



## Consultation on new VETERANS' LEGISLATION

Draft legislation that aims to simplify and harmonise Australia's veterans' compensation system has been released by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs for public consultation.

There has been strong interest in the draft legislation since it was released on 28 February 2024, with many submissions already lodged with the Department.

Make sure that you have your say before submissions close on 28 April 2024.

The draft legislation is the next step in responding to recommendation 1 of the Royal Commission's Interim Report. If enacted, the Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Bill would implement the Government's proposal for a single Act model from 1 July 2026.

Under this model, all new claims after the commencement date would be assessed under an improved *Military Rehabilitation*

and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA), with compensation payments being received under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA) and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA) at the commencement date being grand-parented.

The new system would also have a number of improvements, many of which have been added as a result of the consultation conducted on the Veterans' Legislation Reform Consultation Pathway last year. They include:

- introducing a new Additional Disablement Amount to the MRCA, providing similar benefits as the Extreme Disablement Adjustment under the VEA for those post retirement age (taking into account modern superannuation entitlements)
- making the higher travel allowance amount available to all



Have your say

veterans, regardless of kilometres travelled, for private vehicle travel for treatment

- providing a pathway for veterans only covered by the DRCA to qualify for the Special Rate Disability Pension and a Gold Card under MRCA if they have a new claim accepted or a material deterioration of an accepted condition accepted post-commencement

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## An open apology on claims delays

As the Secretary of DVA, I want to apologise for the delays veterans have experienced after lodging claims. I recognise the delays in finalising a claim can be distressing and create uncertainty. We recognise that too many veterans have been waiting too long for an outcome on their claim. I want to assure veterans and their families that improving the time taken to process a claim is a key priority for the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

DVA is appreciative of the additional resources we have received which have enabled us to do more. DVA has recruited and trained more staff, improved its forms and processes, made it easier to submit and track a claim online using MyService, and implemented systems to highlight any missing information so when claims are lodged they are ready for assessment. This is assisting

us to process claims as quickly as possible so veterans get the support they need sooner.

You may have heard DVA has recently cleared the backlog of claims that had yet to be allocated to a DVA officer for processing. With the claims allocation backlog addressed, we are now able to focus even more effort on processing outstanding claims as quickly as possible, and reducing the amount of time it takes for a determination to be made on all claims.

DVA is aiming to allocate new claims (Initial Liability, Incapacity, and Permanent Impairment) to a DVA Claims Delegate or a Claims Support Officer within two weeks of receipt. We are determined to ensure that all new claims move swiftly from initial lodgement to active processing.

Claims processing times can vary depending on the type of claim

and its complexity. If you have an outstanding claim and haven't heard from DVA recently, and you have nominated a representative to act on your behalf, please contact them to see what information they have received. You can also view the progress of your claim through MyService.

We recognise that regular communication can alleviate uncertainty throughout the claims process and help to improve your DVA experience. If this has not been your experience or you have any other questions, please let us know by contacting 1800 VETERAN or through our website: [dva.gov.au/about/feedback](http://dva.gov.au/about/feedback).

Yours sincerely,

**Alison Frame**

**Secretary**

**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

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

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## FROM THE DEPARTMENT

Alison Frame  
Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs

**When I penned my first column as Secretary one year ago, I said it was clear DVA's legislative arrangements were not fit for purpose and that our priority was to eliminate the claims backlog and make sure it does not happen again. A year on, I am proud of the progress we have made on these issues and acutely aware of the work that still lies ahead.**

We were able to allocate all claims for processing in advance of the Royal Commission's deadline. However I recognise that this milestone, while significant, does not mean that all outstanding claims have been determined. I apologise to those veterans who are still awaiting an outcome and have been waiting for some time. Please know that our determinations rate is accelerating and that all claims over two weeks old are now on an active case load of a claims support officer or delegate in DVA (see article on front page).

The highlight of my first year in the job has been engaging directly with the veteran community to deepen my own understanding of service, and what veterans and veteran families need from DVA. I have also been delighted by the broader community's willingness to work constructively with DVA as we pursue improvements.

This year, we are expanding our engagements with the veteran community to ensure that our services are informed by, and respond to, the lived experiences of our clients. In addition to our more traditional ways of engaging with the community, we have increased the emphasis on a 'co-design' approach. This ensures that we are working in partnership with the veteran community to understand your concerns, listen to your views and embed this advice into DVA policies, programs and operational practices.

In response to input from veterans and families, DVA has established an Aged & Community Care Taskforce. This recognises that transition

into aged care can be as significant a change as when one transitions from Defence. This work has been guided by an initial stakeholder workshop to establish priorities and aims.

This is an exciting opportunity to deliver a structured approach to aged care services that allows DVA to respond to the complex and evolving changes that are happening more broadly across the aged care sector. I look forward to the real benefits and positive difference this work will make to the lives of our ageing veteran and dependant clients, and their families.

It is clear that it will take more than DVA alone to address the issues facing the veteran community, so I see great possibilities for even deeper engagement and collaboration with the Department of Defence, ex-service organisations and other government agencies to be part of new initiatives and approaches.

In February, I briefly visited New Zealand, where I met with senior government officials to share opportunities and challenges in improving services for veterans and their families. I co-hosted a Five Eyes meeting on Veterans' Affairs with my New Zealand counterpart, with colleagues from Canada, the US and the UK joining us online. The experience strengthened our relationship with these close allies and was a valuable opportunity to hear new perspectives and ideas, and to ensure we are aligning our efforts as much as possible.

While in New Zealand I paid my respects at the Pukeahu National War Memorial and the Australian Memorial. These monuments serve as a reminder of the long and close relationship between our two nations and our shared experience of war and sacrifice. This is particularly pertinent as we approach Anzac Day.

The Department's focus is now shifting to supporting many new DVA clients to access the financial, health and wellbeing support and services for which they are eligible. DVA is positioning to meet the growing demand for our services with innovative customer service and continually adapting our services to



Image:  
David Whittaker,  
Australian  
War Memorial



Laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior alongside Ms Bernadine MacKenzie, Head of Veterans' Affairs New Zealand.

meet the changing needs of the veteran community.

We are delivering business improvements to better support our clients by standardising forms, modernising our IT systems, improving MyService and enhancing our modelling capabilities to plan for the future.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide will hand down its final report and recommendations in September 2024, and the report is likely to touch on many aspects of how DVA operates. Supporting the work of the Royal Commission has been a huge focus in DVA since it commenced. We will continue to support the Commission while also preparing for

its recommendations, the Government's response and implementing the agreed recommendations.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank DVA's dedicated staff for the many ways they go above and beyond to assist veterans. In one recent example, our staff ensured veterans affected by the flooding in North Queensland could continue to access important medicines from their local pharmacy. This was an enormous effort that required a new legislative instrument – all achieved in record time.

I welcome your continued and valued participation in the work of the Department as we continue on our mission to support the veteran community.



Australian Government  
Department of Veterans' Affairs

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phone: freecall 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)  
web: dva.gov.au





## FROM THE MINISTER

The Hon Matt Keogh MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel

**As the last hearings for the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide have now wrapped up, I want to thank all of you who took the brave step of sharing your experiences – be it in writing, or in person, as we all work together on establishing a better way of supporting Defence personnel, veterans and families.**

The Defence Minister, Richard Marles and I were grateful for the opportunity to contribute directly to the evidence of the Royal Commission. Ultimately we want to see their expert recommendations so the Government can get on with the job of implementation.



For Every Drop Shed in Anguish, the new sculpture at the Australian War Memorial

To all those who have lost loved ones, and all those who will forever be burdened by their experiences – we see you, we hear you. Our words of sympathy will never be enough comfort, but please judge us on our actions as we move forward to truly establish a better future for Defence personnel, veterans and families.

We've already taken action on all recommendations of the Interim Report – the items that the Royal Commission deemed too urgent to wait for the final report.

We've followed their lead, eliminating the veteran compensation claims backlog in February, a month before deadline. Of course, I acknowledge that the clearing of the "backlog" of unallocated claims is just part of the story, with many people still waiting too long for determinations. This is now DVA's key line of effort – to bring down those claim determination times.

The Government was elected on a commitment to properly resource DVA so it could eliminate the unacceptable backlog of veteran compensation claims. It's thanks to those hard working DVA staff that we've been able to achieve this milestone.

We've also made massive progress with the first recommendation – to simplify and harmonise veteran compensation legislation. I don't need to tell you all what a nightmare the current three act system is. The intention behind rolling everything into one Act is to ensure it's easier for people to understand what they're eligible for, simpler to make a claim, and faster for the Department to determine that claim – ultimately getting support to you, faster.

I welcome your feedback on the draft legislation and I encourage you to visit the DVA website for more information. Please make a submission; we are intent on getting this right and a big part of that is taking your feedback into consideration. Submissions close on 28 April 2024.

I'm also happy to report we've now announced more than \$5 million funding for each of the Veterans' and Families' Hubs we committed to at the last election. Each of these Hubs, spread around the country, is to be located in areas of the largest veteran populations – identified in the 2021 census. These Hubs will be opening over the next two years.

As we approach Anzac Day, I am reminded that what we do in the Veterans' Affairs portfolio is an important part of how we express



Discussing legislation reform at Ingleburn RSL.



Announcing the Ipswich Veterans' and Families' Hub.

our gratitude to the generations of Australians who have donned a military uniform in the service of our country and let future generations know that all those that serve then, now and into the future are never forgotten.

In towns and cities across Australia and around the world, Australians will gather to acknowledge the commitment of our service personnel to the defence of our nation, and reflect on their

sacrifices and those of the families who support them.

Anzac Day is a powerful reminder that the Australian community rightfully expects our Defence personnel, veterans and families to be well looked after. This is an important task and responsibility of government – a commitment we take very seriously.

**To all of you, we thank you for your service, and the sacrifices of your families.**



## FROM THE ASSISTANT MINISTER

The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP

Assistant Minister for Defence and Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs

**On 19 February, I had the privilege of being in Darwin to commemorate the 82nd anniversary of the city's bombing in the Second World War. A swift and relentless attack saw more than 240 Japanese aircraft unleash their fury on the unsuspecting city – more than 250 lives were lost that day in two separate raids.**

We remembered the sacrifice, the fear and the courage that marked that fateful day, and the spirit of Darwin, and of Australia, that never truly faltered. (You can read more on page 27.)

One organisation that is keeping the spirit alive today is Disaster Relief Australia (DRA), which unites the skills and experiences of ADF veterans with first responders to deploy disaster response teams to where they're needed most. I recently had the pleasure of thanking DRA's volunteers, who have been doing important work in South East Queensland to help communities recover from intense storms and flooding. Disaster

victims told me that when they saw the DRA volunteers in their trusty blue shirts knocking on their door, there was a sense of relief. To all the DRA volunteers, keep up the good work! (You can read more about DRA's work on page 18.)

In February, I was proud to dedicate a new sculpture at the Australian War Memorial in recognition of those who have suffered as a result of their service to our nation. For *Every Drop Shed in Anguish* stands in our nation's capital as a lasting reminder of the impact service has on individuals and families. (Read more on page 30.)

Over the summer holiday period, I called on Australians to reach out and show their support for their veteran mates and families who may have been experiencing heightened stress, anxiety or depression, during what can be a difficult time for some. Anzac Day, while a time of commemoration and gratitude for veterans' service, may also bring up similar emotions. Please keep an eye out for each other – and know that one conversation can make a difference.

I encourage those in need of support to reach out to Open Arms. (More information about their work is on pages 12–14.) The service is staffed by trained professionals who understand military service. Veterans and their families can be confident they will be able to access the support they need from experts who understand life in uniform. Please contact 1800 011 046, available 24/7.



## Letter to the editor

In reference to the article in the December 2023 issue of *Vetaffairs* 'Remembering the Burma-Thailand Railway 80 years on'. During my service with the RAAF in Thailand from February 67 to August 68 I visited the war graves cemetery outside of Bangkok where I noticed a grave marker for a Corporal from a town "via Gerrigong" which is not far from my home town of Nowra. I took photos of the headstone and his listing on the honour roll (sorry can't remember his name).

When I returned to Australia, I contacted the local RSL and they were able to trace his family who called at my parents' home to collect the photos. During the war, the family received advice that he was "missing in action" but at the end of the war they were advised that he was "presumed dead, possibly at the POW camp in Singapore". The family were very happy to know their relative had a "resting place" after all these years. Sometimes just the smallest act can make a big difference.

Regards  
Bob Stanley  
(Ex WOUFF RAAF)

## Police, medics, and DSH Insurance come to rescue of Lismore flood victim

In the early hours of 28 February 2022, the residents of Lismore awoke to a nightmare. They found themselves trapped, surrounded by rising floodwaters. Ranked as one of the most costly natural disasters in the world for 2022, the flood had dealt a devastating blow to the Lismore community.

Among those caught in the chaos was Mary McDonough, a 93-year-old woman who clung to her mattress with unwavering determination. Bernie McDonough, Mary's son, vividly recalls the panic and uncertainty of that day. 'I wasn't with my mum, and we weren't sure what was happening in Lismore,' says Bernie.

Eventually, help arrived when NSW police constables came to the rescue. However the challenges didn't end there. Mary faced another hurdle, this time financial. The repairs to her home, which she had lived in for many years, were estimated to take an entire year.

Defence Service Homes (DSH) Insurance were there to help navigate through this financially stressful time.

'People think "Oh, you're lucky you've got insurance",' says Bernie. 'I've heard it referred to as winning the lotto or having a windfall.'

The support from DSH Insurance was invaluable to the McDonough family, providing them with the assurance that they wouldn't have to face this daunting process alone.

'They understood the urgency of the situation, especially considering mum's high care needs, and together we explored various options that would help support our requirements,' adds Bernie. 'These floods are going to be embedded in our community psyche for years to come but we're grateful to everyone, from emergency services and community response groups, to DSH Insurance, who matched their service delivery promise with action.'



Bernie McDonough with his mother Mary McDonough

You can get a Home Building Insurance quote online in minutes at [online.dsh.gov.au](https://www.dsh.gov.au), with automatic flood cover and no excess on claims included in the quote at no additional cost (apart from some accidental and earthquake damage). As always – terms and conditions apply! Visit our website at [www.dsh.gov.au/insurance](https://www.dsh.gov.au/insurance) or talk to our customer service team today on 1300 552 662.

To read more of Mary McDonough's story, see the full version of this article in *Vetaffairs* online.

# Free advocacy support for veterans and their families

If you need assistance with lodging a compensation claim with DVA, or with your wellbeing journey, and don't know where to start, engaging an ex-service organisation (ESO) advocate might be the answer you're looking for.

ESO advocates play an important role in supporting veterans and families through the claims process and helping find supports for improving wellbeing. Importantly, these advocacy services are provided free of charge (some may charge a small administration fee), meaning there is no need to pay someone to help.

ESO advocates can be found on the Advocacy Register ([advocaterregister.org.au](http://advocaterregister.org.au)), which is a national database that provides the contact details of free advocacy services across Australia.

ESO advocacy is delivered in line with service delivery standards and ESO advocates are trained through the Advocacy Training and

Development Program to meet national training standards for advice they provide to the veteran community.

It's important to remember that DVA does not give any particular provider or advocate special access or treatment. Using a provider who charges for their services does not guarantee a successful claim or faster processing.

Veterans and families also have the option to engage with DVA directly online by using MyService. Through MyService,

you can lodge claims and track your progress, apply for a Veteran Card, book transport and more.



For more information, please visit the DVA website (search for 'What to consider if you're looking for help').

## New veterans' legislation

Continued from page 1.

- increasing the funeral allowance from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for previous automatic grant categories under the VEA, and ensuring that a reimbursement for funeral expenses of up to \$14,062 is available in respect of all service related deaths
- the ability to have DRCA claims reviewed by the Veterans' Review Board
- merging the functions of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission into the Repatriation Commission
- introducing 'presumptive liability', allowing the Repatriation Commission to specify injuries and diseases that can be determined as "automatic unless proven otherwise" where they are known to have a common connection with military service.

Moving to a single ongoing Act will make it easier for veterans and families to understand their entitlements and receive the support they need, when they need it. It will also contribute to streamlining and speeding up claims processing within DVA.

Visit [www.dva.gov.au/legislationreform](http://www.dva.gov.au/legislationreform) or scan the QR code to review the proposed changes, understand what would be different and why, learn how the changes may impact you, get involved and have your say.



