boyd McMahon at the showcase event in June 2023 at the Inspire Centre in Canberra



ARRTS participant Boyd McMahon

something that was totally different. Something that would be a challenge but not too much of a challenge. And which provides a bit of escapism.'

'Mark is one of the program's success stories,' says Professor Anthony Eaton, who is a mentor in the creative writing stream and an academic at the University of Canberra. 'He's kept writing... and that's exactly the outcome we're after. He's used writing to put himself together, to move into new worlds.'

Anthony has been an ARRTS mentor since the program was established in 2015.

'Mentors are practising artists,' says Anthony, who's a published author of children's and young adult books. 'So that's a big point of difference. We're not a therapy program. It's a creative practice but it seems to have therapeutic outcomes ... for a lot of the participants, and the interesting thing is we see benefits five, six years on. Many come in feeling fairly cynical. They have pre-conceptions about the arts and creativity that don't match with reality. It's a chance to put on another

identity and it gives them a safe place to think of themselves and their ADF identity, or for those dealing with trauma.'

Anthony adds the participants quickly become a tight-knit group and often keep in touch afterwards, with one another and with him.

'It's an amazing program and has made a lot of difference to people over the years. It's a pleasure to be involved in and is one of the best things I've done in my years as a writer.'

Another beneficiary of the ARRTS Program is Boyd McMahon. Like Mark, Boyd is in his mid-fifties and was medically discharged in 2022. He had served 33 years in the RAAF and now lives in Townsville with his wife (also an Air Force veteran) and two adult daughters. He chose the music stream.

'After being out of the military a year, I was nervous about attending the program and being subjected to a schedule again,' says Boyd.

'I wasn't sure how I was going to go with that aspect of it, but it's a schedule full of fun activities so I found it quite enjoyable.

'I've met some great people on the program. It's interesting hearing everyone's different stories... Hearing about the diverse backgrounds and having the opportunity to come together as a group through a shared activity has been quite good.

'The skills of the music mentors are amazing. They're all very giving and talented.

'One outcome from this is that as a family we can do music together. I've been able to connect more with my family, after always being apart from them with work, and rebuilding our relationships through music.'

Each program culminates in an evening showcase event where ARRTS participants display their painting and sculptures, perform their music or read out their writing.

'I played guitar for two songs and sang one song in a duet, with some solo bits, even though I've never sung before,' Boyd adds. 'My whole family watched the event via livestream from Townsville and were very impressed.'

'I can definitely see how this program will value-add into ongoing life. I would recommend the ARRTS program to anyone needing a bit of time out or a reset in life.'

Since it was founded in 2015, 332 people have completed the ARRTS Program.

The next program will be held
29 October – 24 November 2023.

The application period is open
3 July – 25 September.

For further information,
visit defence.gov.au/arrts

Operation Grain Harvest Assist

ADF skills are well suited to a career in agriculture, writes Lieutenant Colonel Garry Spencer AM (Retd).



COVID was a tough time for many Australians, including our hardworking grain-growers. In late 2021, with a bumper harvest looking likely due to the La Niña weather pattern, farmers were hopeful of a good harvest yield, ideally making up for several sub-optimal previous years.

However, due to COVID, and the toughening of border entry standards into the nation, their usual supply of backpacker labour was just not going to arrive.

I got in touch with some of the people who had appeared in a *Landline* episode. Speaking to them helped define the problem, the locations in need and the 'good idea' started to take more shape – the contention being that former tank drivers with the requisite training could become competent harvester operators. And so Operation Grain Harvest Assist (OPGHA) was born!

With enthusiastic assistance from Grain Producers Australia, who advised *Landline*, a website was established and two Facebook pages were linked to it, which now have over 2,000 supporters.

Now that OPGHA was ready to launch, where better to do that than on *Landline*, where the whole idea started? We estimate that 250–300 veterans answered the call to assist the grain-growers of the nation.

This included a retired Major General who four years previously commanded 15,000 troops as the Commander of the 1st Division. With his mate from Sydney, a retired Colonel, they not only supported a grain-grower, but produced a number of YouTube videos on their adventures.

OPGHA is a volunteer-run organisation, but the veterans who do the actual harvesting are paid for their work.

In September 2022, we conducted a training course on grain headers for 18 veterans in Horsham. The course was principally sponsored by CASE IH Australia, supported by O'Connors – their biggest distributor there. O'Connors provided its Chief Instructor and Executive Sales Manager for the duration of the four-day course as well as two new grain headers.

Channel 9's *A Current Affair* program attended the training course, producing a very helpful segment about OPGHA. To see the video and article, visit the Channel Nine website (Search for 'A current affair grain harvest').

Almost all participants deployed across the nation, from the Queensland border down to the Mallee-Wimmera region, to assist the grain harvest.

In March 2023, at the request of Cotton Australia, we conducted a 4-day training course in Moree in north-central NSW on cotton pickers and strippers – ten veterans took part. The training was conducted by a Moree contract harvesting company called BMC, which also provided machines for the course.

A number of the veterans who trained on the course deployed to assist the cotton harvest, principally in northern NSW. As part of the course, we visited the cotton-ginning facility in Moree. The firm is called North West Ginning and they're keen to hear from veterans.

After the course, a team from Channel 9 visited some of these veterans and the news story was syndicated nationally.

Cotton Australia has told me that it would like us to conduct another training course for veterans in the first quarter of 2024 in south-west Queensland. We will very shortly be requesting expressions of interest via our Facebook pages. We are also fielding enquiries from the sugarcane industry up and down the north Queensland coast.

We are in the process of leveraging our now-proven successful training program, and looking at methods of developing and recognising the experience of veterans in harvest work, so that their pay reflects the expertise that they have.

Great relationships have been developed with the leaders of these industries, with growers, dealers and equipment suppliers, as well as local communities. The warmth and sincerity of their welcome to our veterans has been wonderful to see and experience. This aspect has been the most satisfying of the program, as has the

opportunity to work yet again with an outstanding group of our ADF veterans!

The success of the program to date hinges on the quality of our veterans. Without exception, they have impressed both their trainers and those who have worked with them.

We owe particular thanks to so many people from so many parts of our nation's vital agricultural industry – from growers, to processors, to equipment dealers and product handlers, to equipment repairers and other suppliers as well as to the local communities. We now have many contacts across the nation who would all be delighted to welcome a veteran onto their team.

To all veterans, when you are considering leaving the ADF, I suggest that you consider a career in agriculture where so many things are similar to your ADF service, including working in the great outdoors, on advanced equipment, with well-led teams, all working towards achieving challenging objectives and in country areas where you are respected and appreciated.

We have contacts with tertiary institutions where you can gain formal qualifications in farm management or related areas by flexible delivery, enabling you to start preparing before you transition out.

One way to see if agriculture is what you want to do in the future is to attend one of our industry-funded training courses, then complete a harvest with one of our family farms, often working with another veteran who has been there and done it before.

For further information: Garry Spencer admin@opgha.org.au / 0418 996 856 / opgha.org.au. For the full version of this article, go to dva.gov.au/Vetaffairs/grain.

The graduating class from the Horsham training session



BOOKSHELF

The following books, often self-published, have been written by, for and with veterans. Their authors and others have asked that we bring them to readers' attention. If you have a book for a subsequent edition, please email vetaffairs@dva.gov.au, noting that we may not have room to include it in the print edition, but will include it in the online version. Please provide the following: title, name of author, blurb (short description that we reserve the right to edit), publisher (if any), price, how to buy it, and image of the front cover.

