



Prime Minister's National Veterans' Employment Awards winners announced



Above: Prime Minister Anthony Albanese with Zilor Group's Matthew Lodden



Above right: Minister Matt Keogh with Nathan Bligh

Zilor Group, an Australian veteran-owned business, was the stand-out winner at this year's Prime Minister's National Veterans' Employment Awards, picking up both the Small Employer of the Year Award and the overall Outstanding Employer of the Year Award.

The awards, now in their sixth year, honour veterans who have transitioned into successful civilian careers from the ADF while shedding light on the untapped potential these individuals and their partners offer to the Australian workforce.

Announcing the winners in Canberra in September, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the primary message of the evening was clear: veterans are every bit as skilled, dedicated and adaptable in civilian life as they have been in the ADF.

'The sooner we recognise the value of the contribution that veterans

can make following their return from service, the better off our workplaces, our communities and our veterans will be,' the Prime Minister said.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and co-presenter of the awards, Matt Keogh, echoed the Prime Minister's sentiments: 'After listening to your stories, reading your citations, I don't think any employer can be in doubt about how their organisation could benefit from recruiting veterans and veteran families into their civilian workforce, no matter the industry.'

The awards acknowledge organisations that actively recruit, employ and support veterans and their families in the civilian workforce.

Zilor Group specialises in management consulting, strategy transformation and IT service delivery. It has made a positive impact

on the veteran community by continuing to provide employment opportunities and unwavering support to those who have served our nation, and their families. With a small but robust team that understands the unique challenges veterans face, they are a shining example of how dedication and innovation can truly make a difference.

Veterans develop strong problem-solving abilities in the ADF and it is no surprise that many veterans start their own businesses after transitioning to civilian-life. This was the case for Veteran Entrepreneur of the Year Nathan Bligh, who harnessed his ADF experiences and knowledge to establish Informattech, his thriving information and communications technology consultancy.

The Prime Minister also recognised the partners of veterans, acknowledging the invaluable support they provide. 'The partners know the veterans' path, because they have travelled it with them. So when you help a veteran's partner and family, you certainly help a veteran,' he said.

The event was a night of celebration and inspiration, spotlighting the important contribution veterans make to civilian workplaces and their determination to thrive in their post-service careers.

For the full list of winners, see pages 20 and 21.



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Meet Australia's new Repatriation Commissioner

When asked why, with a stellar military career in full swing, he decided to transition out, former Brigadier Kahlil Fegan admits it was a hard decision.

'It was with a heavy heart,' Kahlil says, 'but the reality for me was that I'd spent years away from my family. I exceeded everything I'd hoped to achieve in the ADF, and I knew that

no matter what the next role would be, I'd never have the opportunity to work as closely with soldiers again.'

The camaraderie of military life is something he was born into. With a father who was a serving Vietnam-veteran, Kahlil grew up on bases in Australia and overseas.

Continue reading on page 22.



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

With 2023 drawing to a close, I wanted to provide you with an update on DVA's progress throughout the year and also share some of our priorities for 2024.

We have seen substantial growth in demand for DVA services over the past few years, the demographics of the veteran community are changing and, as a result, the community's needs are evolving. So our focus is on meeting the growing demands on our services and also adapting our service offer to meet changing needs. The improvements currently underway provide a strong foundation on which we can continue to build.

The past year saw some changes in senior leadership in DVA. We farewelled the previous Secretary, Liz Cosson AM CSC, in January, and I am proud of what we have achieved in terms of building on the change agenda that Ms Cosson ushered in.

Other leaders have joined DVA, and we have a leadership team with diverse experience. In July, Don Spinks AM retired from his role as Repatriation Commissioner leaving a wonderful legacy of engagement with, and contribution to, the veteran community.

We welcomed Kahlil Fegan DSC AM as the incoming Repatriation Commissioner. Commissioner Fegan brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role. His strong connection to the current generations of veterans will be invaluable as we strive to engage and work more



At the National Peacekeepers' Day commemorative service in Canberra

closely with the younger veteran cohort. (You can read more about Kahlil on pages 1 and 22).

Throughout 2023, the Department has continued supporting the vital work of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. We have responded to over 180 directions to provide information and produce documents, providing close to 3,000 pages of answers to questions and over 400,000 pages of documents. The Department has participated in five roundtables and conducted 14 workshops and presentations for the Royal Commissioners. We are confident that this work will assist the Royal Commissioners in their important deliberations.