## Pensions and allowances rise

SERVICE PENSION	Old rate (fortnightly)	New rate (fortnightly)	Increase (fortnightly)
Single person	\$1,096.70	\$1,116.30	\$19.60
Couples (each)	\$826.70	\$841.40	\$14.70
Single person - transitional	\$906.80	\$922.90	\$16.10
Couples (each) - transitional	\$731.60	\$744.60	\$13.00
WAR WIDOWS			
War widow(er)'s pension	\$1,116.30	\$1,136.30	\$20.00
Income support supplement	\$331.40	\$337.40	\$6.00
DISABILITY Compensation Payment			
Special rate (T&PI)	\$1,729.20	\$1,760.00	\$30.80
Intermediate rate	\$1,146.40	\$1,166.80	\$20.40
Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA)	\$933.20	\$949.80	\$16.60
100 per cent	\$600.30	\$611.00	\$10.70
10 per cent	\$66.96	\$68.03	\$1.07
VETERAN PAYMENT			
Single Person	\$1,189.70	\$1,211.20	\$21.50
Couples (each)	\$927.60	\$944.50	\$16.90
MRCA			
Wholly dependent partner payment	\$1,116.30	\$1,136.30	\$20.00
Special Rate Disability pension (SRDP)	\$1,729.20	\$1,760.00	\$30.80

These are the maximum rates of payment and include any Energy Supplement payable. These changes came into effect on 20 March and the first full payment at the new rates will be the payday 17 April 2024. An explanation of these changes is available in the online version of *Vetaffairs*.

# Can you recognise suspicious provider behaviour?

**Service providers and other third-party organisations play an important role in offering high quality health and wellbeing programs and services for veterans and families.**

To help protect veterans and families, all service providers must comply with strict requirements for the services they deliver to DVA clients. Most providers do the right thing, however, we are aware of some providers and third-party organisations which are engaging in misleading and non-compliant behaviours, including fraud.

A small number of DVA providers and third parties engage in non-compliant conduct and this adversely affects the veteran community and DVA. For example, they could:

- target veterans through misleading advertising and prize draws
- send or offer DVA clients unsolicited 'free' goods related to their Veteran Card entitlements
- contact DVA clients via uninvited, direct approach methods (cold calling/emails)
- contact DVA clients claiming to represent DVA or be making contact on behalf of DVA
- use images of Veteran Cards and government logos on webpages and other materials to suggest DVA or the Australian Government endorses their services
- provide DVA clients with allied health services without a valid referral from their GP.

DVA is the only source of truth for information about the services and supports that can be accessed by veterans and families using a Veteran Card. We will never provide veteran details to third parties to call on our behalf promoting services. You can learn more about Veteran Card entitlements and DVA's funded health services on the DVA website. Alternatively, you can call us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) to confirm what services you are entitled to receive.

There are ways you can protect yourself from being a victim of fraud. These include by:

- knowing the facts - read the small print
- asking questions if you can't find answers in the small print
- checking the information you've read or heard is correct
- not sharing your personal information over the phone or online with people or providers you don't know
- asking an advocate or trusted friend or family member to help you
- visiting [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au) or calling us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) if you need more information.

Remember, if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Look into it closely before you accept the offer.

## If you suspect fraud

DVA takes a zero tolerance approach to fraud committed against DVA or our clients. Tip-offs help to keep our veteran community safe. If you suspect someone isn't following the rules, report it to us by:

- emailing: [fraud.tipoff@dva.gov.au](mailto:fraud.tipoff@dva.gov.au)
- completing the online Report a Fraud form: [dva.gov.au/about-us/dva-forms/report-fraud](http://dva.gov.au/about-us/dva-forms/report-fraud)
- contacting us by phone: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

DVA takes all fraud and non-compliance tip-offs seriously and investigates these as appropriate. You can choose to remain anonymous when reporting an issue that you think might be fraud. However, please be aware this

can make it more difficult to investigate the issue if we require further information.

For more information, including what DVA needs to investigate a fraud complaint, please visit the Reporting Suspected Fraud page of the DVA website ([dva.gov.au/about/overview/reporting-suspected-fraud](http://dva.gov.au/about/overview/reporting-suspected-fraud)).

It is normal for you and your family to feel distressed if you think you have been a victim of fraud. If you need support, Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling offers counselling and support services for veterans and families 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Contact Open Arms by visiting [www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au) or by phoning 1800 011 046.

## Community feedback helping to shape the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Over the last few years, members of the veteran community have shared what is important to them when it comes to the mental health and wellbeing of veterans, Defence members and families. Feedback from the community is helping to inform areas of priority and issues to highlight in the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, expected to be launched in mid-2024.

Some key themes have emerged from this feedback, including that access to treatment and support is needed in a timely manner, along with simpler processes and increased engagement with DVA and health providers. These services and supports should be easily accessible, with greater access to services needed in rural and remote areas.

The feedback has highlighted that improving mental health and wellbeing literacy is vital to improving health outcomes and the continuing stigma and implications of disclosing mental health concerns should be addressed.

We've also heard that greater support during transition is needed and barriers to accessing services and supports should be reduced. To do this, we must value the insights from those with lived experience - systems, programs and services should be co-designed.

The feedback has come from a range of consultation activities including surveys, webinars and roundtables. We have heard from all corners of the



veteran community, including those who have served, families, women, First Nations people, members of the LGBT-QIA+ community, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people with disability, and other groups.

Thank you to everyone in the veteran community who have shared their views and lived experiences. Your feedback is helping to shape the strategy and the future of supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our veterans and Defence members.

For more information, search for the strategy's page on the DVA website.

## Many thanks for your warm welcome

Kahlil Fegan DSC AM  
Repatriation Commissioner



Since my appointment as the Repatriation Commissioner, I am immensely appreciative of the support I have received from everyone at DVA and in the veteran community.

In particular, I am very grateful for the assistance I've had from so many ex-service organisations (ESOs). These organisations and their leaders are a great reflection of us as a nation and our commitment to supporting veterans and families.

Over the past 6 months, I've focused on gaining a fuller appreciation of the challenges and opportunities we must deal with so we can continue to improve the support we provide to those who have served our country.



*Kahlil Fegan at the official plaque commemorating his father, a Vietnam War veteran, at the Garden Of Remembrance of the Woden Public Cemetery in Canberra.*

In this time, I have had around 300 engagements with members of the veteran community, ESOs and other key stakeholders.

I've learnt a great deal and have enjoyed being able to assist and contribute to the work being conducted across the community to enhance and improve Australia's veteran support system.

I have also had the privilege of supporting DVA Secretary, Alison Frame, who is passionately consulting and implementing meaningful change to enhance DVA's support to veterans and families.

I have travelled widely across Australia to conduct engagements with our serving personnel, contribute to ESO events, visit Veterans' and Families' Hubs and meet staff. I am also very honoured to be attending Anzac Day commemorations at Gallipoli in Türkiye this year. I feel privileged to be Australia's Chief Executive



*L to R: Kahlil Fegan; Katie Maloney, General Manager, Partnerships & Engagement RSL QLD; Emma Whitehead, Chief Executive Officer, Mates4Mates; and Troy Watson, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Veteran Services, RSL QLD*

for the event and Master of Ceremony at the Lone Pine Service.

In the months ahead, I will be seeking opportunities to enhance communication, collaboration and cooperation within the veteran community, and advocate on those matters that impact our veteran entitlements.

Importantly for all of us, the Government recently released draft legislation that aims to simplify and harmonise veterans' rehabilitation and compensation legislation. This was the very first recommendation made by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide in its Interim Report.

I strongly encourage you to take the time to understand what these changes would mean for you. A consultation period is currently underway and submissions on the draft legislation will be accepted until 28 April. Visit the DVA website to make an individual submission, or collaborate with a group on like issues and submit it through an ESO. It's vital that you make your feedback known, as this legislation will impact us and future generations for many years.

Finally, a few words about the important work being done across Australia by an organisation called Cor Infinitus (Infinite Courage).

Recently, I attended the dedication of the Suffering of War and Service sculpture, *For Every Drop Shed in Anguish* at the Australian War Memorial. The artwork represents those affected by operations and during training, war and on

peacetime service. It was an extremely moving event and I thanked the Director of the Memorial, Matt Anderson, and his wonderful staff. Importantly, it also gave me the opportunity to meet some of those who have been deeply impacted and to learn more about their experiences.

Following the dedication I met with the CEO and Founding Executive Director of Cor Infinitus and was briefed on some of the valuable work they are doing to support veterans' families.

Cor Infinitus is a national initiative that aims to give dignity and respect to the families and loved ones of those who have served our nation and taken their own life. This is being achieved by establishing modest memorials throughout the country. The organisation has worked with local champions to establish 19 memorials across Australia. The memorials are completely inclusive. They do not represent any individual person or circumstance. Rather, the memorials are ageless, anonymous and owned by all families and friends of those lost.

Cor Infinitus and other similarly minded individuals and organisations are worthy of our respect and support. If you are interested in a memorial in your location, further details can be found at [corinfinitus.org](http://corinfinitus.org).

Thank you again for your support, there is much work ahead and I look forward to continuing to work with our Ministers, Secretary Frame, ESOs and you to make a difference. Have a memorable, respectful and safe Anzac Day.

**Do you have diabetes and have a Veteran Gold Card or Veteran White Card with diabetes as an accepted condition? If so, 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.

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, visit [dva.gov.au/diabetes](http://dva.gov.au/diabetes) or call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).



John Macartney

## Volunteers are peerless in men's health

The Men's Health Peer Education (MHPE) Program began in 2001 in response to a prominent study of Vietnam veterans which revealed they experienced higher rates of health issues than the general population.

The DVA-funded program encourages men to take part in wellbeing initiatives and share responsibility for improving their own health and wellbeing. Led on the ground by trained volunteers who, like John Macartney, are often veterans themselves, the MHPE program raises awareness about men's health issues in the veteran community.

'Sharing information and knowledge encourages

others to take ownership of their health,' John says.

Trained volunteers form an integral part of the program and its peer support model. This helps to facilitate events that encourage men to take part while promoting DVA's social health programs. Without volunteer support, the program would not still be around today.

John's motivation as a volunteer is simple yet profound: 'I have a desire to make a tangible and positive difference in the lives of veterans - which I can achieve in my role of MHPE volunteer,' he says.

More than five million people volunteer across Australia each year. It might come as no surprise that many of them are

part of the veteran community. In fact, data recently released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare revealed that veterans were more likely to volunteer compared to Australians who've never served.

John says that volunteering has boosted his health and happiness. 'It's given me a greater sense of belonging, and I've made many great friends.'

We say thanks to John and all of the other wonderful volunteers who've helped MHPE become what it is today. For more information about the program and opportunities to volunteer as a trained MHPE volunteer visit [dva.gov.au/mhpe](http://dva.gov.au/mhpe).



# Penicillin allergy and antibiotic resistance



**JENNY FIRMAN**

Chief Health Officer

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Many people reading this will have been told they have a penicillin allergy. Up to one in five of Australians who are admitted to hospital say they have a penicillin allergy. This is not surprising, as antibiotics in the penicillin family are very commonly prescribed – nearly everyone will have taken a penicillin at some time in their life.

In the past this has not caused too many problems as there have been many other antibiotics to choose from. But antibiotic resistance has rapidly increased at the same time as development of new antibiotics has decreased. This has started to cause problems when choosing an antibiotic for people with a penicillin allergy.

## True penicillin allergy

However, researchers have found true penicillin allergy is much lower than people think. When researchers do allergy skin testing on people in hospital they have found only 10-20% of those who say they have a penicillin allergy actually have a true allergy.

People may think they have a penicillin allergy for several reasons. They may have been told by their parents that they had a penicillin allergy as a small child but don't know the full details of what happened. They may have had a side effect to penicillins such as nausea or diarrhoea, which is not a true allergy but means their doctor may

avoid giving penicillins again for minor illnesses. Or they may have developed a rash after taking penicillins – this may be because of the antibiotics, a viral illness that causes a similar rash, or a virus such as glandular fever interacting with the penicillin.

*Only 10-20% of those who say they have a penicillin allergy actually have a true allergy.*

Sometimes people or their doctors have avoided penicillins due to someone in their family having a severe penicillin allergy, even though there is no evidence this allergy is inherited.

Knowing if someone has a true and severe allergy can be important because if they have a serious or life-threatening infection, or need certain surgeries, a penicillin may be the first choice for them.

Some people do have serious allergic reactions to penicillins and shouldn't take them. These reactions may be delayed and include things like serious blistering, extensive skin rashes, severe mouth ulcers, kidney, liver and blood conditions. Other people may have immediate reactions such as anaphylaxis, swelling of the mouth, throat, lips or tongue, low blood pressure, and hives (urticaria). People who have these reactions after penicillin should avoid penicillins for their whole life and will be offered other options.

If your doctor considers it is important for you to find out if you have a true penicillin allergy, you can be referred for specialist allergy testing. Such testing may involve allergy skin testing or sometimes an oral penicillin challenge where you are given a dose of penicillin in a hospital setting where any serious reactions can be treated.

## The history of antibiotics

Penicillin was discovered nearly 100 years ago by Alexander Fleming when he noticed that bacteria weren't growing near a particular mould. However, it took another 10 years to purify a small amount of penicillin from the mould and prove it could treat infection in humans. Howard Florey, an Australian pharmacologist and pathologist, and a team of researchers at Oxford University did this in 1940.

By then, England was at war, and people were dying of wound infections, so they needed to work to make enough to be useful. There was limited medicine manufacturing happening in England so Florey and a member of his team travelled to Chicago where they were able to work with the US Government and dramatically ramp up production.

By September 1943, there was enough penicillin to meet the needs of the entire Allied Armed Forces. The large scale availability of such a useful antibiotic revolutionised the treatment of infectious disease and injuries in servicemen, and aided the Allied victory in the Second World War.

## Antibiotic resistance

The methods used to discover and develop penicillin then led to the discovery of other antibiotics, including many used today to treat bacterial infections and prevent infections after surgery. These were developed as bacteria became resistant to the existing antibiotics. Using antibiotics means bacteria develop resistance as a defence. Some bacteria can also share their resistance genes with different types of bacteria.

There are several ways to slow down the development of antibiotic resistance:

- Prevent infections by washing your hands and keeping up to date with vaccinations.
- Only take an antibiotic when necessary (e.g. not for viral infections).
- Choose the right antibiotic for the right infection and take the course for the prescribed period of time.

This last one is important for people with a possible penicillin allergy as penicillin is very effective against many common infections and, importantly, doesn't impact the 'good' bacteria living in the gut. Other 'broader spectrum' antibiotics do affect these gut bacteria and are more likely to lead to resistance developing. Hospital patients who report antibiotic allergy are more likely to have longer stays in hospital and suffer multi-resistant infections.

If your doctor assesses that you need a penicillin allergy test, DVA funds this for veterans with a Gold Card or a White Card with a relevant accepted condition.

The discovery of antibiotics revolutionised medicine in the 20th century. It's up to all of us to use them wisely and help to limit the development of antibiotic resistance whenever we can.

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

## Accessing medical grade footwear through DVA



DVA's Medical Grade Footwear (MGF) Program provides specialised footwear to help clients stay independent and mobile.

Clients must have a deformity or abnormality of the foot or ankle, or a medical condition such as diabetes where everyday shoes do not fit and cannot be modified. The MGF Program provides eligible clients with either ready-made or customised footwear.

In November 2023, we updated the Ready-Made Footwear Register and it now includes almost 400 different styles of footwear for your prescribing health provider to choose from.

If you believe you may be eligible, book in to see your GP for a referral to either a podiatrist or a relevant medical specialist such as an orthopaedic surgeon, rehabilitation specialist or rheumatologist. Clients must also hold either a Veteran Gold Card or White Card and have an accepted clinical condition relating to the need for medical-grade footwear.

Clients assessed as being eligible for MGF may receive up to two pairs of shoes at a time. If you are participating in recreational or sporting activities such as golf or bowling and require specialised footwear, you may be able to obtain an additional pair of shoes.

For more information on the MGF Program go to the DVA website: [www.dva.gov.au/MGF](http://www.dva.gov.au/MGF).

## Smoke alarms for the hearing impaired



Two of the most common health conditions experienced by veterans are hearing loss and tinnitus. To support veterans living with these conditions, DVA provides assistive listening devices, tinnitus devices and hearing devices through our Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP). The devices offered through this program are designed to improve your ability to hear in specific listening situations.

While standard smoke alarms are suitable for most people with a mild to moderate hearing impairment, people with profound or severe hearing loss are unlikely to hear a standard smoke alarm. This makes living in your home without a specialised smoke alarm system a risk to your personal safety.

DVA provides specialised smoke alarm packages that include a photoelectric smoke alarm, vibration pad, and flashing light. The addition of

the vibration pad and flashing light means you're more likely to respond quickly and independently during a potential emergency.

You are eligible to receive a smoke alarm package through the RAP if you:

- have been diagnosed with profound hearing loss, or severe hearing loss in the better functioning ear, and
- hold a Veteran Gold Card, or a Veteran White Card for a related accepted condition.