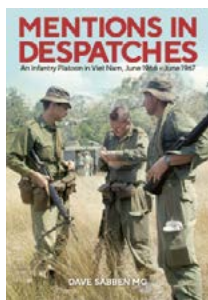
Please note that the following are not reviews or promotions of the books. DVA takes no responsibility for the accuracy of their content or the opinions expressed in them.

Mentions in Despatches

By Dave Sabben MG

This book is a highly illustrated day-by-day account of an Australian Infantry Platoon's 12-month tour in the first year of the Task Force at Nui Dat, Vietnam. A coffee-table, quality A4 art paper book with 30+ maps, 500+ images and 250+ Australian War Memorial images. Visit the website sabbenmidbook.com to see sample pages, read the Foreword, Preface, Contents, Index and more, and to order your book(s).

- **Pages:** 420+
- **Cost:** \$82 plus postage
- **To buy:** via sabbenmidbook.com (signed to buyer by author).

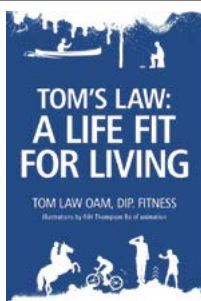


Tom's Law: A Life Fit for Living

By Tom Law OAM

An autobiographical snapshot of a boy who grew up to be a qualified electrician and then went on to have a colourful and varied life. Stories of fun that was had, some sadness, plenty of adventures, wonderful family and a lot of luck to have made it to 67 years age. After 21 years in the Australian Army and having been awarded an Order of Australia Medal for his services to training, Tom went back to civilian life. For the past 20 years, he has continued to learn about and work in the field of health, wellness and personal training. Today he works in his own fitness business, Tom's Law.

- **Pages:** 234
- **Cost:** \$25 plus postage
- **To buy:** Amazon or tomslaw@hotmail.com

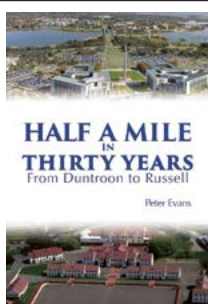


Half a Mile in Thirty Years - From Duntroon to Russel

By Peter Evans

Peter writes: 'This book is not intended as a rigorous history but the tale of a simple soldier and a very proud member of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals. My career spanned much of the Cold War, extensive social and political change and almost unbelievable technological advancement, so this story may be of some interest to more than just my immediate family'.

- **Pages:** 131
- **Cost:** from \$10
- **To buy:** available as an e-book only through Echo Books and Amazon

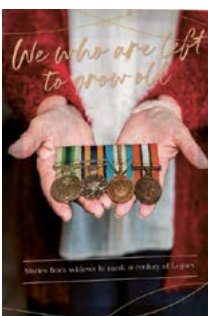


We Who Are Left to Grow Old: Stories to Mark a Centenary of Legacy

By The Legacy Club of Brisbane

This book is a collection of stories from Legacy's Brisbane war widows. Legacy supports thousands of widows who lost their loved ones and have been affected by their partner's service in the Second World War, the Korean War, Malayan Emergency and Vietnam War. Many of these ladies came to Legacy as young widows, still raising their children and struggling with their grief. To celebrate Legacy's centenary in 2023, The Legacy Club of Brisbane wanted to capture these stories of resilience and achievement before they were lost.

- **Cost:** free + \$15 postage
- **To buy:** online via storiesofremembrance.org.au or contact Legacy Brisbane: 07 3029 5600, communications@legacybrisbane.org.au

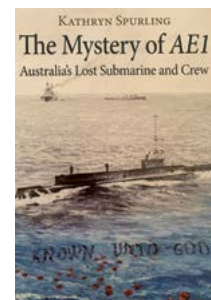


The Mystery of AE1 - Australia's Lost Submarine and Crew

By Kathryn Spurling

In 1914, Australia's first submarine *AE1*, went on patrol from Rabaul Harbour in search of German shipping and was never seen again. The loss of *AE1* with her entire complement of three officers and 32 sailors was the RAN's first major tragedy which marred an otherwise successful operation to seize the German colonies in New Guinea and the South Pacific. In December 2017 a new search, using the vessel *Fugro Equator*, located the wreck of *AE1* in 300 metres of water off the Duke of York Island group.

- **Pages:** 200
- **Cost:** \$15 plus \$10 postage
- **To buy:** kspurling48@gmail.com



Like Shadows in the Corner - the Forgotten Wives of Australian Vietnam Veterans

By Helen Townsend-Austin

This book contains a wonderful, shared pool of memories from the wives of Australian Vietnam veterans. How privileged we are to be invited into their precious moments - the terrible losses, the good, and the sad. These memories are historical and etched in their minds forever - we now know how it was for wives waiting at home. The writers of the stories you will read now have an average age of 70+ years. For all this time, wives have carried these memories in their hearts and minds. They now share their memories with us, giving an incredible window into their lives by inviting us to be part of their history.

- **Pages:** 218
- **Cost:** \$20 (including postage)
- **To buy:** helhilt@bigpond.com



Porky's People

By Karl Metcalf

This book is an illustrated history of the Seventh Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (7 RAR) during its first tour in South Vietnam in 1967-68. The book primarily uses images to tell this story, whether they be photographs, artwork, maps, or newspaper cuttings. The book covers the period from the raising of the battalion through to the time it returned to Australia and the immediate aftermath.

- **Pages:** 765
- **Cost:** \$200 (including pack and post)
- **To buy:** Tony Keech at porky_seven@bigpond.com or 0418 624 211



Survivor - Life in the SAS

By Mark Wales

Over four deployments of intense warfighting in Afghanistan, Mark Wales watched the line between right and wrong become blurred. When he left the SAS he was adrift, crippled by guilt. Told with gripping suspense, humour and touching warmth, *Survivor* is Mark's extraordinary life in and out of the SAS, a story of resilience and a testament to the power of transformation.

- **Pages:** 368
- **Cost:** \$26.94
- **To buy:** Amazon



BOOKSHELF

The Promise

By Rob Redenbach

From the trenches of the First World War to special forces operations in Afghanistan's Chora Valley, *The Promise* explores the limits of courage and the legacy of sacrifice. Written by ADF veteran Rob Redenbach and illustrated by Ben Pronk DSC, all profits from *The Promise* are donated to Cor Infinitus – a veteran-lead charity that provides dignity and respect to the families of those who have served Australia and have taken their own life. 'The Promise is such an important story. Beautifully written, it brings history to life.' (Melissa Doyle AM, author of *15 Seconds of Brave*.)

- **Pages:** 96
- **Cost:** \$14.95 + postage
- **To buy:** corinfinitus.org/shop

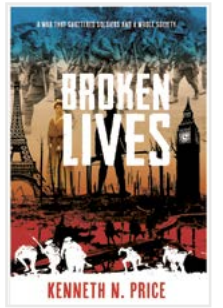


Broken Lives – A War that Shattered Soldiers and a Whole Society

By Kenneth N Price

Go into the trenches with the Australian troops of the 9th Battalion. Follow the exploits of Lieutenant Peter Bowen and Sergeant Craig Williams during the major battles of 1917 and 1918. Then go to the streets of Paris and London and observe the impact that the Great War had on the civilian population of these great cities. Follow Sister Ann Copley as she works selflessly to nurse the casualties of war. Observe some of the changes that took place at this time regarding the relationships between men and women as they struggled to make sense of the upheaval to their society, which was happening all around them.