To get your package, organise an appointment with your GP, audiologist, audiometrist, occupational therapist or hearing specialist. Also, check out what other assistive listening and hearing devices you might be able to get through the RAP to help you live safely and independently. (Search for 'Assistive Listening Devices, Tinnitus Devices and Hearing Devices' on the DVA website).

## Can you access\* the Booked Car with Driver service

when travelling for approved treatment under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*?

### Full access if you are either:

- ✓ Aged 80 years and over **OR**
- ✓ Living with dementia (any age) **OR**
- ✓ Legally blind (any age)



[www.dva.gov.au/bc wd](http://www.dva.gov.au/bc wd)

### Access if you are 79 years or younger and you are:

#### Travelling to a specific treatment location

- Former Repatriation General Hospitals
- Public and private hospitals, including outpatient services
- Providers of prosthetics, surgical footwear and orthotics
- Office of Hearing Services accredited providers
- Medical specialist rooms \*General Practitioners excluded
- Radiology, imaging and pathology services

YES, AND

#### Meet one or more specified medical conditions

- Frailty that severely limits your independence
- Recent surgery or treatment severely affecting your capacity to use public transport
- Conditions that make travelling on public transport challenging (such as incontinence)
- Respiratory insufficiency severely limiting independent activity
- Amputation severely limiting independence
- Arthritis severely limiting independence
- Significant trauma
- Recent coronary occlusion severely limiting independence
- Peripheral vascular disease severely limiting independence
- Cardiac failure severely limiting independence
- Psychosis
- Hemiplegia
- Ataxia



You can access\* the Booked Car with Driver service. Call 1800 550 455 to book or discuss your eligibility.

\*Veteran White Card holders must be travelling for treatment of a condition covered by their Card to be eligible.



**DR LORETTA POERIO**

Senior Mental Health Adviser

Department of Veterans' Affairs

## Press pause and reflect on your health and wellbeing

We are living in an increasingly uncertain, and sometimes hostile, world. The chronic stress these situations can engender, whether from personal, local and/or global events, can take its toll in a range of ways and can leave us feeling flat, overwhelmed and exhausted.

Taking a step back and reflecting on how we can care for our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing, and support others to do the same, can assist in navigating these times with equanimity.

Focusing on caring for ourselves may appear selfish, but in reality it is not, and nor should it be seen as a luxury only for those who have time. To be there for others, we need to ensure we are okay too. Self-care enables us to accept and adapt to those things in life we can't control and to make wise choices about the things we do have some control over.

It is important to remember that we all react to stress differently, so working out your priority areas for intervention and what strategies work best for you are critical. We need a range of tactics in the toolkit.

The first rule in self-care is to recognise what is happening within yourself. This sounds obvious; however, we are very good avoiders and absolutely fabulous at not seeing what is right in front of us. This is why family and friends can often be the first to notice when something is wrong, which doesn't always go down well.

Self-awareness means listening to what our body is trying to tell us. Taking the time to ask ourselves some basic questions can help increase our self-awareness:

- Are my thoughts racing?
- Am I finding it difficult to focus?
- Am I confused or worried more than usual?
- Am I experiencing more tension headaches?
- Is my sleep disrupted, or am I getting too much or not enough sleep?

Perhaps you are feeling that people have become a lot more irritating lately, or you are crying at the drop of a hat. These are all signs that a reset is required. The important thing to understand is your signs and triggers. Noticing the signs early makes all the difference, as it is far easier to intervene early than to deal with the consequences once not-so-helpful behaviours become entrenched.

Many of us know at least some things that will help us keep a measure of equilibrium, such as sleep, exercise, good nutrition, relaxation, and meaningful and supportive social connection. The difficulty is, how do we find the motivation to put these things into practice?

Planning is key, along with starting small. One

*You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.*

– C.S. Lewis

pitfall on the path to change is to take on too much in too short a time and then feel overwhelmed, exhausted and guilty at failing, yet again. Sound familiar?

When building a new self-care routine, it's important to act wisely and choose to focus on one strategy at a time. It starts by picking one area you would like to focus on and having a clear understanding of what you are trying to achieve and why.

Motivation is key, as it provides the energy for self-discipline and commitment. However, unrelenting standards can be a red flag. Be realistic – expect and plan for lapses – they are part of the change process. It is important to have a plan, be consistent, review the 'why' regularly, and be patient.

As you are building your self-care plan, the following steps can be helpful to think about:

- *Review your situation.* List what is happening in different areas of your life – home, work,

friendships, family. Why do you need to make improvements?

- *Identify the stress triggers.* Review the different stress triggers in your life and think about strategies you can put in place. (See websites below.)
- *Prioritise one self-care strategy.* Stick to one strategy at a time. Remember the goal posts can be very small. This will help in not feeling overwhelmed. Make a time in your diary for the task or involve a friend to help motivate you.
- *Take small steps.* Break down the task/activity into small steps and commit to taking one at a time.
- *Plan for roadblocks.* There will be challenges and you will need to be agile. Plan for how you will deal with these events. Don't be deterred by lapses.
- *Schedule time to practise and review the self-care strategy.* Even when you are telling yourself you are too busy, carve out a little 'you' time, even if you start with two minutes a day to just focus on noticing your breathing and slowing it down.

Self-care should not be an optional extra in our busy lives: it should be a critical part of our lives because we are so busy. It impacts how we feel about ourselves, the quality of our relationships and ultimately our satisfaction with our lives. Without a focus on our own health and wellbeing, we can't do justice to ourselves or those we love. So, what will your next step to better health and wellbeing be?

For some strategies you can put in place, try the following websites:

- Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling 'Self-help tools' ([openarms.gov.au](http://openarms.gov.au))
- Head to Health 'Looking after your wellbeing' ([headtohealth.gov.au/living-well/looking-after-wellbeing](http://headtohealth.gov.au/living-well/looking-after-wellbeing))
- Black Dog Institute 'Wellbeing resources and information' ([blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/wellbeing](http://blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/wellbeing))
- Beyond Blue 'Look after your mental health and wellbeing' ([beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/wellbeing](http://beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/wellbeing)).

## Open Arms, Open Conversations

*Open Arms' new audio series presents stories of recovery from the veteran community. We thank Dannii, Matt, Kristy and Kyle, and hope their stories empower others to take the next steps in their mental health support journey.*



### Dannii

Dannii, the daughter of a Vietnam veteran, knows that recovery isn't a linear journey. She grew up in a household where her father's chronic PTSD meant she and her brother wouldn't know what the next day would bring.



'As a child, it was really, really difficult for me and my brother, in that we were always in this hyper-vigilant state. He was never violent, but he did self-medicate with alcohol, and also the continued flashbacks that would happen. My father lost his life to PTSD when he was 58.

So, I developed a severe and enduring eating disorder partly because of the trauma

that I had as a child. After my third suicide attempt, I was in Melbourne's Alfred Hospital in intensive care. And it was that third and final attempt that I had the opportunity through Alfred Health and their psychiatric services to access Open Arms because there wasn't a lot of other support options.

I thank Open Arms for changing my life. I had been receiving psychiatric support for my eating disorder, depression and anxiety and trauma for many years. And it wasn't until I accessed Open Arms and I spoke to a great psychologist, his name is Matt... it changed my life. He allowed me the space to grieve for all those lost years and everything that happened, and he also gave me hope.

We spoke about quality of life. He said to me, Dannii, you will get through this. We will work through this. You will get a job and have your own place again. You'll have friends again, you'll be able to live a good life. And it was about rediscovering that sense of identity that can be lost to veterans, families, to children of vets through all this trauma, you lose your sense of self sometimes because you're stuck, so wrapped up in the trauma.

I still live with complex PTS and anxiety, but I have tools, I have strategies, I have positive, healthy ways to cope. I call myself fully recovered. I work as a mental health practitioner now in Victoria, because I thought if Matt can do that for me, I want to be able to do that for somebody else.

No matter what sort of trauma, no matter what sort of past, if you're willing to do the work and you're willing to reach out and put trust in somebody, like Open Arms, your whole life can change.'

### Matt

When Matt transitioned from the Navy to civilian life he found himself isolated and unstable.

'When I was in the military, I had three mates that I served with. They committed suicide within 18 months. And one of those guys I lived with, and served on the same ship with, and he tried taking his life for about 12 to 18 months, between two to five times a week. And I tried to keep him alive for that time.

When I transitioned out of the Navy I went to Tasmania.

I didn't grow up there, I moved there for my partner and my daughter. I'd never been there, I didn't know anyone; and in that sense, I was already isolated. I had to make the decision to leave Tasmania to go to one of the states that had the help (I needed). And I knew leaving my daughter meant I would never see her again because of the relationship with her mother, and that was a hard decision.

I was suicidal. I was drinking a bottle [of alcohol] a day, completely closed off from the world. To make that decision was extremely hard. But I made the decision. I ended up coming to South Australia and going to a place called Ward 17. And that's where I heard of VVCS [Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service - now Open Arms] and I started getting counselling.

Essentially, when I got out of Ward 17, I just kept drinking. And that went on for four or five years, and I kept going in and out of hospital. I kept going back to Open Arms. I kept testing the waters before I was ready to actually help myself.

I did want the help. And it took me many, many years to start asking the right questions of myself. So, once I started to ask those right questions, then the counselling started working. I think the challenges that I faced was finding someone I could connect to. And it's not they're bad counselors, it's just you find that person that you get along with.

I've been suicidal and I've called Open Arms at midnight absolutely a wreck, ready to take my life. And the person that I've spoken to is that person on the frontline. And yeah, I just wanted to say thank you to those people. To be honest, I wouldn't be here without those people because those are the people that have really helped me and got me through.

Now that I am on my way to recovery, I'm sober, I just enjoy being around my kids. I run my online directory, Vet Direct Australia. I find that it gives me purpose. If it can just reach that one veteran and save that one vet, that's job done for me.'



## listen to their stories:

[openarms.gov.au/resources/audio-series-open-conversations](https://openarms.gov.au/resources/audio-series-open-conversations)

### Kristy

Kristy is from a military family and joined the Navy straight out of high school but was medically discharged two years later with a serious back injury. She's now an Open Arms Community and Peer Advisor.

'I am married to a veteran and my family has quite a rich history of serving in the ADF as well. My grandfather is a Vietnam veteran. I had a really positive experience when I was in service. I still speak to a lot of people today - some of my closest and dearest friends I served with. It's like a big family.'

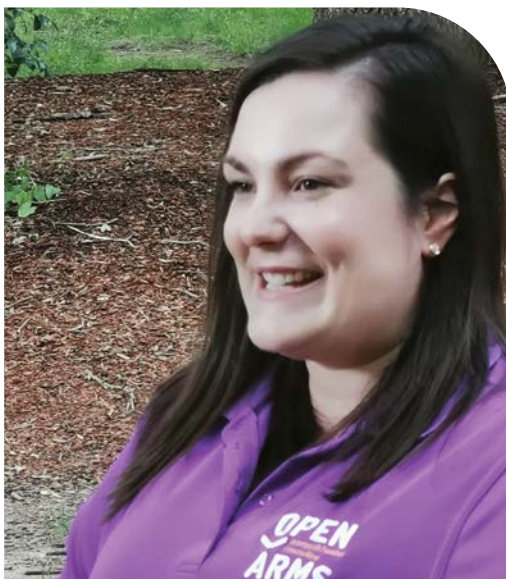
I transitioned out in December of 2009. I felt really isolated. I didn't have a great deal of support. I didn't know what I could access. For me, joining the military was something that I wanted to do for a really long time and I had big dreams, big career dreams that I never got to fulfill.

So, leaving at such a young age and only after such a short period was a big shock and there was a grieving process as well attached to that. And it took a really, really long time to find a new path. After having my third baby, my mental health nose-dived. And there was a lot of unprocessed grief and trauma from my military experience that had sort of compounded. And also postnatal depression was the cherry on top.

I still remember making the first call to Open Arms... I didn't feel like I was being judged. I didn't feel like I was crazy. I didn't feel like I was different. It was just a normal conversation. Accessing Open Arms was probably life-saving, to be able to have that support in working through some of the most challenging times of my life meant that I could do and be what I am today.

In the bubble of Defence when you sign up, when you become a member of the ADF, it's not just you that becomes a member, it's your whole family. So to be able to include that within our eligibility criteria I think is absolutely fantastic.

I love what I do. It's challenging to support people at sometimes their most vulnerable times in their life. But being able to support families and from that lived experience perspective as well, to share the journey and to support people in knowing that they're not alone.'



### Kyle

Kyle was a cavalry crewman (driver) who deployed to Afghanistan. Upon returning home, he began suffering from PTSD and turned to heavy drinking and drug use as a way to cope. He now provides veterans with the kind of support that saved him as an Open Arms Peer Worker.



'I didn't know what was happening, to be honest. I didn't know much about mental health. I just sort of was living it day to day and I thought this was normal. I would be just having more regular panic attacks. Even my best friend at the time I was living with, I think he was struggling too, but we never said anything to each other. We just drank and drank our problems away, or tried to at least.'

The final straw was for me having a final panic attack where I thought I was going to die. And that was it. That was me sort of reaching out for help after that. I look back now after being 10 plus years and I wish I could see my first psychologist and just thank her.

Things that I'm doing regularly are exercise, eating right and sleep. You know, sleep is the tide that rises all boats. It's also exercise. I catch up with friends. I'm having a social connection, but also getting out in nature and doing some solo hikes. Mainly I work with people that like social connection. Getting out of the military, you lose a lot of that camaraderie and it's linking them in with different social connection.

None of my two peer clients have ever been the same. And that's what the beauty of peer support is. It's really focused about what they need at that time, and there's no judgment whatsoever.

And when we get people that are so active in their recovery and they're ready for it, they just flourish in a space of six to nine months... people are thriving after being linked in with these services or one thing leads to another and they're able to hold down employment.

You see some people that have been struggling for years and years, decades even, without seeking any help, and how terrible that would be... Don't suffer in silence, it's the worst thing that you can do, because a problem shared is a problem halved. Once you say you're not okay to the right person, it's like a domino effect - these amazing things can happen for you.'

# OPEN ARMS

Veterans & Families Counselling

If you, or someone you know is struggling, Open Arms' trauma informed and military-aware support is available any time, day or night. Call 1800 011 046.

## The Open Arms Model of Care

Open Arms, formerly known as the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service, has been delivering mental health support services to the veteran community for more than 40 years.

Founded by Vietnam veterans, Open Arms is unique as a mental health service established by people with lived experience. Its longevity can be attributed to ongoing adaptations made to how the service provides support to successive generations of veterans and families.

*'Family and relationship counselling makes up more than 50 per cent of our service delivery and represents a critical need in our community.'*

Open Arms recently published its Model of Care, which clearly sets out what clients can expect when they reach out to the service for support. It defines Open Arms as a specialist service, focusing on delivery of military aware and trauma informed care rather than replicating more generalist services.

Leonie Nowland, head of Open Arms at DVA, says the Model of Care is inspired by the need to ensure the service is effectively responding to the changing needs of the veteran and family community, and delivering specialised programs related to the impact of military service.

'The Model of Care outlines how Open Arms operates on the basis of episodes of care,' says Leonie. 'It begins with understanding your needs and setting agreed goals for the support, counselling or treatment required, and measuring outcomes from your perspective. The purpose of this approach is to support your recovery.'

This means that when someone engages with Open Arms for their mental health support needs, the engagement is goal based and outcome focused, with a beginning, middle, and end.

'Some people who engage with Open Arms may require extended care,' Leonie adds. 'When your program of support is completed, you may need to receive further support and we make this as easy as possible for you to access.'

The Model of Care outlines how Open Arms works in partnership with other health providers to comprehensively support clients, especially

where the person is acutely unwell. This includes GPs and psychiatrists, as well as other community agencies.

'With your consent, we will write to your GP to advise them of our involvement, provide progress updates and letters on case closure,' Leonie explains. 'The level of engagement depends on the GP and the level of risk identified.'

Service can have a significant impact on families. ADF members and their families experience a range of military lifestyle challenges such as postings, service related separations (such as exercises and deployments), and transition from service to civilian life.



DVA First Assistant Secretary Leonie Nowland

'Family and relationship counselling makes up more than 50 per cent of our service delivery and represents a critical need in our community,' says Leonie. 'Families can also play an important part in protecting against suicide. Our Lived Experience Peers have experience as a former serving member or as a family member of a veteran, and provide support that utilises those experiences.'

It is important to note that Open Arms is not a specialist paediatric service and does not provide psychological assessments (such as assessments for ADHD/ASD) for children. Where family counselling is required, children aged under 5 years can be seen as part of the family unit where clinically appropriate.

Additionally, while Open Arms provides family and relationship counselling, it is not a specialist family and domestic violence service or a forensic service that provides court-ordered counselling. In both these cases, Open Arms refers clients to specialist support and appropriate agencies as required.