- **Pages:** 192
- **Cost:** \$24.95
- **To buy:** Booktopia, Angus & Robertson, Googlebooks, Amazon



Australian Tri-Service Contingents: Somalia 1992–1994

By Gary Conquest

This book encompasses 212 members of groups of four Tri-Service Contingents as part of the Australian Service Contingents UN Operation in Somalia (ASC UNOSOM: Operation IGUANA) from 1992 to 1994. The task of ASC UNOSOM was to ensure the movement control of food, water and people by road, sea and air, so that it reached the Somali people during a ravaging famine in the country. The Mogadishu International Airport was under the complete control of RAAF Air Traffic Controllers from 1993 to 1994. Individual stories tell the tale of their deployment in a country that the whole world was watching and helping during the years of famine.

- **Pages:** 288 – softcover book in landscape orientation
- **Cost:** \$70 plus \$13.50 parcel post, with \$100 insurance and a tracking number
- **To buy:** Gary Conquest at admin@veteransofsomalia.au

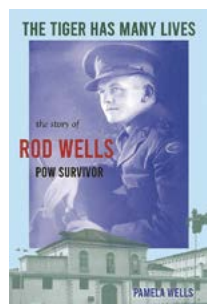


The Tiger Has Many Lives – The Story of Rod Wells, POW Survivor

By Pamela Wells

Rod Wells grew up on a dairy farm at Dhurringile, and from early childhood keenly experimented with and explored many avenues of science. In 1939, Rod enlisted for war service and was sent to Malaya as a young lieutenant in 8 Division Signals. After the fall of Singapore, he was sent as a POW to Sandakan, North Borneo and later arrested by the notorious Kempeitai for building a clandestine radio receiver. After many months of severe torture, interrogation and deprivation, Rod narrowly escaped execution and spent the last months of the war at Outram Road Gaol, a place which very few prisoners survived. When Rod returned to civilian life, he was determined to put his POW experience behind him.

- **Pages:** 304
- **Cost:** \$35 plus postage
- **To buy:** sevenpenspublishing.com



Dreadful Lady over the Mekong Delta – RAAF Canberras in the Vietnam War

By Wing Commander Bob Howe (ret'd)

This book looks at the men of No 2 Squadron and the operations they flew in the Vietnam War in their Canberra bombers. From April 1967, the squadron spent four years attacking enemy targets, many of them in the Mekong Delta region, and contending with the politics, weather, and 'fog' of war. Bob Howe arrived in Vietnam in 1969 as a youthful Canberra navigator/bomb-aimer, but much of his time was spent as a specialist in bombing operations. The book describes how crews overcame the difficulties of operating in an intense Asian war in an aircraft that was designed for a completely different environment.

- **Pages:** 268
- **Cost:** \$19.99
- **To buy:** Simon and Schuster, Booktopia, Google Books, Angus and Robertson



Call Sign Vampire: The Inside Story of an Australian Field Hospital during the Vietnam War

By Rod Searle, Denise Bell, Paul Danaher and Gregory Anderson

'The 1st Australian Field Hospital played a vital part in Australia's war in Vietnam. Call Sign Vampire sets out, and achieves, a comprehensive investigation of the workings of a field hospital. Personal memories from those who served and who were patients combine to create a very evocative book that are complemented by hundreds of images. This lavishly illustrated and beautifully produced book is a deserving commemoration of those who served in Vietnam. Call Sign Vampire is highly recommended, and the authors deserve congratulation.' (Justin Chadwick in *Sabretache – Journal of The Military Historical Society of Australia*, June 2022). Published and distributed by 1st (Aust) Field Hospital Association.

- **Pages:** 280 hardback (with slipcase)
- **Cost:** \$149.99 (includes local postage for *Vet Affairs* readers)
- **To buy:** email Paul at book@callsignvampire.com.au

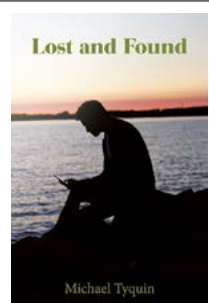


Lost and Found

By Michael Tyquin

This novel is a story about the experiences of a traumatised Afghanistan army veteran, Greg, and an unexpected mentor he found in an older man, Frank, a recently widowed former officer. Between them, they come to grips with their own personal demons and together emerge, if not unscarred, then at peace with themselves and the world. The novel shows their developing, sometimes stormy relationship over 12 months. Through helping the other to understand their trauma and grief, Greg is restored and able to deal with his nightmares; while Frank has found a new friend and meaning in life.

- **Pages:** 84
- **Cost:** \$4.99 (e-book) \$12.99 (soft cover)
- **To buy:** Xlibris



One Man's Road to Tol Plantation: The Life and Death of Private Hector Kay

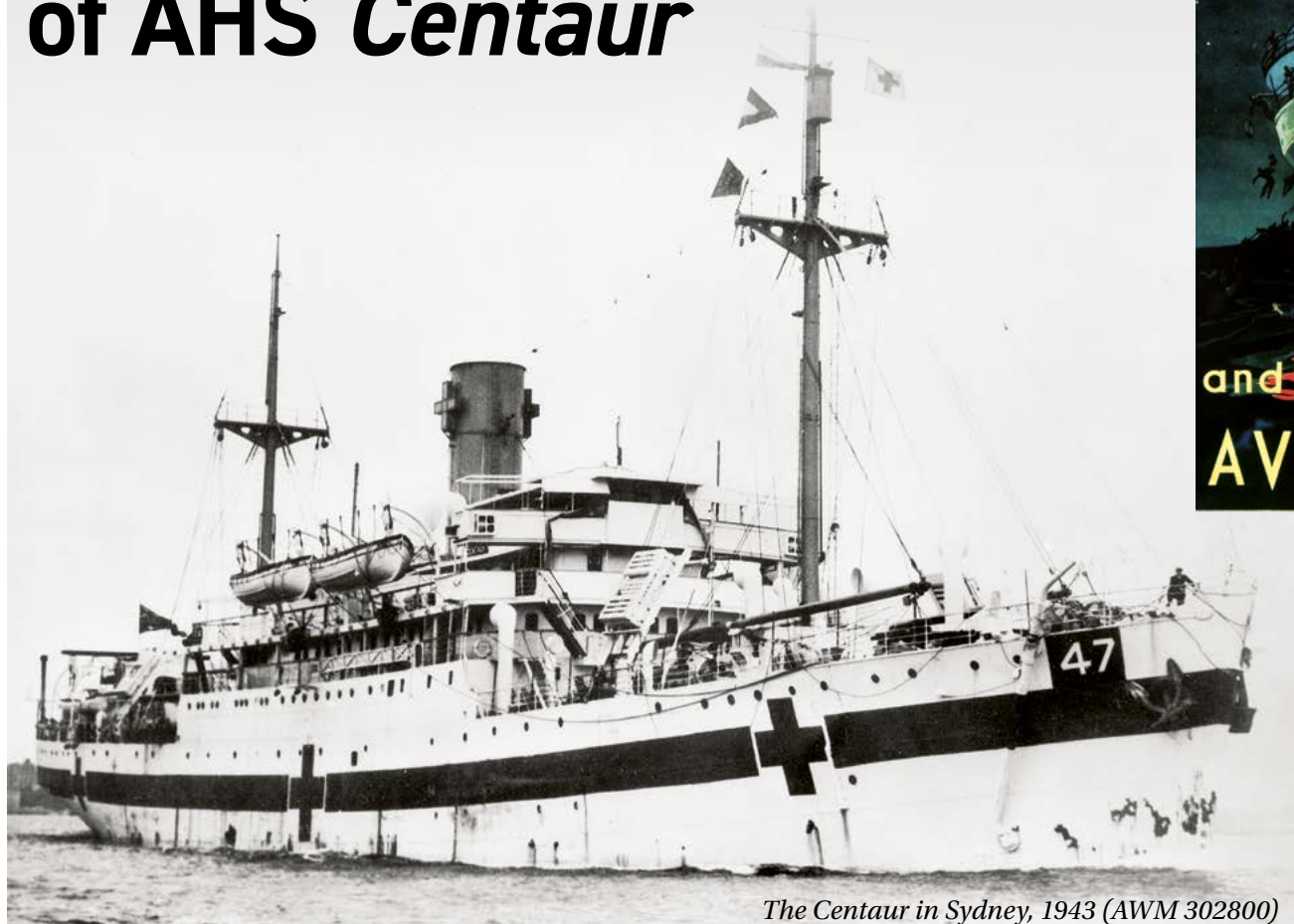
By Ross K. Hall

The massacre of more than 150 unarmed Australian soldiers on the Pacific island of New Britain, Papua New Guinea, in 1942 forms the central rupture in this story of one soldier, Private Hector Kay, who died there. Through detailed research of family correspondence, photographs and other documentary evidence, Private Kay's nephew Ross Hall recounts the events preceding the attack. From Kay making his noble and ethical decision to join up amid the clouds of war, to the soldiers' journeys north and their adjustment to camp life in Rabaul, Hall's history brings the eventual tragedy into shocking relief by giving focus to the life and death of one 'thoroughly decent' man.

- **Pages:** 120
- **Cost:** \$25 including postage Australia-wide
- **To buy:** rosskayhall.wordpress.com/ or email the author at ross.h@lizzy.net.au



Remembering the sinking of AHS *Centaur*



The Centaur in Sydney, 1943 (AWM 302800)

In May 1943, the attack on AHS *Centaur* by a Japanese submarine made it one of the most remembered hospital ships of the Second World War.

To ensure *Centaur* was easily identifiable as a hospital ship, she was painted white with a green band, interrupted by large red crosses, running around the hull. At night, the vessel was brightly illuminated by powerful spotlights.

In addition to this, a large number 47 was painted on the bow. This was *Centaur's* registration number with the International Red Cross and indicated that the enemy had been notified through diplomatic channels of her status as a hospital ship.

However, at 4.10 am on Friday, 14 May, *Centaur* was travelling east of Moreton Island, off the coast of Queensland when she was rocked by a great explosion and sank within minutes of the



Second World War poster by Bob Whitmore (AWM ARTV09088)

attack. The sinking was so quick, no SOS message was able to be sent.

Of the over 300 people on board, only 64 survived. They spent up to 35 hours on makeshift rafts and debris before being rescued by the United States destroyer, USS *Mugford*.

Sister Ellen Savage was the only one of twelve nursing sisters on board to survive. She suffered severe injuries as a result of the explosion and immersion in the sea. Sister Savage concealed her own injuries and treated the wounded. She also kept up morale, with a focus on keeping spirits high for the survivors, and later received the George Medal for her bravery.

Eighty years on, we remember the victims and survivors of the *Centaur*. To find more information on this tragic event, visit our Anzac Portal: anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/sinking-centaur

70 years on from the Korean War

On 27 July, Korean Veterans' Day, we paid tribute to the service of Australians who fought in the Korean War, and marked 70 years since the armistice was signed to effectively end the conflict.

The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 when North Korea (People's Democratic Republic of Korea) launched an invasion of South Korea (Republic of Korea) in an attempt to unify the country under its communist government. To aid the South, the Australian Government sent personnel along with the 21 member states of the United Nations. It was the first conflict for the newly formed Australian Regular Army.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh attended commemorative events in the Republic of Korea, meeting with several Australian veterans and their families.

'I was honoured to represent Australia in South Korea to pay tribute to those who lost their lives, to those whose scars remain some 70 years later and to acknowledge all those still missing in action,' Minister Keogh said. 'They will not be forgotten.'

'For many Australians who served in the rugged hills and shell-shattered cities, who saw the impact on the people of South Korea, the memory of this war remained imprinted on their mind. And for those who never came home, their absence left a void in the lives of their loved one's – a constant reminder of the heavy cost of war.'

In the days before the armistice, Australian troops were heavily involved in the Battle of Samichon River, the last battle fought in the Korean War. Also known as the Battle of the Hook, the intense action saw 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR) and 3rd Battalion, 7th United States Marine Regiment bear the brunt of successive Chinese attacks.

The Chinese did not succeed in penetrating the Australian trenches. On the morning of 26 July, they abandoned the attack with between two to three thousand dead in front of the Australian and American line. It is estimated that as many as 10,000 were wounded.

At 10 am on 27 July the formal armistice was signed at Panmunjom, which took effect at 10 pm that night. The date is formally commemorated in Australia as Korean Veterans' Day. Australian soldiers, sailors and aviators fought alongside their South Korean allies, so it is also a day when



Minister Matt Keogh with Korean War veteran Ernie Holden at the 70th anniversary commemorations.

we reaffirm the bonds of friendship that exist between our two nations.

About 18,000 Australian military personnel served during the Korean War, including the Air Force, Navy and Army. More than 350 Australians lost their lives during the war and in the post-armistice period, more than 1,200 were wounded and 30 taken prisoner.

After three years of fighting, Australians remained for another four years to help maintain a fragile truce. Seventy years on, we affirm that Korea has never been "the forgotten war" and we remember the sacrifices of the Australian men and women who served.

Australia honours

Throughout 2023, Australians are recognising the contribution of our Vietnam veterans, their service in Vietnam, the sacrifice of their families and their role as integral members of the community in the decades since the war.

On 18 August, a year of recognition culminated in a solemn and dignified commemorative service at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra.

Broadcast live by the ABC, the service included a Commemorative Address by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, Matt Keogh, who expressed heartfelt gratitude for the service our Vietnam veterans gave in Australia's name:

'You were given an impossible job, and you did it well. And you looked out for your mates, every step of the way. Fifty years from now, generations yet unborn will see those names enshrined on our national memorial, and they will know your story.'

- Minister Matt Keogh

VIPs including the Governor-General, Ministers, senior ADF representatives, diplomats, and most importantly – hundreds of Vietnam veterans – came together to reflect on Australia's longest 20th century conflict.

Among them was His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), who told Vietnam veterans they are part of the Anzac legacy, and their fallen mates will never be forgotten:

'I want this to be clear: your nation is proud of you, grateful for what you did when your country called on you and will always remember that sacrifice.'

- Governor-General David Hurley

The Vietnam War was at times contentious at home and for some veterans their return home raised mixed emotions. The recognition afforded some soldiers, sailors and airmen upon their return varied greatly in the immediate aftermath of the war, and for some that lack of recognition would make for a bitter welcome home.

It is estimated that there are about 35,000 surviving Vietnam War veterans in Australia. While that number inevitably dwindles with the passing of time, the nation's determination to remember and honour them remains resolute.



Vietnam veterans

Reflecting on the respect and pride emanating from the throng gathered on Canberra's Anzac Parade, Max Ball, National President of the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia, said many veterans continue to remember the hardships they faced and that for some, their fight continues:

"Vietnam veterans can and should look back on that era with some misgivings, but with a maturing sense of pride that they endured in a difficult and testing field of combat. For our friends and colleagues who did not return we say again: Lest We Forget."

-Max Ball

Amidst the hardship and constant threat of harm, there were fond memories of mateship on the frontline and enduring friendships back at home.