'The Model of Care was developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including clinicians and people with lived experience,' Leonie says. 'We are very excited about the role it will play in shaping how we support veterans and families into the future.'

To learn more about the new Model of Care, visit the Open Arms website: [openarms.gov.au/about/our-model-care](https://openarms.gov.au/about/our-model-care).

## OPEN ARMS

Veterans & Families Counselling

A service founded by Vietnam veterans, now for all veterans and families

For all current and former ADF members and their immediate families

1800 011 046

OpenArms.gov.au



### SAFE ZONE SUPPORT

FREE ANONYMOUS  
COUNSELLING LINE

CALL 24/7: 1800 142 072

## Improvements to DVA Rehabilitation Program

The Rehabilitation Program supports eligible veterans to maximise their wellbeing. The program provides skill and capacity development in multiple areas of a veteran's life to help achieve rehabilitation goals.

A new model has recently come into effect that improves the way providers deliver our Rehabilitation Program to eligible veterans:

- We've engaged 15 nationally capable rehabilitation service providers, meaning you can stay with the same provider, even if you relocate, reducing the need to 'retell' your story to a new service provider.
- There will be a more consistent approach to the delivery of services across all providers.
- We're enhancing our capabilities to monitor provider performance to ensure better outcomes for you.
- We've made it simpler for your provider to deliver services with less involvement from DVA.
- We've offered more provider autonomy so that decisions can be made faster.
- We've updated and simplified the documents that our rehabilitation providers use.

In the next 3 months all current clients will transfer across to the

new program model. You don't need to do anything: DVA will work with your provider to ensure a seamless transition. If you are with a provider that is not continuing, you should have already been contacted by us. DVA will manage this transition with minimal disruption to your current rehabilitation plan and activities.

Your feedback is important to us. It helps us to continually evaluate our program, monitor our providers, and ensure the program best meets the needs of our clients.

We may ask you to complete a survey shortly after you commence the program, and then again upon completion. Our Rehabilitation Client Satisfaction Survey has been split into two parts to be completed at different times. This will make it easier for you to tell us about your program participation and provider experiences.

Please email [rehabilitation@dva.gov.au](mailto:rehabilitation@dva.gov.au) if you would like more information.



## Plan and prepare early for transition

Transitioning from military to civilian life is a period of significant change for ADF personnel and families.

Defence and DVA encourage members to engage with transition support early to ensure they have the information they need for a smooth transition to their civilian lives.

ADF Member and Family Transition Seminars are one of the many supports and programs Defence provides to help guide ADF personnel, families or support people through the transition process.

Air Commodore Kaarin Kooij, Director General of the Joint Transition Authority, said attendance at a seminar was mandatory 12 months before transition. However, as transition is something all ADF personnel would experience at some point, they need to plan and prepare early.

'It's important to know what current transition support services are available to yourself and your family members,' she said. 'I recommend attending a seminar every three to four years to ensure you have the

most up-to-date information. It's also useful for ADF supervisors so they can better support our sailors, soldiers and aviators as they transition from service life.

'It is important to consider the differences in cost-of-living expenses between military and civilian life. It is also important to understand how to access services in the civilian community. Seminars provide that information through targeted presentations, as well as access to stakeholders to chat one on one with.'

Seminars are accessible throughout the year and delivered in face-to-face, virtual live interactive and virtual non-interactive (available 24/7) formats. Family members, support persons and guests are also encouraged to register and attend.

The 2024 ADF Member and Family Transition Seminar schedule is available now. For more information on the seminars, visit the Defence Transition website at [defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/military-life-cycle/transition](https://defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/military-life-cycle/transition).



Australian Government



2024 Prime Minister's  
National Veteran  
Employment Awards

## Nominations for the 2024 Awards are **now open.**

The Awards recognise organisations that proudly employ and support veterans. They celebrate individual veterans and partners who have demonstrated outstanding achievement as an employee or entrepreneur.

To enter, visit [www.veteranemployment.gov.au](http://www.veteranemployment.gov.au)

## The importance of social connection



AWWNSW CEO Renee Wilson (middle) with AWWNSW Board Director Rachel Martin (right) and Debra Banks (left) at the Our Space Sydney Launch in 2023.

### A message from Australian War Widows NSW

Did you know that social isolation takes a toll on health even more than smoking, obesity or alcohol consumption? We've always known that socialising with friends is good for the soul, but now science is telling us that it is also crucial for our minds and overall wellbeing.

*The Greater Good* magazine defines social connection as 'the feeling that you belong to a group and generally feel close to other people'.

Australian War Widows NSW CEO, Renee Wilson, highlights the innate human craving for social connection and how social connection has been at the heart of its organisation for over 70 years: 'AWWNSW was created for the very reason to bring together the widows of war veterans, so they could support each other and strengthen their individual voices,' Renee said.

It is in the spirit of bringing peers together that our organisation evolved through the years. And today we offer our programs and services to all families of former and current ADF personnel.

Launched in early 2023, Our Space is a new and much needed social connection program available to defence and veterans' families.

Recognising the burdens faced by families supporting ADF personnel, who are often isolated, Our Space aims to be a home to them. These families now

need each other more than ever and Our Space aspires to bridge gaps, providing a platform for families to connect, share experiences, and form lasting friendships.

'The families of veterans and contemporary widows need a place to find each other and a reason to connect,' Renee said. 'That reason might be learning a new skill, receiving information or developing knowledge. And that's exactly what we're creating with Our Space - a safe place and a reason for the families of veterans to come together and forge new friendships.'

A strong body of evidence supports the positive effects of social connection, helping guard against challenges like depression and burnout, which are particularly relevant to defence and veteran families. Meaningful connections can build a sense of belonging and purpose, addressing loneliness and boosting mental health.

Families of veterans often struggle to find community, access services, and have their needs addressed within the veteran community. We hope Our Space will change that.

Our Space is your space. Join Our Space online and keep up to date on our face-to-face events in NSW and the ACT visit the Our Space Group by ASWW NSW on Facebook or scan the QR code on this page.

## Ageing well with support at home

As we age, some tasks can require support.

DVA has a range of in-home services and programs that can help eligible DVA clients - of any age - to stay independent and healthy in their own homes. DVA in-home support can include nursing care, cleaning, gardening and maintenance around the home. Aids and devices that make life easier, like hearing aids and ramps and rails around the home, are also available.

Eligible DVA clients with a Veteran Gold or White Card can access most DVA in-home care services following an over-the-phone assessment. However, some services may require a referral from your treating doctor.

DVA clients aged 65 and older can receive additional support and services through other government-funded programs, such as a Home Care Package through the Department of Health and Aged Care. These can be accessed alongside DVA services - as long as you don't double up on the type of service you receive. It is important to consider all services offered through government-funded programs to obtain the combination of services that best suits your overall needs.

Should it become necessary to enter residential aged care, veterans and eligible war widow/ers continue to receive pensions and benefits from DVA. They can also continue to receive support, including medical, allied health, aids and appliances, hospital and travel assistance for medical appointments, using their Veteran Card.

Navigating in-home support and the aged care system can be challenging, so DVA has developed some great resources to help:

- *The veteran's guide to living independently* details the services available to help support you at home, including eligibility requirements.
- *The veteran's guide to moving into aged care* is a guide to step you through the process of moving into an aged care home and the DVA services available to you once you've moved.

You can download these from the DVA website at [www.dva.gov.au/ac](http://www.dva.gov.au/ac), where you can also order a hard copy; or you can call us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

### Renewed focus

DVA recently undertook two initiatives aimed at building on its current support and resources to help veterans age well.

In January, DVA established the Aged and Community Care Taskforce, which aims to improve our support by delivering a structured approach to aged care services that reflects the complex and evolving changes happening across the aged care sector.

To inform the work of the taskforce, we held a workshop with providers, peak bodies, ex-service organisations and lived experience participants. The workshop explored current challenges facing DVA clients transitioning to, and living in, aged care.



## Celebrating decades of Friendship Day

### A TRIBUTE TO WAR WIDOWS



AWW-QLD State President Judy Smith (standing) enjoying Friendship Day with members in Redlands.

#### A message from Australian War Widows Queensland

What began as a modest gathering has blossomed into an annual tradition that not only celebrates friendship but also honours the resilience and sacrifices of those who have lost spouses in the line of duty. Friendship Day has become a beacon of hope and camaraderie where old friendships are cherished while new ones are nurtured.

Over the last decade, Friendship Day has traversed Queensland from Townsville to Currumbin, venturing inland to Toowoomba, and embracing regional areas such as Caboolture, Bundaberg and Gympie. Last year the event unfolded in Redlands and in 2024 it is poised to return to Brisbane for the first time since 2015.

Reflecting on the past 10 years, the essence of Friendship Day remains unchanged. Shree Rogers, a member from Redlands, eloquently captures its significance:

'Friendship Day has become a platform not only for sharing stories and experiences but

also for forging new connections among individuals who have walked similar paths. The complex emotions of grief, loss and, at times, financial hardships, create a shared bond that transcends words. The day celebrates the unique journey that war widows undertake and serves as a stepping stone toward healing and growth,' Shree said.

*We need old friends to help us grow old and new friends to help us stay young.*

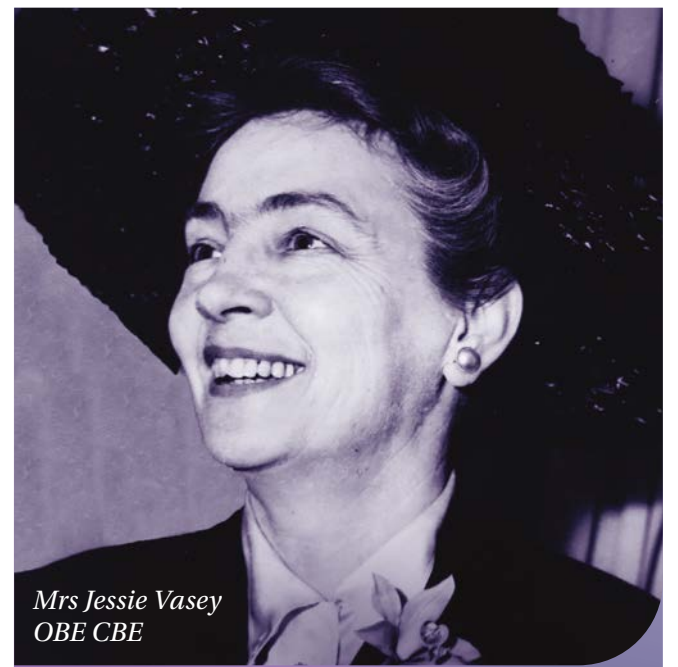
— Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Judy Smith, President of Australian War Widows Queensland (AWWQ), reminisces on the event's humble beginnings: 'The first "Get Together" for Queensland Guild members was celebrated at the Gladstone/Biloela Sub Branch in 1992, with 158 members attending from all parts of the state. With the success of that first event, it was decided to continue Friendship Day each

year at a different sub-branch,' Judy said.

Today, Friendship Day has evolved into one of AWWQ's most cherished events. For many, it has become an annual holiday, where members travel from all corners of Queensland to renew old friendships, make new connections, share stories and enjoy the festivities.

Friendship Day 2024 will be held on Wednesday 29 May, at the historic Brisbane City Hall, and AWWQ members will once again gather for a day of belonging and connection. The event begins at 11:30 am and includes a two-course lunch. Priced at \$55 per person, attendees can also enjoy the offerings of a cash bar. AWWQ members are welcome to book by calling Head Office on (07) 3846 7706 by 17 May.



Mrs Jessie Vasey  
OBE CBE

## National War Widows Day – calling Victoria, Northern Territory and Tasmania

**On 19 October 2024, Australian War Widows (AWW) will celebrate the very first National War Widows Day. War widows in New South Wales and Queensland commenced their state celebrations of this day in 2022; South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory began their celebrations in 2023.**

The 19th of October is the birthday of the Founder of The War Widows Guild in Australia, Mrs Jessie Vasey OBE CBE, who formed the guild 78 years ago.

This year Victoria, Northern Territory and Tasmania will have the opportunity to also enjoy acknowledgement of this day in their states. New war widow groups have commenced planning for this special day in Darwin, Alice Springs and Melbourne. If you live in the Northern Territory or Victoria and would like to help in any way or be part of the celebrations, we would love to hear from you.

If you are a war/defence widow in Tasmania and would like to be part of a planning group, please get in touch with us!

If you are a war/defence widow in any of these locations and would like to be part of the national celebrations, please contact the AWW National Office on 0427 735 871 or email [wwidowsnat@bigpond.com](mailto:wwidowsnat@bigpond.com).



Nancy Wake

## The Fanny Fridays on their bikes for health and heroine



**Inspired by Second World War Australian resistance heroine Nancy Wake AC GM, female veterans from Mount the Limestone Coast are getting on their bikes to raise the profile of female veterans and support each other post ADF service.**

On recent bike rides, the small group of riders, who call themselves "The Fanny Fridays" have pedalled up to 150kms to train for a 500km ride in France next year.

Organiser Liz Wheeler, a Veteran Wellbeing Advocate at the Limestone Coast Veterans' Hub, says the activity was a great way to engage with different parts of the broader veterans' family and to build comradery among participants, most whom

come from relatively small regional communities.

'Along the road we've had fantastic support from the Military Brotherhood Motor Cycle Club who helped us with safety as protective outriders, complete with cautionary signage on their bikes,' says Liz.

'We are also working closely with the Military Emergency Services Health Australia research project, which is exploring issues of women post ADF service, particularly in regional areas, resilience and the benefits of this challenge on older women's health and wellbeing.'

Liz says the women have used their DVA White Cards

to engage the support of an exercise physiologist, which had been very beneficial. The group has also benefited from a modest DVA Veteran Wellbeing Grant of \$2,000 for safety and support equipment.

The group carries with them "Nancy", a crocheted white mouse mascot which goes on their training rides and which will also go to France on the Nancy Wake Memorial ride in 2025.

The ride will take the group from Saint-Santin to Montluçon on before reaching Châteauroux and returning to Montluçon on, a distance of about 500 kms.



The Fanny Fridays in Penola with the Military Brotherhood and Riding Team

Along the way the riders will visit local schools to tell the Nancy Wake story.

Liz says The Fanny Fridays were absolutely awed by the bravery and skill of their heroine. 'Nancy was an incredible Australian who is an inspiration to us all,' says Liz. 'Celebrating her story is having a profoundly positive effect on our physical and mental health.'

For Fanny Fridays' membership enquiries, contact Liz at the Limestone Coast Veterans' Hub. Sponsors are also sought: [nancywakememorial-ride@gmail.com](mailto:nancywakememorial-ride@gmail.com).



### Who was Nancy Wake?

Born in New Zealand and raised in Australia, Nancy Wake became one of the Gestapo's most wanted French Resistance operatives as a result of her courageous opposition to the German occupation. Dubbed the 'White Mouse' by the Germans, she famously cycled about 400 kilometres in 72 hours to organise replacement secret radio codes to maintain contact with the Special Operations Executive in London, allowing vital resistance missions to continue. Nancy was one of the most highly decorated women of the Second World War. (Find out more on DVA's Anzac Portal.)

## Wellbeing tools support volunteers

*A message from Disaster Relief Australia*

A week of volunteering with Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) helps communities in need as well as equipping veterans with wellbeing tools that can set them up for the rest of their lives. DRA's wellbeing officers support volunteers with setting boundaries, building resilience and communication techniques to assist with reintegration into civilian life.

Veteran and provisionally registered psychologist Joshua Bailey has volunteered with DRA for three years and recently finished a deployment in Far North Queensland as a Wellbeing Officer.

'By volunteering with DRA, veterans have a sense of fulfilment and achievement at the end of the week,' Joshua said. 'You turn up, do the best you can, when you can, while making a positive contribution to an area of society that's disadvantaged.'

When volunteering with DRA, veterans work with people from diverse backgrounds and with many different skill sets.

'I have a sense of purpose working with an accepting team without pressure to perform,' Joshua said. I know I have somewhere to sleep, and I'll get fed. DRA also has structure, which is

appealing to people, but isn't rank focused and egocentric.'

DRA supports the wellbeing of its volunteers with a dedicated wellbeing officer on each of its deployments. The officers can be approached by volunteers at any time during their deployment.

'Usually, volunteers will talk to me about some of the trauma they've seen,' Joshua said. 'What they see here with DRA may be triggering for them, so I help them through that as well. I can also be the conduit between the volunteers and the Incident Management Team if they need to. I'm an ear for them to talk to, to make



Volunteers at DRA's recent recovery operation in Far North Queensland; Joshua Bailey is first on the left.

themselves feel better and provide hope as well.'

Joshua said the wellbeing officer role was challenging but enjoyable.