For many veterans, the war encompassed some of the best years of their lives. Noel McLaughlin, proud Vietnam veteran and Chairman of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps Corporation, spoke of a generation who served in a war that defined an era:

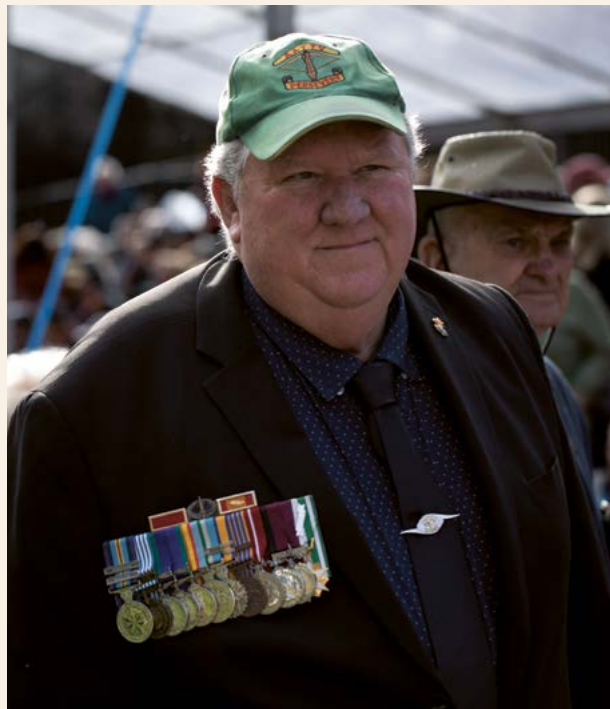
"We were not treated well when we came home. We felt abandoned by Australia. It's a wonderful thing to see this acknowledgement and appreciation of our service, and of our sacrifice, in remembrance of those mates whom we loved and lost on active service."

-Noel McLaughlin

Among a number of initiatives this year, the Australian Government has produced a 50th anniversary commemorative medallion and certificate of recognition honouring the service of Australians who served in the Vietnam War. More than 22,000 of the medallions have already been distributed.

The medallion and certificate continues to be available to all Australian men and women who served in Vietnam, and to the family of veterans who have since passed away or were tragically killed during the war.

To apply, please visit dva.gov.au/vietnam50.



AWM ART40746



Significant commemorations



Anzac Day at Gallipoli (Image: Defence)

In recent months, we paused on special commemorative days to remember the service and sacrifice of Australian and Allied service personnel in the following conflicts.

Battle of the Atlantic

On 1 May each year, we pause to remember the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest military campaign of the Second World War. The day recognises the almost six-year battle to control the Atlantic shipping lanes, costing the lives of more than 72,000 Allied naval and merchant mariners.

Battle of the Coral Sea

On 4 May 1942, Australian and United States naval forces entered into a four-day battle against imperial Japan in what would become known as the Battle of the Coral Sea. More than 500 US personnel perished in the battle, over 60 aircraft were shot down, and one carrier – the *USS Lexington* – was lost. Though the Allies suffered more ship losses, their efforts prevented the Japanese from achieving their objective of capturing Port Moresby in an amphibious operation.

Victory in Europe Day

VE Day is commemorated on 8 May every year to mark the end of the Second World War in Europe. Seventy eight years ago, the German High Command surrendered unconditionally, ending more than five and a half years of conflict. Over 10,000 Australians lost their lives in the European and Mediterranean theatres of the war against Germany and Italy, more than 10,000 were wounded and some 8,000 became prisoners of war.



Flags of Allied nations fly above the Australian Corps Memorial at Le Hamel.

105th Anniversary of the Battle of Hamel

On 4 July 1918, Australian General Sir John Monash led a combined arms assault with infantry, artillery, tanks and aircraft on the village of Le Hamel, France. In just 93 minutes, the Allies overwhelmed the German forces and captured the village, advancing 2 km along a 6 km front. The 15th Australian Infantry Brigade launched a successful diversionary attack at the same time on the German front line east of Ville-sur-Ancre.

105 years ago, Australians and Americans fought side by side on a battlefield for the first time. 1,062 Australians and 176 US soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice at Le Hamel, while another 142 Australians were killed at Ville-sur-Ancre.

Victory in the Pacific Day

On 15 August each year, Australians commemorate VP Day – the day on which the Second World War ended following the unconditional surrender of Japan, 78 years ago. Almost a million Australians served their nation during the Second World War, around 40,000 lost their lives and many suffered wounds and injuries.

Malaya and Borneo Veterans' Day

Commemorated on 31 August, this national day recognises the service and sacrifice of all Australians who served in the Malayan Emergency and Indonesian Confrontation. Thirty nine Australians lost their lives while serving in the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960) and 23 perished in the Indonesian Confrontation (1962–1966).

Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, Borneo, 1965 (AWM P01706.003)



Merchant Navy Day

This designated national day of remembrance, marked on 3 September, recognises the critical contributions of merchant sailors in wartime. Merchant ships and their civilian crews were responsible for transporting service personnel, supplies and equipment. Some were also converted into hospital ships for wartime service. Thousands of Australian merchant mariners served in conflicts up until the Vietnam War, and many hundreds died serving the Allied cause during the two world wars.

Battle for Australia Day

Marked on the first Wednesday of September, this official annual day of commemoration recognises the period during the Second World War when Australia came under direct attack, the series of battles in the region that helped in our defence. On this day, we recognise all those who fought in the Pacific theatre during the war, and especially those who were involved in defending our nation.

The pivotal Battle of the Bismarck Sea



Allied Air Forces attacking Japanese ships. (AWM I28159)

Pilot flying a Beaufighter. (AWM P01335.008)

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea was a major victory for the Allies in the Pacific and one of the most successful operations for the RAAF during the Second World War.

In early 1943, Allied Intelligence learned of a large Japanese convoy which would transport nearly 7,000 troops from Rabaul to reinforce its base in Lae, on the northeast coast of New Guinea. Eight Japanese destroyers and eight troop transports were escorted by approximately 100 fighter aircraft when they left Rabaul on 28 February 1943.

RAAF and United States Army Air Force bomber squadrons in Papua began training together to attack the ships at sea, to prevent the Japanese troops from landing. Once tropical storms had cleared and the convoy was spotted, the Allied force attacked in successive relays over the next three days using a range of aircraft

including Beauforts, B-17 Flying Fortresses, A-20 Bostons and Catalina flying boats.

RAAF Beaufighters inflicted damage with low level strafing runs, while US B-17s and B-25s dropped bombs from higher altitudes. One tactic was low altitude 'skip bombing', which involved causing the bomb to skip along the water's surface, detonating when its tip hit a ship's hull.

By daybreak on 4 March all eight Japanese transports had been sunk and four of their escorting destroyers had also been lost. The other four were badly damaged, and around 50-60 escorting Zero fighters had also been shot down. While the Allied losses were smaller, 13 US Air Force and RAAF crew were killed and a further eight were wounded.

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea is remembered as one of the pivotal battles in the South West Pacific. Eighty years on, we remember the sacrifice and bravery of all those who served in this battle and in the Second World War.

80th anniversary of the Dambusters Raid

On 16 May we marked the 80th anniversary of Operation Chastise, popularly known as the Dambusters Raid.

A 'bouncing bomb' devised by British aircraft designer Barnes Wallis consisted of a depth charge which could bounce along the surface water of a dam before sinking against the wall and exploding.

In order for the bouncing bombs to be successful, they needed to be dropped at a height of 18 metres and a speed of 370 kilometres per hour. This required a great deal of skill and incredible bravery.



An Australian Lancaster bomber crew. AWM SUK15191.

In March 1943, Wing Commander Guy Gibson formed Squadron 617 to carry out Operation Chastise, one of the best-known aerial operations of the Second World War. The squadron was made up of veteran and new airmen from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States.

On 16 May 1943, 19 Lancaster bombers and 133 airmen, including 13 Australians, set off in three waves to bomb four dams in Germany's industrial heartland, the Ruhr Valley. The Möhne and Eder dams were struck and eventually collapsed during the attack. Sorpe Dam was hit three times but not breached, and Bever Dam sustained very minor damage.

Only 11 of the bombers and 77 aircrew of Squadron 617 returned to base. Even with such heavy losses, the operation was considered a success, with the survivors hailed as heroes in the Allied press.

The 13 Australians who took part in the Dambusters Raid included Harold 'Mick' Martin, who was considered one of the finest bomber pilots of the Second World War and knighted for his wartime service. Two Australians died during the attack, another was captured and would remain a prisoner of war in a German prison camp until the end of the war.

We pay tribute to the Australian and Allied airmen who took part in the daring Dambusters Raid, and especially to those who did not return.

Preserving our stories from the Western Front

The memories of Australian diggers on the Western Front will continue to be preserved with an \$8.3 million technology upgrade at the Sir John Monash Centre in France.

Set on the grounds of the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery in France, and adjacent to the Australian National Memorial, the Centre tells the stories of Australia's First World War soldiers in their own words. It plays an important role in the ongoing commemoration of the more than 295,000 Australians who served on the Western Front.

The Sir John Monash Centre uses interactive, multi-media technology to provide visitors with an immersive experience that allows them to understand the story of Australians on the Western Front. The 2023-24 Budget provides the funding over six years to enable important upgrades and maintenance works.

The works will include replacement of ageing technical equipment while maintaining the delivery of a highly interactive experience that will continue to offer insight into the Australian wartime experience.

The six-year funding measure ensures the Sir John Monash Centre will continue to provide a state-of-the-art interpretive experience for visitors from around the world. Some 46,000 Australians lost their lives in Belgium and France during the First World War and this commitment will ensure their legacy and stories of their sacrifice live on.

To learn more about the Sir John Monash Centre, visit sjmc.gov.au.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL



The Australian War Memorial (AWM) has unveiled a key piece from one of the most famous air raids of the Second World War: Operation Chastise, better known as the Dambusters Raid. (Find out more about the Dambusters raid on page 29.)

Ahead of the 80th anniversary of the raid on 16 May 2023, the Memorial previewed an original Sorpe Dam model used to prepare for the raids, which will feature in the redeveloped galleries in the new Anzac Hall.

The 3D models were used by pilots and aircrew in preparing for the operation. The Memorial has models for all three of the main targets – the Eder, Sorpe and Möhne dams.

The models are 3D dioramas used by the pilots

and aircrew to familiarise themselves with the targets ahead of the operation. The model of the Möhne Dam is currently on display in the Memorial's Second World War galleries.

For Australians, Bomber Command was statistically

one of the most dangerous places to serve during the Second World War. From the 10,000 Australians who served in Bomber Command, the names of the more than 4,100 who died are listed on the Memorial's Roll of Honour.

The original Sorpe Dam model will be displayed in the new Anzac Hall alongside the Memorial's Avro Lancaster, "G for George", and a German commemorative copper plaque from the north tower of the Möhne Dam.

The Anzac Hall will provide an additional 4,000m² of gallery space underneath a roof inspired by the Australian Rising Sun badge and is due to be completed in late 2025. (You can read the full version of this article in the digital version of *Vet Affairs*.)

ITEMS FOR SALE

The Red Poppies collection by Ashdene

NEW DESIGNS available now at the Australian War Memorial Shop

In commemoration of the Australian experience of war, Ashdene have released their latest range of homewares – the *Red Poppies* collection. Made for the Australian War Memorial, the range features a fresh poppy design created by Australia's leading botanical artist Jenny Phillips, who perfectly captures the reverence of the Flanders poppy.



Mug, tall can style - \$16.99



Mug, wide flare style - \$17.99



Cup and saucer - \$34.99



Teapot with infuser - \$89.99



Sandwich tray, melamine - \$17.99



Tea towels (pack of 2) - \$29.99



Coasters (set of 6) - \$19.99

Visit shop.awm.gov.au to explore the complete collection.

Buy online or call the Memorial Shop team on (02) 6243 4555 to place an order.

NOTICEBOARD

REUNIONS

Ex RAAF Surface Finisher Reunion

15–17 September 2023, CSI Ipswich, QLD

A reunion for ex RAAF Surface Finishers and their partners. Activities include welcomes, Friday social, lawn bowls, official event and farewell breakfast.

Contact: Greg 'Jacko' Lyons or Garth Steinhart
☎ 0413 700 298 or 0487 195 418
✉ gregjackolyons@gmail.com

102 Field Workshop SVN - RAEME

29 September–1 October 2023, 'Avondale', 601 Brays Road, Gannawarra, VIC

Members and their partners are invited to attend the bi-annual reunion on my property. Ample free camping available with basic shower/toilet facilities and limited access to power. Numbers attending are required for catering purposes.

Contact: Noel (Loonda) Lake OAM
☎ 03 5456 9246
✉ koonda@activ8.net.au

RAN Writers Association Reunion

13–15 October 2023, Sydney, NSW

For more details, please email or visit the website.

Contact: RAN Writers Association
✉ scribes@ranwriters.com
🌐 ranwriters.com

Ex Naval Stores / MLSC members of all ranks

20–21 October 2023, Coffs Harbour, NSW

Enquiries from other branches more than welcome.

Contact: Alan Cady-Ellis
☎ 0407 436 498
✉ temporaryloan@gmail.com

8/9 RAR Association

27 October 2023, Samford, Brisbane, QLD

50th reunion of raising the Battalion linking 31 October 1973. Meet & Greet, AGM, all Companies function, Battalion visit, birthday service and luncheon. All welcome – remember Vietnam to Afghanistan/Iran.

Contact: Gregory Decker
☎ 0417 464 251
✉ pointstar@bigpond.com
🌐 89rar.com/welcome
🌐 facebook.com/89RARAssn

21 Construction Squadron RAE

10–12 November 2023, Royal Hotel (Derms), Seymour, VIC

Reunion for all serving and ex-serving members and their partners. If accommodation is required, please book early. There will be a meet and greet on the 10th, Remembrance Day service on the 11th and a BBQ on the 12th.

Contact: Bill Thornley
☎ 0438 140 759
✉ we.2.bez@bigpond.com

106 Field Workshop

20 November 2023, Steeples Club, Mornington, VIC

To commemorate 55 years since 106 Fd Wksp formed at 1 ATF Nui Dat SVN on The Order of Battle 1 November 1968. 250 soldiers passed through the unit in our first 12 months of operation, with some 535 serving during our operational service. We have still not found all those valuable RAEME/RAAOC and Catering Corps soldiers.

Contact: Milton Pearson
☎ 0488 050 261
✉ csm1066869@gmail.com

HMAS Leeuwin April 1968 23rd Intake

26 February–1 March 2024, Victor Harbor, SA

All members and their partners are encouraged to attend. Divisional staff and instructors who were involved with this Intake are also welcome.

Contact: Charlie Cifala
☎ 0457 634 486
✉ cjcifala@yahoo.com.au

60 Year Reunion 19th VM Army Apprentices

23–26 April 2024, Sunshine Coast (TBC), QLD

All intakes welcome. Those interested, please make contact. Seeking contact details for Gavin Bicknell, Johnny Broomfield, Lloyd Ellem, Lionel Houston and Frank Mazurek.

Contact: Peter Leslie or Pete Culnane
☎ 0413 620 945 or 0439 726 100
✉ pete128@outlook.com

RAAF Apprentices 1974 – 28 Scorpions

23–26 April 2024, Wagga Wagga, NSW

Planning in progress for intake's 50th anniversary event. All 28 Scorpions and their partners are welcome. Expressions of interest through Facebook – 28 Scorpions.