'Wellbeing officers support volunteers with tools they can use for the immediate future or set them up for life,' he added. 'You don't need a degree. You just need life

experience, and you need to be able to care, really. As long as you've got that and that you care about people... and you can go the extra mile for people, then you'll be fine.'

For more information about DRA and opportunities to volunteer, visit [disasterrelief.org](http://disasterrelief.org).

## Breaking 20 years of isolation through sport



*A message from Invictus Australia*

Pauly Rainbow was demonstrating his passion for helping others early, becoming a St John's Ambulance cadet at eight years of age. He continued to support the community throughout his life, serving as a medic in the Army during the Vietnam War, then as a nurse and as a case worker for the NSW Department of Child Services for a decade.

Now at the age of 73, a reciprocation of community support has broken what became a 20-year period of social isolation.



*Pauly Rainbow trying out Scuba Gym.*

Pauly experienced a host of significant mental and physical issues during the years that followed his discharge, including PTSD, hearing loss and tinnitus. For the past five years he has been wheelchair bound, with no use of his legs due to Functional Neurological Disorder.

Contacting Invictus Australia changed Pauly's trajectory. He soon found solace and interaction in a range of community sports including parkrun, Horse Aid, dragon boating and walking groups. Where his wheelchair status once felt like a dead end, Pauly now views it as an opportunity to make a difference in others' lives.

'There is nothing I won't try,' says Pauly. 'The only failure is not trying at all. I am now connected to so many people. So many ESOs have reached out to support me. It's empowering. Invictus Australia are extremely helpful in forming social connection, especially when you don't have any.'

Meeting Invictus frontline staff member Jye was another turning point for Pauly. Jye connected him with Scuba Gym, an organisation dedicated to enabling lasting change for people with disabilities. Pauly feels that water is his healing place and, with regular sessions, has progressed to being able to walk under water.



*Pauly Rainbow*

After years in a wheelchair, the moment was nothing short of exhilarating.

'I watched a 73-year-old-man in a wheelchair remove a canoe from a trolley, put it into the water, get himself in and paddle out onto the Hunter River,' says Jye. 'It was inspirational. This man does not allow his condition to define him.'

To anyone struggling and feeling isolated, Pauly Rainbow doesn't hesitate to recommend reaching out for help to connect with the local community: 'Don't give up. Take responsibility and keep going.'

For information on connecting with local sport in your area, visit [invictusaustralia.org](http://invictusaustralia.org).

## CONNECT. ACTIVATE. MOTIVATE with RSL Active Strava Clubs



*A message from RSL Australia*

RSL Active provides opportunities to keep the mind sharp, toughen the body, and polish the spirit! All around Australia veterans are joining other veterans and local communities to get out and about, find a new passion or hobby and spend time with like-minded people through the RSL Active program.

Recent activities include gold panning, axe throwing, chess, coffee catch-ups, beach walks, salsa dancing, ten pin bowling, abseiling, clay target shooting, hiking and craft activities.

One of the popular new ways of connecting, getting active, sharing goals and participating in friendly challenges is through RSL Strava Clubs. RSL Active has created virtual clubs for cyclists, swimmers, runners and walkers using the popular Strava app.

The Strava app is free to download. You don't need any special dedicated hardware. Simply download the app, then search for 'RSL Active' and request to join your preferred club. Once your request is accepted, it's time to hit the pavement, jump on the bike, or hop in the pool. Strava will track your efforts through your smart phone, fitness tracker or smart watch.

You may even find that many of your friends are already using Strava! When you connect your Facebook account, you'll be able to see other friends that are using it too. It's a great way to connect with old friends and create healthy competition. You can follow others and offer encouragement and comments, adding a social element to your training.

Strava provides a wealth of tools for tracking your performance, with features including a training calendar, heart rate and other data analysis if you want to go into more detail. You can also use it to plan and find new routes.

RSL Strava Clubs provide some extra encouragement for members to get active, even when the weather isn't great or your motivation is low, with regular challenges and prizes. Our 'active' RSL supporters can purchase high-performance RSL Active apparel for cycling, running, walking and other training activities from the RSL Active pop-up store.

The RSL Strava Clubs currently have more than 300 members and you don't need to be an RSL member to join. So, join an RSL Active Strava Club and connect with a veteran community which is getting out and having fun. We'd love to have you on the team.



*RSL Active Program Officer Neil McCallum MBE leads the Strava Clubs for the RSL.*

To learn more about RSL Strava Clubs or to join our swimming, running/walking or cycling club, visit [rslaustralia.org/rsl-strava-club](http://rslaustralia.org/rsl-strava-club).

## 75 years of the Royal Australian Regiment



Descending on parachutes from an overcast sky above Canberra, members of the Red Berets trailed red smoke behind an unfurled flag of the Royal Australian Regiment. Veterans and soldiers watched as they landed on the Royal Military College parade ground as part of proceedings to commemorate 75 years of the Royal Australian Regiment on 23 November 2023.

Each battalion's Colours were marched out individually to the tune of their quick march song, played by the Royal Military College band.

More than 65,000 soldiers have served on active service in the regiment, with 706 making the ultimate sacrifice. Originally formed in 1948 with three battalions, it now consists of seven and

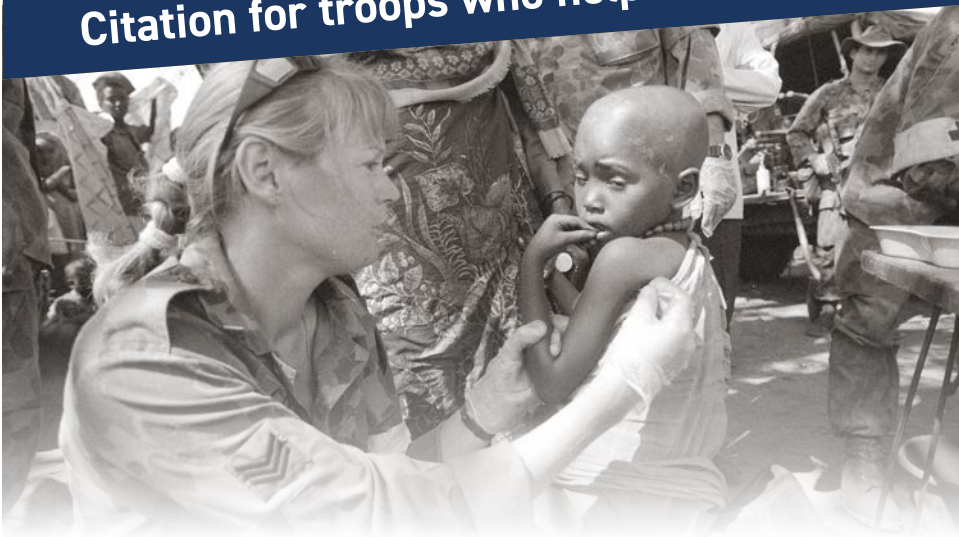
holds a proud history for defending Australia.

Holding close the connections he made, Brigadier Chris Appleton (ret), former commanding officer of 5th/7th Battalion, said it was a 'magnificent parade'.

'It was so wonderful to see all the Colours of the regiment on parade,' Brigadier Appleton said. In 25 years, the infantry trainees who were on guard will be at the 100th anniversary, they'll write the next chapter of this great story.'

Reviewing officer, Chief of Army Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, took the opportunity to award theatre honours for Malaya (Conflict) 1955-1963 and the Malaysia (Confrontation) 1964-1966 to all battalion Colours.

## Citation for troops who helped Somalis



Medic Warrant Officer Class Two (WO2) Joanne Cook hadn't seen a gunshot wound in real life until deploying to Somalia 30 years ago. Apart from treating several locals injured during the violence, an Australian soldier was accidentally shot in the chest at point-blank range towards the end of their deployment.

'He was brought into the treatment centre and we began working on him,' she said. 'It was clockwork; he received the best treatment that anyone could have.' Unfortunately, he couldn't be saved because of the seriousness of the injury and became the only Australian soldier to die in Somalia.

In October 1992, the Australian Government sent a contingent of 211 ADF personnel to Somalia for Operation Iguana. About 1,500 ADF personnel were deployed on Operations Iguana and Solace between 1992 and 1995 to support the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and contributed to the US-led, UN-sanctioned, Unified Task Force.

At the end of 2023, 1RAR Battalion Group, Australian Service Contingents (ASC I, II, III and IV), and HMAS *Tobruk* received the Meritorious Unit Citation for their sustained outstanding service in warlike operations.

## Serving on in semi-retirement

In December 2022, Warrant Officer Class One (WO1) Tommy Giles turned 60 and needed to retire from full-time service. However, through ServeOn, he was able to find a flexible role that allowed him to remain connected with Army and embrace semi-retirement.

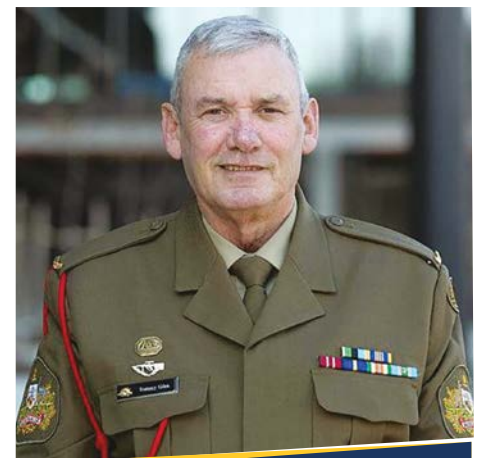
'It's brilliant,' WO1 Giles said. 'It's a great experience working flexibly. I've been able to maintain a sense of purpose and it also provides a social aspect where I'm able to keep in touch with people I've worked with over the years.'

Having provided more than 40 years of service across the Irish Army and the Australian Army, WO1 Giles was keen to continue serving on his own terms. 'I've always believed that there's a job for everyone in the Army, if that person wants it,' he said.

For members who are approaching or have reached the compulsory retirement age for

full-time service, but are under 65, WO1 Giles believes it's worthwhile to reach out to find a flexible service role. 'People may not be aware of all the roles that are available,' WO1 Giles said. 'It's not too late to find something and stay connected.'

To find a flexible role that suits your lifestyle visit [www.army.gov.au/serveon](http://www.army.gov.au/serveon) and request a phone call from your local Contingent Workforce Management Cell.



## 'Our Girl' historic Catalina to be restored

A historic aircraft is being restored to its original war-time configuration after it was handed over to the Royal Australian Air Force. The Rathmines Catalina Association (RCA) formally handed over former US Navy PB5A Catalina 'Our Girl' during the aircraft's 80th birthday commemoration activities in Beresfield, NSW.

RCA president Bill Anderson said the PB5A model of Catalina was operated in Australia in large numbers between 1941 and 1945.

'Our Girl's restoration and future display are important on several fronts,' Mr Anderson said. 'Our volunteers are maintaining and using skills learned over many years; the work days

provide an avenue for fellowship and an aid to men's health. Our members, many with family ties to the Catalina squadrons and the public at large are experiencing the rebuilding of an aircraft that was a part of the defence of Australia.'

RAAF Rathmines, best known as a major base for the iconic Catalina flying boats, was a significant part of the Air Force story from 1939 to 1961. The restoration of Our Girl is expected to take about five years. Once restored, Air Force intends to publicly display the aircraft at the RAAF Williamtown Aviation Heritage Centre as a memorial to the region's Catalina operations during the Second World War.



To read the full versions of these articles, and much more, visit Defence News:

[defence.gov.au/news](http://defence.gov.au/news)

## From the Army to DVA

After 30 years in the Army, many of those final years working in organising ceremonial events, Paul Richardson CSC OAM found that moving to DVA's Commemorative Events Team was a natural fit.



**Paul made the move 6 years ago, having risen to the rank of Warrant Officer Class One by age 35 and then being appointed as a Regimental Sergeant Major, including several deployments to East Timor and Afghanistan. His career was progressing and Paul hoped to be Regimental Sergeant Major of the Army one day. However, he decided to put his family first.**

'One of the jobs that led me to DVA was while I was the Warrant Officer – Ceremonial of the Australian Defence Force,' Paul says. 'That was during the Centenary of Anzac period, so I was lucky enough to be the ADF's representative working with DVA directly, enabling me to represent the Army in uniform in Gallipoli, France and the United Kingdom.'

'I really enjoyed the work because I saw what it provided the veteran and their family.'

Paul joined the Army straight out of school, aged 17. When he went to the recruiting office he intended to join the Navy because he came from a small fishing village in East Gippsland called Lakes Entrance and loved boats. But at the last minute, he changed his mind.

'I'm not sure why,' he laughs. 'It was a spur of the moment thing. Perhaps it was because all my family had been in the Army during the First and Second World Wars, or for National Service, but no one had stayed for a career.'

'I had a fantastic, rewarding career. I only left because I had young children and wanted them to be schooled in one place and to also grow a close network of friends. My partner still serves in the Army, so by me leaving the Army, it also helped her career to flourish, given mine was the priority for some time.'

Last year, Paul was formally appointed as Director of Commemorative Events. (See the related article in *Vetaffairs* December 2023.) He identifies two highlights since he joined DVA. One was the recent National Commemorative Service marking the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War last year. The other was supporting Second World War veteran commemorative missions to the UK and France for the 70th anniversaries of the Normandy landings and Victory in Europe Day.

'I have always considered these veterans to be our national treasures,' Paul says. 'To see the look on their faces when they received their Legion of Honour medals, or marched down the streets of London and were received by the now King on Horse Guards Parade was priceless.'



*Paul Richardson training US troops in Afghanistan.*

'To have a brief audience with the late Queen was also a very special occasion for me.'

Even though he was doing similar work, Paul found the transition from the Army to civilian life challenging.

'Being a Regimental Sergeant Major, I was kind of at the top of the tree for a soldier,' he says. 'The role of the Regimental Sergeant Major is also quite unique, the pace stick sometimes says it all. I came into the Australian Public Service (APS) at a slightly different level. Also the APS has a very different style, a different approach and mentality which takes a while to get used to. The military is very mission focused.'

'So much like my Army career, I continue to learn and be led by others. I do though every now and then behave a little like a Regimental Sergeant Major, when required.'

'Above all, I miss the camaraderie. I still do today. I also miss the group physical training. It's hard when you transition to make yourself do that. Keeping physically fit and then doing it in large and small teams is so good for your mental health – it's a routine, it's competitive, and you feel so good after it. I did love giving the young ones a run for their money when the opportunity was presented. I always prided myself in whatever unit I served, to be up the front of the pack, regardless of my age.'

'But one thing I don't miss is the ironing,' he laughs.

Paul stayed in the Army Reserves until 2023, mentoring senior non-commissioned officers and warrant officers at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

He says being busy helped him with the transition process. He joined the Department at the tail end of its Centenary of Anzac program and was heavily involved in organising events marking the Battle of Polygon Wood in Belgium, the Battle of Beersheba in Israel, the Battle of Hamel in France, Anzac Day in France and finally, Remembrance Day in France.

Paul said he would highly recommend the APS as a place to work for people transitioning from the ADF, due to its similarities and the contribution you can continue to make serving the public.

'I honestly think that many ADF members should seriously consider a second career in the APS, whether they are planning to transition either early or later in life. It has some similarities that would assist some who do struggle with transition. I am happy to admit it's not easy after so many years of military service. My only piece of advice is that you can't do it alone. Look at being coached or mentored. Reach out to other veterans that have done what you are about to do.'

## Women veterans providing mutual support



WVNA Townsville's 2023 Christmas party at the Townsville RSL, sponsored by the Townsville City Council

**Ramon Fenton co-founded the Women Veterans Network Australia (WVNA) in 2013, a year after she was medically discharged from the Army with a severe back injury. She'd joined the ADF at age 17, served for 16 years and been deployed to East Timor twice, Iraq and Afghanistan.**

'When I was discharging, I felt very unprepared and I was told I'd have no problems transitioning,' she says. 'But about six months after I discharged, I was feeling lost. I'd lost my identity, my security, my income, my friends. I discovered I had PTSD, depression and anxiety. And I was a single parent. I tried to join ex-service organisations (ESOs) but they were largely male dominated and didn't have the same understanding of women's needs.'

'After chatting with a few female friends online, we found we all had something in common. We decided we needed to put together an organisation for women veterans.'

In 2016, the WVNA became incorporated, and since July 2017 they've been a not-for-profit charity. The WVNA mission is 'Connecting past and present women who have served in the Australian Defence Force with social support, resources and information'.

'Things have improved but even now, you can march on Anzac Day and some bloke will take you aside and say, "You've got your medals on the wrong side". This happens even here in Townsville - the largest garrison city. We've fought so hard to have the same recognition.'

Natalie Watson, who is WVNA regional coordinator for north-west

Victoria, agrees: 'We don't get recognised the way that the men do. Getting on the committees of ESOs, taking part in Anzac Day - it's an uphill battle. Some ESOs are a real boys' club. They don't make you feel welcome.'