Contact: Chris Nielsen
☎ 0403 943 029
✉ chris.nielsen@live.com.au

Headquarters 1st Australian Task Force and D&E Platoon

21–25 November 2024, Adelaide, SA

Commemorative lunch on the 23rd at the Training Depot, Torrens Parade Ground. Preceded by a dedication service at the Pathway of Honour where our own memorial will be unveiled, then commemorative service at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Contact: John Verhelst
☎ 0437 212 121
✉ jeverhelst@gmail.com
🌐 www.hqlatf.org

MEDALS LOST AND FOUND

LOST

Charles Frederick Taylor NX66278

Seeking lost service medals.

Contact: Suzette Keys
☎ 0402 498 397
✉ jellyhotdog86@outlook.com

WO1 Army M W Sward 37333

My late father's official medals were presumed stolen from Chatham Valley, Oberon, NSW in 2017. The medals were Vietnam and other service medals and ribbons in one piece.

Contact: Lilea Sward
☎ 0417 508 543
✉ lileasward@gmail.com

John Graney Southwell

My dad's Distinguished Flying Medal was last seen in 1975/76 at Largs Bay, South Australia. Please contact me if you have any knowledge of our precious family heirloom.

Contact: Susan (Southwell) Hill
✉ hillsusan527@gmail.com

M J Fogarty 02644

Two sets of same medals (original and replica) Australian Service Medal 1945–1975 with clasp FESR and an Australian Defence Medal (current issue). Stolen c. 2018 when my house was burgled. Theft was reported to police.

Contact: Mike Fogarty RAN
☎ 02 6288 5339
✉ mike.fogarty@bigpond.com

R27467 B Dulihanty RAN

Medals lost in post – ASM 1945–75 with PNG, and Japan clasps and ADM.

Contact: Graham Dulihanty
☎ 0401 856 710
✉ granran2010@live.com

Francis and Frederick Tamblyn's WWI medals

Both my great great uncles died in WWI. Francis (Frank) was part of the NZ Infantry and died of wounds after his return from the Somme. I'm also searching for his medals from the Boer War. Frederick died at Lone Pine and was in the Australian Army.

Contact: Patricia Bowes
☎ 0401 344 804
✉ trishbowes@bigpond.com

FOUND

Murphy's Pacific Star medal (WWII)

The surname 'Murphy' is stamped on the back of the medal.

Contact: Brett
☎ 0419 235 586

W A Leslie R93355 and H A Leslie WX60351

We were handed two sets of medals found in a trunk bought at an auction. There are 10 medals WWI/WWII for W A Leslie and 8 medals for H A Leslie – Malaysia, Borneo and Vietnam.

Contact: Trevor Smith, Curator, Caloundra RSL Military Display
✉ curator@caloundrarsl.com.au

1557 PTE James Vincent Molloy

James served in the 6th Light Horse Regiment in WWI and was awarded the 1914–15 Star, WWI Victory Medal and British War Medal. He lived in the Windsor and Parramatta areas of NSW before he passed away in 1953.

Contact: Robert Millar
☎ 0412 514 902
✉ bmillar@ozemail.com.au

2794915 W G Willis

Australian Defence Medal

Contact: Reception
☎ 02 6057 2000
✉ elizabethstreet@commercialclubalbury.com.au

Gnr Hugh Norris (AIF) 37808

British War Medal 1914–1918 found during house renovations in Millicent, SA. Hugh was from Berry, NSW, and served in the Field Artillery in WWI. Mother listed as Mrs Elizabeth Ann Norris of Mullumbimby, NSW.

Contact: RSL Millicent Sub-branch
☎ 0456 086 262
✉ millicent@rslsa.org.au

4/604 (formerly SX500199) WO1 William Vaughan Clark

General service badge (rising sun), badges of rank, corps, unit and formation, plus pay book and AAB83 (record of service). WO1 Clark joined RAAOC in 1946, served in Vietnam April 1966–April 1967.

Contact: RSL Millicent Sub-Branch
☎ 0456 086 262

✉ millicent@rslsa.org.au

R E Roberts B4574

Australian service medal 1939–1945 and two star medals. Would like to return to owner or family.

Contact: Menetta Walker
☎ 0429 948 315
✉ net62@bigpond.com

Pacific Star Medal

The medal has been handed into the Edmonton Police Station, 103 Louie Piccone Way, Edmonton, QLD 4870.

Contact: Katrina Grant
☎ 07 4045 9101
✉ propertyedmonton@police.qld.gov.au

F J Quigley, 67212

Three medals from 1939–1945 found in Nelson Bay. Would like to return to family.

Contact: Jennifer Wagner
☎ 0417 225 783
✉ jenken27@optusnet.com.au

NX56924 Pte William Neville Poulton, 2/3 Pioneer Battalion

Looking to return medals to next of kin.

Contact: Bev
✉ wombatlodge2@gmail.com

B H Stedman 2723749

National Service Medal in case. Found in op shop in Port Macquarie. Would like to return to family.

Contact: Ed Pietsch
0428 281 804
☎ peach201050@gmail.com

Michael Hindmarsh, Australian Army

Found at Hervey Bay tip – Australian Army Teamwork Medallion in presentation case.

Contact: Simon Morley – Hervey Bay RSL Sub-Branch Inc
☎ 07 4197 7477
✉ subbranch@herveybayrsl.com.au

Pte Bernard Dutton and Sylvia Dutton

605 Pte Bernard Dutton 13 Light Horse Regiment AIF (WWI), 1914–18 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal. Bernard's wife, 93342 Sylvia Dutton RAAF (WWII), Australian Service Medal 1939–45 and War Medal 1939–45.

Contact: Peter Whitelaw
☎ 0411 107 039
✉ peter@peterwhitelaw.com.au

You may also want to visit the Defence Department Honours and Awards page for information on applying for medals, replacements and relatives' medals (defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/honours-awards).

NOTICEBOARD

NAVY

Seeking Graeme 'Tug' Wilson

Seeking former shipmate of HMAS *Leeuwin* Rhoades 37th Intake 1971-1972. Would like to catch up.

Contact: Chris Mamot

☎ 0437 200 157

✉ c.mamot57@gmail.com

Dandenong Naval Association

A lunch is held at 12 noon on the first Friday of each month at the Noble Park RSL, 1128 Heather Ton Rd, Noble Park, Victoria. Welfare and pension officers present. All ex-Navy and partners welcome.

Contact: Gordon Murray OAM, President

✉ gordonmurray44@icloud.com

Naval Association of NSW, Gerringong Sub-Section

Meetings held third Tuesday of the month (except December) at Gerringong RSL Hall, Belinda Street.

Contact: Robert Foster (Secretary) or Lee Cordner (President)

☎ 0428 669 820 or 0427 333 034

✉ kiamarobert@outlook.com

Ex-Navy personnel in the Albert and Logan Shires and surrounds

The Beenleigh and District Sub-Section meetings are held at 11 am on the last Sunday of the month at the Beenleigh RSL and Golf Club, 13 Bardyn Halliday Drive, Mt Warren Park. We hold a brief meeting, then have a drink or a bite to eat. Partners welcome.

Contact: Brenda Schuurman, Secretary

✉ brendasch@bigpond.com

JR's 23rd Intake April 1968

Looking for Junior Recruits from the 23rd Intake who would like to get back in touch with old shipmates.

Contact: Charlie Cifala

☎ 0457 634 486

✉ cjcifala@yahoo.com.au

Teletype communications equipment

Seeking original teletype communications equipment, i.e. ASRs, KSRs etc as I would like to set up a display in a small country town's RSL.