'A lot of women are too scared to attend Anzac Day marches. So when we march, we march as a group and we're trying to get the word out there that you can join us in doing that.'

Like Ramon, Natalie joined the ADF at 17, specifically the Air Force, and served for 20 years. She also served in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Both women are very glad they served but both felt alienated when they transitioned, as do many of the WVNA's members.

'People have reached out and said, "You've saved my life. I'm going through the same thing",' says Ramon. "Thanks to you, I've now got a circle I can relate to. I can now communicate with other female veterans".

'We've got women from all ages, serving and ex-serving, speaking the same language. And it doesn't matter what service you were in, whether you deployed or not, or what rank you are or were. Everyone's equal.'

The WVNA organises monthly catch-ups and has a strong Facebook presence. It has a forum page, which is open to female veterans only, and has about 3,000 members.

'These pages are a great opportunity for women to ask any questions they want without being judged,' says Natalie. 'It's a way of sharing your journey or experiences, and you often find that other women are going through something similar. We can share our knowledge, such as how to make claims through DVA, how to get a White Card.'

Individual regional coordinators organise specific events, and other ESOs including RSL sub-branches, have started contacting the network to invite them to get involved. The WVNA also gets involved in Veterans' Health Week ([dva.gov.au/vhw](http://dva.gov.au/vhw)) and the 10,000 Step Challenge.

Last year, the WVNA held yoga, cooking, woodworking and pottery classes as well as Tai Chi, hikes, walk & talks, tours of military barracks, axe throwing and other events.

Each year, the Western Sydney group holds a service the Saturday before Anzac Day. An all-women event, it's an opportunity to showcase women in Defence, past and present.

Ramon also represents the WVNA at DVA's annual Female Veterans and Veteran Families Forums.

In addition, the WVNA attends transition seminars. 'My advice is that you should start your transition journey from the day you join the ADF,' says Ramon.

For both Natalie and Ramon, it's all about connection and being among supportive people who understand the issues you're facing, many of which are specific to women veterans. In their view, this is so important for women who've transitioned out of the ADF and find themselves without friends or support of any kind. And it applies to serving personnel too.

Ramon mentions a female member of the RAAF who as a single parent was posted to Townsville where she knew no one. She got involved with the WVNA and soon afterwards was hospitalised. She was able to call on Ramon and others to get her to and from hospital, pick up her two-year-old from childcare and babysit her for a while.

'As soon as I put our blue WVNA shirt on, I feel like I've got my identity back,' says Ramon. 'I volunteer for the RSL and for Eat Up Australia (a charity that makes school lunches for vulnerable children) and I find helping others helps me with my mental health issues.'

**Membership costs \$10 and you can join via the WVNA's website ([wvna.org.au](http://wvna.org.au)). You can also find the WVNA Forum on Facebook.**

## Meeting the unique needs of female veterans

By Major Lyndsay Freeman, Chair of Women Veterans Australia

Australian women have deployed on military operations since the Boer War. With a sharp increase in ADF women deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and peace operations missions across the globe, the needs of veteran women are now in the spotlight.

According to the 2021 Census, women make up 20.6 per cent of current serving ADF members, and around 13.5 per cent of Australia's veteran community.

When speaking with servicewomen, it is clear they are a humble and community-focused group who are proud of their service to their country. They have served in many different roles, including active ones such as explosive ordnance experts, pilots, surgeons, allied-health professionals, communications experts and engineers.

Female veterans experience military training, operational deployments and transition into civilian life in different ways to their male counterparts. Their unique needs and challenges have largely been invisible, with the majority of Australia's wonderful ex-service organisations tailored to the experience of male veterans.

This inherent gender bias manifests itself in the provision and types of services and treatments for female veterans. As well as detracting from their positive reflection of their service, it also leads to poorer health outcomes, reduced engagement in protective health behaviours, and reduced perceptions of healthcare quality.

Women-centric health care, both in the military and provided by DVA, has mainly been gynaecological. I would like to see female veterans receiving support that fully takes into account that women experience PTSD and other mental health conditions differently.

According to Royal Australian Medical Corps officer Liz Daly, the experience of PTSD seems to be more acute for female personnel. One study (published in *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(6)) comparing 96 cases of PTSD found that female veterans experienced more severe symptoms than male veterans. Further research (*Military Medicine*, March 2015) has found that, compared with male veterans, women are more inclined to internalise emotions relating to a traumatic event.

Female veterans often transition from the ADF with complex

psychosocial histories, as well as higher rates of sexual trauma resulting from sexual harassment and abuse in the military than male veterans. There is also evidence that some veteran women delay or avoid accessing DVA services due to their negative gendered experiences when seeking healthcare in the past.

Servicewomen are more likely to be primary carers of children and other dependants. This makes their experience of deploying on operations and exercises, as well as attending the required courses for promotion, different to non-primary carers. For instance, while I was on a 9-month deployment in the Middle East, I still had to do my kids' admin.

The nuances and challenges in service and transition are numerous and complex, but there is no denying that a tailored, gender-specific lens is required for women who serve their nation. They risk being treated like the minority, face limitations in what roles and positions they can perform, and often feel like "the other" in the male-dominated organisation. So when they transition, there's a need for safe spaces where female veterans can talk candidly about issues such as the sexual abuse and harassment they experienced in the military.

Things are improving, but female veterans continue to face a unique set of challenges. Women Veterans Australia is proud to be part of the solution.

### Who are Women Veterans Australia?

Women Veterans Australia (WVA) is a not-for-profit charity founded in April 2021 to support female veterans with their unique needs, concerns and aspirations. It is led by a dedicated and experienced board of directors, along with an expert panel consisting of highly qualified health professionals including psychologists, counsellors, coaches and mentors.

WVA is fortunate to have two outstanding Ambassadors – Peta Irving and Sarah Watson – who bring a wealth of ideas and extensive networks to the charity. As Chair, I'm a current serving Army officer, mother of two, a mentor, and an activist for gender equality.

Many of our volunteers have recovered from trauma and this lived



Lyndsay Freeman with Matt Anderson (left), Director of the Australian War Memorial, and Brigadier General Covunisaqa, Commander Land Forces, the Republic of Fiji Military



Women of HMAS Anzac come together to celebrate International Women's Day 2013. (Image: Defence)

experience adds an invaluable dimension to the organisation's approach.

Collaboration is key in the veteran community. WVA is committed to supporting the female veteran community in complementary ways to other veteran organisations, as well as representing our members at various forums.

The team has launched head-first into 2024. With the hope of finding more sustainable funding pathways, we have continued our momentum from 2023 with our Strike for Success series about to launch. This program focuses on empowering women veterans to thrive with knowledge relating to physical and mental healthcare, financial stability, and

employment outside of the military. Building on this, WVA seeks to identify initiatives that amplify the voices of our veterans and shine a spotlight on this growing (and at times overlooked) sector of Australia's veteran community.

The WVA team encourages both veterans and non-veterans of all sexes and genders to consider joining the organisation in some capacity, as it will allow us to extend our reach to ensure every female veteran can achieve their full potential.

More information on WVA can be found on our website ([womenveteransaustralia.org.au](http://womenveteransaustralia.org.au)). You can also keep up to date on new initiatives and programs on our Facebook and LinkedIn pages, as well as our Instagram account: @celebrate\_women\_veterans.

# BOOKSHELF

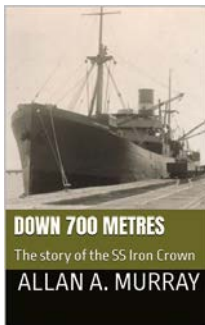
The following books, often self-published, have been written by, for and with veterans. The books and their descriptions are submitted by readers. DVA takes no responsibility for the accuracy of their content or the opinions expressed in them.

## Down 700 Metres: The story of the SS Iron Crown

By Allan A Murray

The Japanese cruiser submarine *I-27* torpedoed the *SS Iron Crown* in early June 1942. She was the second merchant vessel sunk by the Japanese off the south-east coast of Australia and took to the bottom 38 of the 43 merchant seamen on board. This story of loss details the ship's service with BHP Shipping, her sinking and the fate of the crew. It then describes how the wreck was found on the sea floor off Gabo Island by the CSIRO in 2019. The Foreword is written by Brigadier David Westphalen, the grandson of one of the lost crew members.

- **Pages:** 70
- **Cost:** \$3.00 (e-book) \$10.00 (paperback)
- **To buy:** Amazon

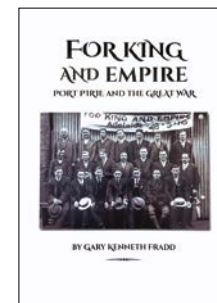


## For King and Empire – Port Pirie and The Great War

By Gary Fradd

Port Pirie gave such an important and sizeable contribution during the First World War, not just by way of individual enlistments, but also through its industrial capability and social support for the cause among non-combatant residents. *For King and Empire* celebrates some of Port Pirie's individuals in the war, whether they be glowing tales of gallantry, more mundane experiences of wartime such as sickness and injury, or illustrations of life on the home front. These snapshots are presented in the context of Port Pirie's own local history, giving rise to a rich tapestry of personal narratives, the social history and political events of the time.

- **Pages:** 300
- **Cost:** \$49.99 plus postage and handling
- **To buy:** [secretary.rsl.pp@aussiebb.com.au](mailto:secretary.rsl.pp@aussiebb.com.au); or Gary Fradd on 0476 584 958



## Moments in Time

By Mick O'Donnell

Michiel McGlynn is a restless young man who grew up in the early 1900s in Toowoomba with his Irish parents and his beloved Maddie. He records his life in a series of exercise books: the drama of boarding school, confronting action in the First World War campaigns, his recovery from serious wounds, the strange relationship with an elderly Jesuit, and the undercover activities in Holland with the delightful Dieneke. In the service of his country, Michiel is drawn into an intelligence network. Written by Navy veteran Mick O'Donnell, *Moments in Time* takes the reader through 4 generations of the McGlynn family, all influenced by Michiel's secrets.

- **Pages:** 423
- **Cost:** \$45.00
- **To buy:** [www.mickodonnellonline.com](http://www.mickodonnellonline.com), Australian War Memorial bookshop, Paperchain



## A Grave Too Far Away

By Dr Kathryn Spurling

*A Grave Too Far Away* illuminates the story of Australians who served with Royal Air Force Bomber Command in Europe from 1939 to 1945. They were young Australian members of the RAAF and their stories are told through letters and interviews. Through training, they bonded as crews and were sent into night skies on bombing raids over Europe, knowing that every operation may well be their last. Too many were shot out of the skies and buried a long way from home – their loss and legacy would reverberate for generations.

- **Pages:** 400
- **Cost:** \$32.00 including postage within Australia
- **To buy:** [kspurling48@gmail.com](mailto:kspurling48@gmail.com)

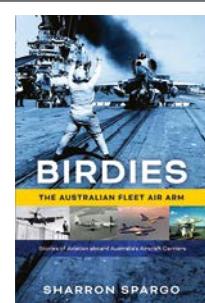


## Birdies: The Australian Fleet Air Arm

By Dr Sharron Spargo

There is a unique branch of the Royal Australian Navy that remains largely unknown to the general public: the Fleet Air Arm. Naval aviators have served in every combat, humanitarian, anti-piracy and global policing deployment, often operating within international forces. The first of the latter was the Experimental Military Unit, which served within the US Army Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam. This unique and very successful interoperability paved the way for Australian naval aviators to enjoy the reputation they now do, which extends beyond the Asia Pacific region. This is their story, as told by those men and women who have stood guard, and those who stand guard today.

- **Pages:** 275
- **Cost:** \$35.00 plus postage and handling
- **To buy:** [sharronspargo@gmail.com](mailto:sharronspargo@gmail.com)



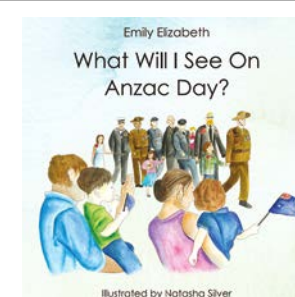
## What Will I See On Anzac Day?

By Emily Elizabeth

Illustrated by Natasha Silver

This is a book especially written for early childhood educators, families and care-givers to use when exploring Anzac Day concepts with young children. Discovering what children will see, hear and do on Anzac Day provides an opportunity to develop a base knowledge of why we remember and commemorate Anzac Day on the 25th of April. It is also a great resource for Remembrance Day and for general discussion around military concepts with young children.

- **Pages:** 24
- **Cost:** \$24.95
- **To buy:** [www.smallhandsearlylearning/resources](http://www.smallhandsearlylearning/resources), Australian War Memorial and other museums throughout Australia

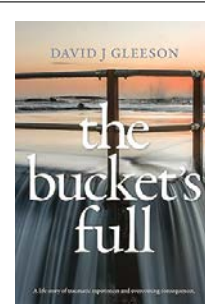


## The Bucket's Full

By David J Gleeson

*The Bucket's Full* is the true story of a police officer who has worked for 37 years in a number of policing jurisdictions and capacity development missions in Timor Leste, Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea (PNG). The author was a high ranked station manager and detective in Victoria before joining the Australian Federal Police to work overseas. Following a series of incidents while deployed in PNG, Federal Agent Gleeson is diagnosed with PTSD. His bucket was full. During treatment, David recounted his various experiences and incidents that led to his diagnosis, which resulted in the compilation of his story.

- **Pages:** 370
- **Cost:** \$32.99 plus postage
- **To buy:** <https://oover-3877.myshopify.com/>



## A Shot of History: Attack on Sydney Harbour, June 1942

By Dr Tom Lewis

On the night of 31 May 1942, Sydney Harbour was attacked by 3 midget submarines of the Imperial Japanese Navy. An accommodation vessel of the Royal Australian Navy, the *HMAS Kuttabul*, was torpedoed and 21 sailors died. The midget submarines were hunted down, and 2 sunk. War had already come to northern Australia, and now the southern cities were made bitterly aware that the world-wide conflict had reached them. The midget submarine attack was only the beginning: gun strikes were made against land targets, and more enemy submarines came south, attacking freighters up and down the continent's eastern coast.

- **Pages:** 389
- **Cost:** \$29.00 including postage within Australia
- **To buy:** [tom.lewis2619@gmail.com](mailto:tom.lewis2619@gmail.com)





# BOOKSHELF

## **The Mutiny at Long Phuoc Hai**

By Jack Twist

This novel tells the stories of 5 young Aussies called up to serve in the Vietnam War. Their experiences come together when they're posted to serve in the same platoon in 1971. One of the young soldiers, selected for officer training, is assigned as platoon commander and the other four serve under him. Tensions build between officers and men and on their last day of active service 'outside the wire', with the war by then unpopular at home and all but over for Australia, the men refuse to follow an order.

- **Pages:** 128
- **Cost:** \$20.00 including postage within Australia
- **To buy:** jacktwist3@gmail.com

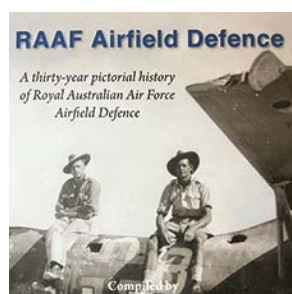


## **RAAF Airfield Defence**

By Dr Sean Carwardine

This pictorial history is a collection of photographs, short stories and quotations honouring the memory of the aviators who served in the RAAF Airfield Defence for the first 30 years. From its creation in 1929, the images and quotes take the reader all the way to the 1950s and National Servicemen (NASHOs). The book contains images that have never been seen publicly and expands the current known history of the RAAF fighting on the ground.

- **Pages:** 40
- **Cost:** \$25.00 plus \$10.00 postage
- **To buy:** carbs99@bigpond.com



## **Ryszard**

By Marcia Wakeman

A story based on true accounts of the author's father, Ryszard, living in war-torn Poland in the 1940s. The bombing of his home sees his family living with his aunt in a different city. Here he meets Helena, a Jewish girl, who becomes his first girlfriend, although his brother Jozef has other ideas! Tragedy leads Ryszard to join the Home Army (the Polish Resistance) where he befriends Franz, a lad with anger management issues. Getting captured by the Nazis, enslaved in a workers' camp, escaping when the Allies bombed the town of Oranienburg and making a gruelling journey to the German border, they meet with other survivors with the same idea - to find the Americans.

- **Pages:** 562
- **Cost:** \$35.00 plus \$11.00 postage
- **To buy:** marcia.wakeman@gmail.com or via Amazon - e-book and paperback



## **Cunnamulla Express**

By Jim Ayliffe

The year is 2029, the Sunshine State... beautiful one day - anarchy the next! Jordy Masters is a tradie with a mission - to introduce social justice when no mainstream politicians dare. In his book, author and Army veteran Jim Ayliffe presents the story of a political protégé who has been thrown in at the deep end of a new state government. However, Jordy sees his baptism in politics as an opportunity to introduce a range of social justice initiatives and tests international alliances in the process.

- **Pages:** 156
- **Cost:** \$29.99
- **To buy:** Contact james.ayliffe89@gmail.com



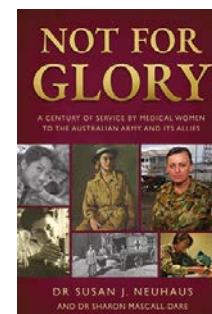
## **Not for Glory:**

### **A century of service by medical women to the Australian Army and its allies**

By Dr Susan J Neuhaus and Dr Sharon Mascall-Dare

From the trenches of the Western Front to the rice fields and jungles of South-east Asia, Australian women have served as doctors and medical specialists from the First World War until the present day. This book tells their stories of adventure, courage, sacrifice and determination as they fought to serve their country ... and won. 'Not for Glory has done a magnificent job in reminding us that bravery, skill and compassion exist not only in the history books, but also in the current generation of female medical professionals who serve Australia here at home and wherever our soldiers deploy.' (Lieutenant-General David Morrison, Former Chief of Army)

- **Pages:** 322
- **Cost:** \$29.99; audiobook \$16.45
- **To buy:** Amazon or Audible Australia

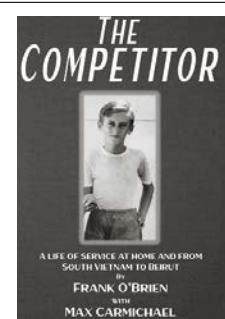


## **The Competitor**

By Frank O'Brien with Max Carmichael

*The Competitor - A Life of Service at Home and From South Vietnam to Beirut* is the autobiography of Frank O'Brien. After joining the Australian Army as a boy soldier/Army Apprentice in 1964, Frank went on to experience a range of duties and challenges in a career lasting 3 decades. That career saw service in South Vietnam as a soldier/interpreter, a sergeant armourer in Singapore, a warrant officer/artificer armaments in West Germany and Australia, prior to a second career as a general service officer. Frank's "Boy's Own" story continues today in Vietnam as an entrepreneur conducting private rail tours.

- **Pages:** 200
- **Cost:** \$34.00 (including postage and handling)
- **To buy:** Amazon or contact Frank at frankosvietnam@yahoo.com.au

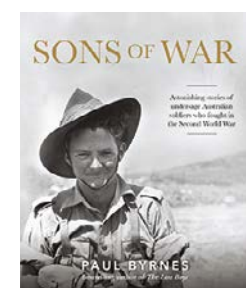


## **Sons of War**

By Paul Byrnes

In the Second World War, thousands of Australian boys lied about their age and volunteered for war. Like many of their fathers in the Great War, they went with their eyes wide shut: under-trained, under-equipped and under-age. This extraordinary book captures the bold and untold stories of 40 Australian children who fought in the deadliest war in history. *Sons of War - Astonishing stories of under-age Australian soldiers who fought in the Second World War* is a deeply personal military history: an homage to youthful bravery, a eulogy for those who fell, and a tribute to those still standing.

- **Pages:** 384
- **Cost:** \$20.00 - \$30.00
- **To buy:** Booktopia, Big W and other book sellers



## **Love Letters from the Western Front**

By Herbert Inglis (Edited by Nancy Inglis)

This book is written from the primary source of a digger's experiences as a stretcher bearer in the First World War. His diary writings depict the horror and suffering, but also the heroism and mateship that bound the diggers together. It is a touching account of a soldier's love for his faraway sweetheart written in letters to her where he also gives a full account of the activities of Ambulance units, rarely covered in military histories. Nancy Phillips (nee Inglis) has researched and edited the material and presented it as a coherent biography of her father, Herbert John Inglis.

- **Pages:** 162
- **Cost:** \$19.87 (hard copy), \$9.99 (e-book)
- **To buy:** Amazon

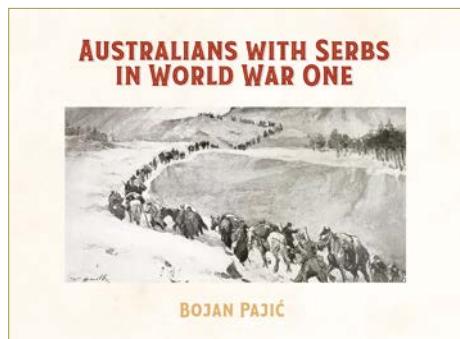


If you have a book for a subsequent edition, please email [vetaffairs@dva.gov.au](mailto:vetaffairs@dva.gov.au). Please provide the following: title, name of author, blurb (short description that we reserve the right to edit), price, how to buy it, and image of the front cover. Submitting a book does not guarantee publication.

## The forgotten Serbian Campaign of the First World War

Reviewed by Professor John Pearn

It is easy to forget that the First World War began on 28 July 1914, when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, sparking years of fierce fighting that exacted a brutal toll on Serbia's civilian population. Australians were involved in the Allies' campaigns to liberate Serbia from September 1915 and more than 380 nurses of the Australian Army Nursing Service served in the theatre from mid-1917.



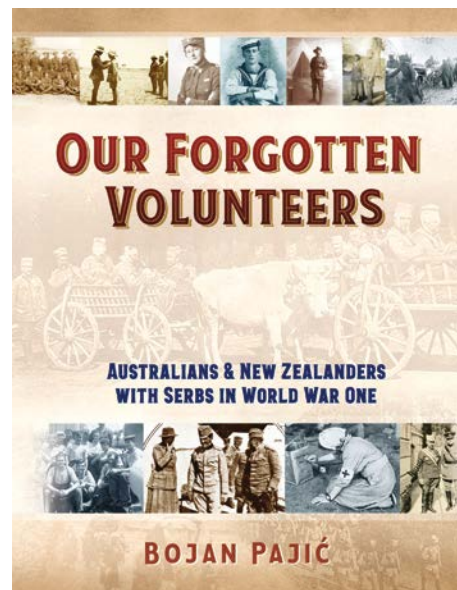
By Bojan Pajic. Melbourne, Arcadia, 2022. 132 pages; \$60.00.

*Our Forgotten Volunteers* is an enduring and engaging record of the service of the 1,500 Australian and New Zealand soldiers, airmen, sailors and medical and humanitarian volunteers who served in the Serbian campaigns. This work is a standard reference for those with an interest in Australian military history. It is also a standard reference for those with special interests in military medicine, the origins of gender equality in Australia, and the chronology of ethnic integration into both civilian and military life.

The research which underpinned this encyclopaedic work is professional and is staggeringly comprehensive. The chapters include details of the causes, development, actions and aftermath of the Serbian campaigns from 1914 until the final victory on the Macedonian, Salonika and Balkan Fronts in October 1918.

More than 150 Australian servicemen and women serving in operational frontline roles were decorated by the Serbian Government for their leadership, courage and exceptional voluntary service. For those with special interests in decorations and medals, this book is a must.

The book is also of particular note because of the unique and pioneering service of Australian women on operational service. In Australia, women doctors were forbidden to join the Australian Army Medical Corps until 1940; and then only with the Honorary rank of Captain.



By Bojan Pajic. Melbourne, Arcadia, 2018. 491 pages; \$65.00.

In *Our Forgotten Volunteers*, Bojan Pajic documents the service of the Australian women surgeons, orderlies, ambulance drivers and nurses who served in forward operational units. Their legacy, documented so well in this book, is part of the history of Australian military medicine, no less important than that of the Anzac legend.

*Australians with Serbs in World War One*, is an annotated photo-archive of the Serbian campaigns from 1914 to 1918. This fine book features a collection of moving and dramatic



Australian Dr Agnes Bennett with Serbian Crown Prince Alesandar at the hospital she led supporting the Serbian Army.



Stella Miles Franklin served as an orderly who treated wounded Serbian soldiers.



Sailors of RAN River Class destroyers which took part in operations in the Adriatic Sea during the Serbian Campaign

photographs and paintings of people and places in those campaigns. It features the harrowing images of refugees in the first years of the war. It portrays the devastation of the Serbian typhus epidemic of 1914-15.

There are unique photographs of Australian women who served as medical orderlies, ambulance drivers and military doctors - all serving



King Peter of Serbia retreating across the Albanian Mountains 1915, by Frank O. Salisbury.

as volunteers who left their civilian lives in Australia so that tyranny might be fought and democracy preserved. Of the many individual stories, one of universal interest is that of Stella Miles Franklin, the pioneer woman Australian writer, and the details of her service as a cook and orderly in a forward Scottish Women's Hospital Unit.

One of the terrible battles of the war was that of Kajmakcalan, in which the Serbs defeated the Bulgarians between 12 and 30 September 1916. Stella Miles Franklin wrote a play, *By Far Kajmakcalan*, which features her admiration for the humanity and courage of the Serbian soldiers.

These two books fill a gap in the contemporary knowledge and understanding of our national history. In one sense they are a memorial of the service and courage of more than a thousand Australians who served in those campaigns. In another, they are important reference

works for those with interests in Australian history more broadly and our national military history specifically. I commend them.

Major General Professor John Pearn AO GCStJ RFD is a senior physician, professional historian and former Surgeon General of the ADF who served on operational deployments in Papua New Guinea, the Indonesian Confrontation, the Vietnam War and Rwanda. Both books are available from Australian Scholarly Publishing.

## Women's service recognised in mural

A message from the Violet Town RSL Sub-Branch



An impressive mural representing women who served in, or supported, Australia's and allied defence forces in times of war has been unveiled at the Violet Town RSL Sub-Branch in North East Victoria.

It is the largest mural in Australia dedicated to honouring all women's contribution to war. Painted by recognised mural artist Tim Bowtell, the largely black and white artwork tells the story of local women from the Violet Town area who served, but set in the context of Australian women's service in all military conflicts.

The large mural is 17 metres long and nearly 2 metres high, and is located next to the town's Boer War

Memorial in Cowslip Street, just off the busy Hume Highway linking Melbourne and Sydney.

The RSL project to build the mural, which extended over several years, highlighted that while there were about 20 local women who had been identified as having served in the Army, Navy, Air Force or on the home front, they served only during the First and Second World Wars.

The project team was keen to create a mural that symbolically represented those who served across the spectrum – from the Boer War to the present – as well as those who helped on the home front.

The mural covers the major areas of conflict of the 20th and 21st centuries, and shows portraits of local women and other women, representing those who played their part. Other features are women at work

in factories highlighting work on the home front, and high ranking officers, representing the rise of women in the ranks of the military. Storyboards highlight the different organisations which women joined and the roles they played.

The mural will become part of Victoria's military history trail, extending from Seymour northward. The Violet Town RSL Sub-Branch is proud that the RSL is recognising the women of the district as well as the men.

## School creates military history app

Comet Bay College, just south of Perth, has created a military history extended reality app. ANZAC XR is a free, highly engaging and interactive app which uses the latest augmented reality (AR) technology to transport users to historical locations of military significance.

The app is a way to get up close and personal with Australian heroes, military vehicles and equipment. Developed by Viewport XR and funded thanks to a Saluting their Service grant from DVA, ANZAC XR is a great tool for the classroom or for anyone interested in Australian military history.

Comet Bay College principal Kelly Bennett said she was thrilled the school was given the opportunity to develop the app. 'The augmented reality military vehicles and equipment can be viewed either miniature or life-sized, giving users a 360-degree immersive experience to further enhance their understanding of military history and experiences,' she said.

'The software will allow us to add more characters, features and content down the track, ensuring the

app is an unlimited educational resource.'

ANZAC XR has five main features:

- AR Heroes, who share their stories of service in a life-like 3D animation, with interactive features, including the ability for app users to take photos with the avatars
- AR Vehicles, Uniforms and Equipment, which can be seen either miniature or life-sized
- AR Portals, which give a 360-degree immersive experience of locations relevant to military history
- The Gallery of Honour, which includes AR portraits of veterans, some with video interviews
- A Notifications function, acknowledging significant military dates in Australia's history.

Comet Bay College Year 10 student Vaanya Agarwal had a sneak peek at



Comet Bay College students Max Pereira, 14, and Amy Howard, 15, explore the new ANZAC XR app, while teacher Tara Holmes guides Ruby Jamieson, 15, Liam Killeen, 15, and Vaanya Agarwal, 14, through the AR portals.

the app prior to its launch on Anzac Day and said she was impressed by the clarity and detail in the AR technology. 'I'm really looking forward to exploring the app more,' she said. 'I think it has a lot of really interesting features.'

Comet Bay College Humanities staff have created lesson plans to complement ANZAC XR, which will be shared with all schools in Australia. ANZAC XR can be

downloaded Australia-wide for free on the Apple and Google Play platforms.

Comet Bay College thanks its many supporters and volunteers, including the Royal Australian Navy, the Australian Army, the Royal Australian Air Force, the WA Maritime Museum, the Army Museum of Western Australia and the Aviation Heritage Museum.

Entries close  
31 May 2024



## Award entries open Connect with local veterans!

The 2024 Anzac Day Schools' Awards are calling on schools to explore the theme *Discover the stories of veterans in your local community*. This year's theme aims to deepen students' understanding of Australia's wartime history by encouraging them to connect with local veterans.

Rahmeh Loz, a student at last year's national award winner, John Edmondson High School, shared her insights from the project

and stressed the importance of understanding the experiences of Vietnam veterans. 'This has helped me understand the pain and feelings that Vietnam veterans had to experience and go through,' she said.

'It has taught me that they have made many sacrifices for us and we should be grateful for their service. I have also learnt what it must have felt like through their eyes and perspective.'

As the 2024 theme focuses on local veterans' stories, schools are encouraged to consider creative and innovative ways for students to commemorate and learn about the experiences of veterans in their local community.

For more details about how to enter and the selection criteria, visit the Anzac Portal ([anzacportal.dva.gov.au/education/anzac-day-schools-awards](http://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/education/anzac-day-schools-awards)).

## Commemorating Anzac Day



As Anzac Day 2024 approaches, final arrangements are being made at commemorative sites in Australia and around the world, as we prepare to remember the contributions of all servicemen and women over more than a century since the First World War.

The Australian War Memorial will once again host the national Dawn Service, which will be telecast live on ABC TV and streamed via DVA's Facebook page ([facebook.com/DVAAus](https://facebook.com/DVAAus)).

The Returned Services League of Australia (RSL) and other ex-service organisations, as well as state and territory governments, organise Anzac Day services throughout the country. You can find out about local services by getting in touch with your local RSL sub-branch or visiting the Anzac Day page of the RSL Australia website ([www.rslaustralia.org/anzac-day](http://www.rslaustralia.org/anzac-day)).

A number of Australian War Cemeteries and Gardens of Remembrance hold Anzac Day services. Please check the Commemorations page on the DVA website ([dva.gov.au/recognition/commemorations](http://dva.gov.au/recognition/commemorations)) for up-to-date information.

If you are planning a commemorative service, or choosing to commemorate Anzac Day at home,

the DVA digital kitbag of printable materials can help. The kitbag includes speeches, Orders of Service, commemorative music playlists, craft activities and more. To download these resources, visit the Anzac Portal ([anzacportal.dva.gov.au](http://anzacportal.dva.gov.au)).

Services held in Gallipoli in Türkiye and Villers-Bretonneux in France hold special meaning for Australians.

Anyone planning to attend either of these two services must register for a free attendance pass by visiting [commemorations.teg.com.au](http://commemorations.teg.com.au). The international Dawn Services will also be broadcast live on the ABC on Anzac Day and streamed live on DVA's Facebook page.

Every year, the Australian Government works with local authorities to also hold safe, solemn and dignified Anzac Day services at significant sites where Australians fought and died in the Second World War: the Bomana War Cemetery and Isurava Memorial in Papua New Guinea, Hellfire Pass in Thailand, and the Sandakan Memorial Park in Malaysia. Please consult the DVA website ([dva.gov.au/anzac-day](http://dva.gov.au/anzac-day)) for important information about participating in these services.

## In remembrance of the Bombing of Darwin

The 19th of February each year is a national day of remembrance honouring those who served and lost their lives in the attacks on Darwin and across northern Australia during the Second World War.

From December 1941, Japanese forces swept southward, invading Thailand, Malaya, parts of the Netherlands East Indies (present-day Indonesia) and New Guinea. On 15 February 1942, the Japanese captured Singapore, representing a major symbolic and strategic defeat for the Allies.

Four days later, more than 240 bombers and fighters descended on the coastal town of Darwin in two devastating waves.

The attack overwhelmed Darwin's defences, with Japanese aircraft bombing and strafing their targets, the port, ships and the airfield. Eight of the 47 ships in the harbour - three naval and five merchant vessels - were sunk, including the American naval destroyer USS *Peary*, killing 88 sailors.