Contact: Gary McGowan

☎ 0420 327 159

✉ garymcgool1955@gmail.com

ARMY

Jimmy Sonigo RA 3 Vietnam

I am urgently seeking Jimmy. He was a mate of my late father, Plyn Dennis Jones; they served together in Vietnam.

Contact: Dean Jones

☎ 0456 719 328

Seeking Johnathon Daniels

He was born in Rhodesia and joined the Army in the 1970s.

Contact: Vince Black

☎ 0435 080 087

✉ vinlor1@bigpond.com

Seeking Raymond William Green

A fellow 1971 Duntroon graduate. Ray served in the Royal Australian Corps of Transport.

Contact: Brigadier Gerry Warner (Retd)

☎ 0418 289 148

✉ gerry@ozemail.com.au

Seeking nurse, Vietnam 1968

I met this Army nurse somewhere between Berea and Nui Dat in 1968 at a bar opposite an orphanage. As my mates and I left the bar, she ran after me holding my M16 yelling I'd left my gun. I'd love to be able to thank her after all these years.

Contact: Alan Bloom

☎ 0438 077 999

✉ heatherannbloom@gmail.com

Seeking relatives of Sister Margaret De Mestre

An Army nurse who was on the hospital ship *Manunda* when it was bombed in Darwin Harbour, Margaret was a friend of my late mother, and I recently came across a letter she wrote to mum in 1941. I would like to pass on the letter to her descendants.

Contact: Desley Stafford

✉ desley.stafford@outlook.com

3109616 L/Cpl Bob Powell

Seeking contact with my Crew Commander, C Sqn 1st Armoured Regt, Vietnam 1971.

Contact: Doug Burvill

✉ doug@aplacethesun.com.au

Seeking Kelvin Pritchard 2795280

My old mate, who served in 86 TPT.PL. in Vietnam 1971. Was living in Newcastle, NSW.

Contact: Michael Merrifield

☎ 0447 303 079

Ex Victorian Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) Staff

I was one of more than 900 CBA staff Australia wide who were 'called up' for National Service 1965-1972 and one of the many Victorian staff who were posted to Vietnam. Gary Doolan (ex 85 Tpt Platoon) and I are looking to find other Victorian staff members who were posted to Vietnam during that period. To date, I have learnt of 12 others.

Contact: Ken Wriedt, Ex CBA 1965-1998, Ex HQ Coy (Tpt) 1 ALSG 1969-1970 (RAASC)

☎ 0434 148 622

✉ kmwriedt@iinet.net.au

Seeking David Lake

Private 1988/1989 Storehouse 17, Scuba Company, 21 Supply Battalion. Married to Vicki and I believe he came from Gosford, NSW.

Contact: Ross Withers

☎ 0488 102 890

✉ rosmarlogistics@bigpond.com

Seeking contact person for 2/1 Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Sydney Branch

My father served 1939-1945 and I would like to march in Sydney on Anzac Day 2024 with the gentlemen who marched this year with this Regiment's banner. RSL NSW do not have contact details.

Contact: Rosie Brennan (nee Lumsdaine)

☎ 0430 310 044

✉ rbrennan5353@gmail.com

Seeking Tony Klepzyński

Ex 21 Construction Squadron Puckapunyal. Last heard from in WA in the late 1970s.

Contact: Les Grant

☎ 0414 635 730

✉ lesgrant52@gmail.com

Seeking Robert (Bob) Hicks

C.M.F Army S.A. 2/6 Signals, Beluah Park. Last contact March 1965 in North Adelaide. Transferred to Melbourne for two years. Was in Vietnam.

Contact: Marian Dickson

☎ 0439 898 516

Medical Assistants, 8 Camp Hospital (Singleton)

Looking for past assistants up until the buildings were demolished. Cpl Ray Evans from WA was in charge of outpatients at the time.

Contact: John Brown FACN

✉ john.brown.prof@iinet.net.au

Woodbridge Area School, Tasmania

Seeking former students who served in Vietnam, for a reunion and possible history project. We have some of their names: Phillip Archer, Norm Cairns, Peter Cairns, Joe Gilewicz, Rod Marney, Royden Russell, Tony Smith, Lex Triffett, Geoff Vince, Ron Woolley, Hayden Hughes (Navy). Approximately 200 students attended the school at that time.

Contact: Norm Cairns

☎ 0498 765 425

AIR FORCE

Beaufort Squadron Members

Seeking contact with RAAF Beaufort air or ground crew for forthcoming book re Beaufort operations in Australia and SWPA.

Contact: Tony Clark

☎ 0498 085 249

✉ tclark817@bigpond.com

WWII Warrant Officer Allan George Vivian Miles RAAF Service No 1835

I have Allan's WWII-era canvas sausage bag and would like to return it to his family.

Contact: Kerry McDonald

☎ 0422 134 288

Seeking family of Robert Allen 'Shorty' Stewart

BajanThings has recently published a post that features crew members who flew with Errol Barrow, PM of Barbados while in RAF 88 Squadron "B" Flight from September 1944 to April 1945. The crew included Robert, an Australian wireless operator gunner. He was born on 5 January 1919, joined the RAAF on 21 July 1942 at 2 RD RAAF Bradfield Park Sydney, trained in Canada, flew with RAF 88 Squadron in England and France from 20 September 1944 to 6 April 1945, and was discharged from 2 PD Appt Term RAAF Bradfield Park Sydney on 13 December 1945.

Contact: Peter Burton

✉ decimus.burton@gmail.com

🌐 bajanthings.com

Seeking Wing Commander David Reynolds

I served in the RAAF Coms Op (COMMS STATION 64), Sgt No A122178, 8/10/1971 to 19/6/1988 (medically discharged). I am totally blind, 80% deaf. Postings in the Pearce, Darwin, Butterworth and Glen Brook Coms. Hoping to contact WGCdr Reynolds or any of the Communication persons who served with me.

Contact: Allan Brian Cox (Coxy)

✉ andola@bigpond.com

MISCELLANEOUS

AFC AND RAAF Association - Toowoomba Branch

Reaching out to all those who serve/have served in the RAAF, either Regular, Reserve or National Service, to join the Association. This invitation is also extended to Army Aviation and Commonwealth Allied Forces. The Branch meets on the first Sunday of each month at Club Toowoomba, 331 Hume Street, Toowoomba at 10am.

Contact: Richard Carter

☎ 0419 363 913

✉ twmbasec@raafaql.org

Seeking Clinician Podcast Guests

Hosted by a veteran, the podcast aims to share the life stories of ADF nurses, medics, doctors, paramedics and allied health professionals who have served in humanitarian, disaster relief, austere and war environments. If you're interested in being a guest or would like more information, please email.

Contact: Emma

☎ careunderfirepodcast@gmail.com

Library of The Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (RUSIV)

A publicly accessible and free military library located in Victoria Barracks Melbourne that provides a comprehensive and friendly resource for veterans and the wider community. This facility enables easy but deep research on the service history of Anzac personnel. The library has many items not held in other collections including letters, maps and pamphlets.

Contact: RUSIV

☎ secretary@rusiv.org.au

🌐 rusiv.org.au/library

United Nations Medal

Seeking families of 65 ADF officers who served the United Nations during 1947-1951 in Indonesia. There is the possibility of the award of the UN Medal and I am hoping to seek family help in preparing a one-page biography and photo of each of the officers - which will then be offered to the Australian War Memorial for its revamped peacekeeping exhibit.

Contact: Graham Rayner

☎ 0406 376 312

✉ graham.rayner33@gmail.com

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Vetaffairs is published three times a year. Although we often have to reduce the length of articles to make them fit, the full versions are in the digital editions on our website: dva.gov.au/vetaffairs.

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