Tragically, the two raids claimed more than 250 lives, including members of the three Australian armed services, and other Allied personnel. Many merchant mariners and other civilians were also killed, including the postmaster, his family and several postal workers when the trench in which they were sheltering outside Darwin's post office suffered a direct hit.

A mere two weeks later, Japanese fighters struck Broome without warning, resulting in dozens being killed or wounded and the destruction of more than 20 Allied aircraft.

These were the first of almost 100 raids throughout 1942 and 1943, from Wyndham, Port Hedland and Derby in Western Australia, to Darwin and Katherine in the Northern Territory, Townsville and Mossman in Queensland, and Horn Island in the Torres Strait. To learn more about these attacks, visit DVA's Anzac Portal.



Officers of the 14th Australian Heavy Anti-aircraft Battery examining a Japanese 60 kilogram incendiary bomb which failed to explode. (AWM 027801)

## Sharing international experience in managing war graves

The Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) at DVA recently hosted the Director General of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), Mrs Claire Horton CBE.

Mrs Horton saw firsthand the high standards of commemoration and horticultural practice at the Lutwyche, Springvale and Perth War Cemeteries in Australia, and Bomana War Cemetery in Papua New Guinea. These are managed by some 40 horticulturists and arborists, and more than 600 contracted trade specialists who care for the 13,700 Commonwealth war dead of the two world wars, and the 336,000 Australian war dead and veterans who have died of causes related to their war service.

Leading a worldwide organisation that operates at local levels, Mrs Horton champions the value of sharing new developments as the organisation continues to adopt more sustainable ways of working. Mrs Horton was particularly interested in how OAWG manages the use of natural resources and the biodiversity potential and impacts of our commemorative sites.

'It's been a superb opportunity to meet such closely connected

colleagues across the world and to see the excellent work being done first-hand,' Mrs Horton said. 'Sharing ideas and information about our common concerns of managing ageing heritage estates, how we are both testing the use of new technology, and how we develop sustainable environmental practices and global standards, has been something I have much valued.'

Across the world, OAWG and CWGC staff are developing a great deal of experience adapting operational practices in the face of changing weather patterns. Like OAWG, the Commission has reduced its use of chemicals and is committed to promoting and delivering best practice in the effective and sustainable use of resources across its commemorative estate.

Last year, the CWGC launched a new, forward thinking and progressive strategy, *Towards 2039*, looking at its global role in the future of commemoration. The strategy aims to

engage and enrich newer, wider and younger audiences in the Commission's mission to ensure the names, contribution and stories of our shared fallen are remembered in perpetuity.

Director of War Graves, Brigadier Tim Bayliss AM, added that OAWG certainly has challenges and opportunities ahead as it cares for those we commemorate across Australia's ageing heritage estate for the next century.

'The changes we make now must be carefully measured and thought out,' Brigadier Bayliss said. 'Whatever we do, Australia's commemorative mission remains the same: to honour those men and women whose service has led to their deaths either in war or as a result of it.'



L-R: Corey Wiegold, Geoff Taplin, Claire Horton, Alison McLaren, Matthew Fenney and Mitch Hayne at the Cross of Sacrifice, Sydney War Cemetery

### The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Founded by Royal Charter in 1917, the CWGC oversees the provision, care and maintenance of the graves and memorials of the 1.7 million members of Commonwealth forces who lost their lives in the two world wars. Headquartered in the United Kingdom, the CWGC cares for cemeteries and memorials commemorating the war dead in 23,000 locations across 150 countries. Of these, 76 CWGC war cemeteries and plots are located in Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. They are cared for and managed by the OAWG as the Agent of the CWGC.



Mrs Claire Horton, Director General of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and OAWG Staff at the Bomana War Cemetery

## Recognising First World War veterans lying in unmarked graves

In older sections of many general and civil cemeteries, amidst towering monumental headstones and those less imposing, are grave plots conspicuous in the absence of a memorial or any form of marker that talks of the person at rest, or those who loved and mourned them.

Veterans returning from the First World War were aware of the unfolding welfare support being made available by Commonwealth Government in the years that followed. Nevertheless, many suffered without assistance, often estranged from their families, at the mercy of the Spanish Flu pandemic and the Great Depression.

Too many died without means or family present and were laid to rest in an unmarked grave.

George Thomas Wetzel's father shared his letter with *The South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register*: 'The eldest son writes from Malta Hospital, and informs me that he was wounded in one of the engagements after the landing at the Dardanelles,

and he hopes soon to be in the firing line again.'

On 6 February 1926, George drowned while swimming at night in the Murray River at Renmark. Newspaper articles only stated that he was unmarried with one dependant, a good swimmer and had recently become unemployed. There was no mention of the service he had undertaken at Gallipoli, the shell that had exploded affecting his sight, the wife that is named on his enlistment papers or his parents.

The South Australian Headstone project team has been provided with funding through the Marking (First World War) Private Graves

Grant Program to contribute to the cost of marking George's grave. They are one of a number of groups and individuals who, with Government support, will recognise the service of 42 veterans at rest in private graves around the country.

Forty-two grants of \$450 have been awarded in the first round of the program. The Repatriation Commission assessed all applications and also determined that 44 veterans who had been identified through this program were in fact eligible for official War Grave status and commemoration. Planning for the next round of the program is underway; please visit the DVA website for more information.

## Drops of anguish set in stone



**In February, the Australian War Memorial dedicated a new, contemporary artwork in its grounds to represent the “blood, sweat and tears” shed by those in service and their families. *For Every Drop Shed in Anguish*, by artist Alex Seton, is made up of 18 unique droplets of marble, some weighing up to 3,000 kilograms.**

The Memorial commissioned the artwork in consultation with veterans and families who have experienced or witnessed service-related trauma. Project Manager and Senior Curator of Art, Anthea Gunn, said the artwork captures the complexities of suffering.

‘This is a different way of recognising the true cost of service,’ Dr Gunn said. ‘Instead of a traditional heroic sculpture, this is a

contemporary abstract work (or installation) that creates a place for people to engage through art with the lived experience of service.

‘It is a public acknowledgement and point of connection to all who have suffered as a consequence of service. The colours and crystals that form the marble represent the scars so many live with every day, but show them as something beautiful, a symbol of resilience.’

Alex Seton is also featured inside the Memorial’s galleries with his 47 marble depictions of folded Australian flags. The *As of Today...* sculptures commemorate all Australian soldiers who lost their lives as a result of service in Operation Slipper in Afghanistan.

‘*For Every Drop Shed in Anguish* is a field of marble droplets on the lawns of the Australian War Memorial,’ Mr Seton said. ‘These rounded and abstracted liquid forms represent every drop of blood, sweat and tears ever shed by Australian military personnel and their families.’

‘I chose the dewdrop form for its fragility and tension. Every droplet has a particular shape, defined

by its delicate surface tension, as if about to burst. But most importantly, when touched, these forms reveal themselves to have an inner strength and resilience that I hope can provide a promise of hope and healing.’

Ben Farinazzo, who suffered as result of his service in East Timor, was part of the stakeholder committee advising the Australian War Memorial during this project. ‘This sculpture honours the strength of our veteran community, while acknowledging those who have suffered physical and psychological wounds, and sadly those who have taken their own lives as a result of service,’ he said.

### Clock and compass desk sets

Make sure you’re never late or lost again with a clock and compass desk set from OzWoods.

Crafted from Australian jarrah and inset with an analogue clock and compass, each set features an engraved crest on the lid – one for each branch of the Australian Defence Force: the Royal Australian Navy, the Australian Army, or the Royal Australian Air Force.

A fitting gift for current or former service personnel.



**Clock and compass desk sets – \$99.99 each**

Available in three designs: *Royal Australian Navy, Australian Army, or Royal Australian Air Force*

**Bullet pens – \$49.99 each**

Crafted from Australian jarrah, these unique pens from OzWoods feature a bullet-style nib and bayonet-shaped pocket clip.

Each pen is designed to click open with the bolt-action mechanism – echoing the form and function of an Australian Defence Force Austeyr rifle.



Visit [shop.awm.gov.au](http://shop.awm.gov.au) to explore our range of military giftware and more.

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



# NOTICEBOARD

## NAVY

### The HMAS Perth National Association Inc

We cordially invite the descendants and relatives, together with all former and serving crews, of HMA Ships *Perth (1) Perth (2) and Perth (3)*, to become members of our proud association. If you would like to join us, simply visit our website and complete the online Application for Membership form. We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you aboard.

**Contact:** Darryl L Neild OAM, President  
www.hmasperth.asn.au

### The Box Hill Sub-section of the Naval Association

The association meets quarterly at the Box Hill RSL on the 2nd Friday of the month, commencing at 10.30 am. Remaining dates for 2024 are 10 May, 9 August and 8 November. We invite all ex-Navy personnel and families, and those interested in all things Navy, to join us. Lunch at the bistro follows the meeting.

Please contact Joy if you wish to attend.

**Contact:** Joy Emmett  
0406 349 712  
etri1008@hotmail.com  
navalassoc.org.au/  
sub-sections/vic-v00/  
box-hill-district-v68

### Seeking a copy of *In the Navy*

The book, by P.O. Dave Rickard, is a record of his experiences in the RAN from 1965.

**Contact:** Rollin Sinnamon  
PO Box 209, Huskisson, NSW, 2540  
0402 131 030  
sinnoster@gmail.com

### ABSN Derek Jefferson

Seeking to contact a former shipmate from Sydney who was at HMAS Coonawarra in 1976/77.

**Contact:** Phillip Smith  
0438 542 892  
PhillipSmith2020@hotmail.com

### Seeking EM Peter George Bull

Wishing to make contact with shipmate, EM Peter George Bull, from HMAS *Melbourne* 1963-1964.

**Contact:** Odd Steinar Dybvad-Raneng  
0401 254 195  
osdr19@gmail.com

## ARMY

### Seeking Lancelot (Lance) Norman Sanderson 1734180

He served with Royal Australian Engineers 17th Construction Squadron in Vietnam. Before Vietnam, Lance was a member of the Coolum Beach (QLD) Surf Club and his mates from then would like to catch up.

**Contact:** John Ellingsen  
0408 455 733  
john\_snr@jeagencies.com.au

### Seeking Kevin Cook

Kevin was from Adelaide, 1RTB 4PL March 1970, and allocated to Infantry (4RAR).

**Contact:** Paul Magin  
0429 816 951  
maginpj@mac.com

### Soldier's Pay Book - K Manning

I have an Army pay book issued in March 1971 to 519933 PTE K. Manning. It was found at a market in Wickiepin, WA. I would like to return it to its owner.

**Contact:** Steve Meekin  
0405 310 169  
stevemeekin55@gmail.com

### Paul Anthony Joseph Barrett

Seeking any information on Paul, thought to have served with the Australian Army in Somalia during the early 1990s, in order to assist his widow with a claim. All his service records have been lost.

**Contact:** Legatee Kevin  
0428 930 211  
granmarilyn@bigpond.com

### Edward Leonard Place

Seeking my friend Eddie, who served in Vietnam in catering. He used to live in Windsor, Victoria, and wore glasses like John Lennon's.

**Contact:** Marina Ritchie  
0410 643 593  
ritchie.marina@gmail.com

### Seeking Gunner Steve Morier (Jock) 4721037

Jock and I did recruit training in Puckapunyal in 1969, A Company 5 Platoon 3rd intake. Last had contact when he was with 123 Training Battalion, 8 Med. Regiment, prior to going to Vietnam.

**Contact:** John Perry  
0457 668 774  
emmey.2654@gmail.com

### Seeking Richard Douglas Lewis 2781660

First intake National Service, 30 June 1965, 19 Pl D Coy Puckapunyal.

**Contact:** Glenn Daly  
0429 127 486  
coledaly@bigpond.com

## AIR FORCE

### RAAF Airfield Defence Guards

The Airfield Defence Association Australia is searching for any ex, former or retired ADGs residing in Western Australia.

**Contact:** Hendrik (Hank) Hurkens  
0417 909 335  
hanktank12@iinet.net.au

### Seeking old friend John Reader

John is an ex metal basher and warrant officer. I am also an ex metal basher.

**Contact:** Ken Hey  
0418 193 286  
kenraymondhey@gmail.com

### Searching for 3 Loadmasters

From RAAF Base Butterworth 1971-1973 - Bill DeBoer, 'Rough' Dennis and Bob Blackman - in relation to our Ambassadorial flights with TSF.

**Contact:** John Parker  
0427 214 844  
john.parker1449@gmail.com

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Calling former students of Christian Brothers College (Gympie)

We are establishing an Honour Roll for students of the College, now St Patrick's, from the Boer War, WW1 through to present day including Peacekeeping.

If you were stationed in Darwin or Townsville during WW2, you are eligible.

**Contact:** Maureen Rush  
0412 737 380  
maureenrush@bigpond.com

### Care Under Fire Podcast Guests

Hosted by an Australian Army veteran, Care Under Fire Podcast tells the stories of health professionals who have provided care in war, humanitarian, disaster relief and austere environments both domestically and abroad.

The podcast aims to record the clinical and personal lessons learnt from all services in various eras and austere environments.

If you have a story to tell, please email.

**Contact:** Emma  
0438 572 738  
careunderfirepodcast@gmail.com  
https://rss.com/podcasts/careunderfirepodcast/

### Mindset Coloring - Medicine for the Mind

My colouring books are designed to help veterans and others who are stressed, anxious and even depressed.

There is proven scientific and psychological research which has found that colouring has many benefits for the mind. Please contact me to purchase.

**Contact:** Trevor Broadbent  
0427 507 587  
trevorbroadbent11@gmail.com

### Veterans and Families Pipe Band

We are based in Townsville and welcome veterans and their families from all military branches.

We practice on Monday nights from 18:30 to 21:00 at the Oasis Centre in Oonoonba, Townsville.

We encourage all to come and learn the bagpipes or Highland drums.

**Contact:** John Ferguson  
0449 116 651  
tweedybagpipes@gmail.com  
orVFPB@outlook.com

### Veterans and theatre

Do you have trouble settling in the community after retiring from the Armed Forces? Why not try your local theatre? Off stage there is plenty of openings, such as front of house, bar keeping and ticket selling. Behind the stage we have electricians, carpenters, artists painting the sets, prop manufacture, set builders, stage hands and stage managers.

Perhaps you would like to learn new skills, meet new friends, and if you are so inclined, even appear on stage.

**Contact:** Peter Kemp  
03 9560 3972  
pwk@pktheatre.com  
pktheatre.com

### Have you or a family member previously served in the British Armed Forces?

Are you interested in taking part in confidential user research for the Ministry of Defence helping them build future services for claiming medals?

To sign up or request more information please contact the DBS Public Facing Digital Services Team via email.

**Contact:** Karen Awere  
DBSDIT-AGPFDSUserResearch@mod.gov.uk  
gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk

### Give the gift of friendship

Do you have a couple of hours a fortnight to spare?

Do you enjoy making new friends and giving back to your community?

Comlink Australia are on the lookout for volunteers in Queensland to connect with senior veterans at risk of loneliness and social isolation.

Participants are matched with one another based on location, personality, background and interests.

Visits can be spent at home, at a local cafe, going for a walk, or any activity both participants enjoy!

Just an hour or two a fortnight can make a big impact to someone's life, so please express your interest.

Areas covered are Ipswich and West Moreton, North Brisbane, Caboolture and Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast and Gympie, Mackay and Cairns.

**Contact:** Emily Ledger  
07 5390 1218  
companions@comlinkaustralia.com.au  
comlinkaustralia.com.au

### The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc.

We provide support, information and understanding to current and former partners and close family members of serving and ex-serving members of the ADF and Australia's military Allies.

The friendship you will find here is like no other. There is no need to explain your circumstances and confidences are respected.

We are committed to working with our members and to embracing younger partners who are looking for support.

We also have accredited wellbeing advocates and wellbeing support officers.

**Contact:** Pam Elkington  
1300 553 835  
pvaqld@yahoo.com.au  
pva.org.au

### Seeking past Newtown State School students (Toowoomba, QLD)

You are invited to attend our 51st Anzac Day service at 9:30 am on Wednesday 24 April.

We would be delighted to meet any past pupils, particularly given our Centenary celebrations in October this year. Please RSVP to:

**Contact:** Jill Bowman  
admin@newtownss.eq.edu.au

## CORRECTION

The previous edition of *Vetaffairs* featured a description of a book by Larry J Digney OAM entitled *Bubbles, Bombs, Booze & Bastards* (Pg. 25, Vol. 39 No. 3, December 2023) which incorrectly stated that Mr Digney undertook 'experimental diving to 300 metres'. Mr Digney in fact dived to a depth of 300 feet, equivalent to about 90 metres. *Vetaffairs* apologises for this error.

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