When the Royal Commission handed down its interim report in August 2022, the Department moved quickly to implement the report's recommendations, and this work continued throughout 2023. Our claims backlog remains an area of particular focus. We are processing more claims and getting support to veterans faster than previously.

We have devoted substantial resources to addressing the claims backlog. At the end of October 2023, there were 1,073 full-time equivalent staff directly processing claims, which is nearly double the number from June 2022. The Department remains on track to eliminate the backlog of Initial Liability claims by the end of this calendar year and is working towards eliminating the Permanent Impairment backlog by the end of March 2024, in line with the Royal Commission's timeframe.

Upgrades to our IT systems are making it simpler to interact with us. We have made improvements to MyService that help with lodging and tracking claims. It is now easier to see the status of claims and to upload documents, and we are actively assisting MyService users to provide the documents needed to progress claims. Currently, these enhancements are available for Initial Liability claims, with other claim types to follow.

Another project that has yielded substantial benefit was the simplification of medical assessment forms. As a result of this project, a total of 39 medical forms were consolidated into just 15, reducing the number of pages for completion from 89 down to 39. This makes it easier for medical practitioners to provide the information we need to assess veterans' claims. There is more to do in this regard, but it is a step in the right direction.

Work continues to finalise the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy – a joint strategy between DVA and Defence. I know that many in the veteran community completed a survey about the strategy, which has ensured the strategy reflects the needs, priorities and aspirations of the veteran community. DVA and Defence continue to consult with the community and other stakeholders, including mental health experts, researchers, peak associations and ex-service organisations. In a similar vein, the Defence and Veteran Family Wellbeing Strategy is close to finalisation. I look forward to sharing these strategies with you in 2024.

We are increasingly using a co-design approach to engage with veterans, their families, representatives from ex-service organisations and the broader veteran community to co-create services and support. These engagements enable veterans and their families to openly share their ideas and solutions for overcoming the challenges they have faced. This ensures that our policies, programs and operational practices are informed by the community we serve. DVA's commitment to open, genuine and meaningful engagement is an ongoing initiative.

Throughout 2023, I have engaged with DVA staff across the country who are passionate about the work they do and committed to serving the veteran community. Many in the veteran community have reached out to me and described the positive difference these staff have made. Your words of encouragement are highly valued.

In 2024, we will continue our efforts to eliminate the claims backlog, progress the simplification and harmonisation of veterans' legislation, engage more extensively with the veteran community, modernise our IT systems and improve our modelling capabilities so we can better plan for the future.

I close this message by wishing you and your families a very Merry Christmas. To our veterans, thank you for your service to our nation. To our veterans' families, thank you for all that you do. I look forward to working closely with you all in 2024.



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

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FROM THE MINISTER

The Hon Matt Keogh MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel

When we say 'Lest We Forget' at the end of the Ode, we mean it. We will remember them. We do remember them.

Across the globe on Remembrance Day we all paid tribute to those who have served our nation in war, conflict or in peacekeeping operations. As part of those commemorations I had the honour of representing Australia in the United Kingdom, in acknowledgement of the historic and enduring relationship between our nations, participating in multiple services.

I attended the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday and delivered the address at the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Australian War Memorial in Hyde Park.

The Australian memorial in London is something special. It highlights just how far-reaching the impacts of the First and Second World Wars were. Etched on the granite of the memorial are the names of the towns where Australians who served in both wars were born. There are 23,844 towns.

It reminds us no Australian community was left untouched. Nor was any community in the United Kingdom. Our personnel have stood shoulder to shoulder for decades, and continue to do so.

I also took the opportunity to mark Remembrance Day itself with Aussie Army personnel participating in Operation Kudu in the UK, training Ukrainian troops to defend their nation. It was a surreal experience holding an informal ceremony together – Australians and Ukrainians – at the 11th hour in the training area woodlands, to pay our respects and reflect upon what is to come.

At home, this Remembrance Day also marked the 30th anniversary of the interment of the Unknown Soldier in the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Memory. The Unknown Soldier serves as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made in times of war. He is all of them and he is one of us.

Lest we forget.

The trip also provided me an opportunity to meet with the UK Veterans Minister, peak ex-service organisations, veteran wellbeing researchers at King's College, veterans and service providers at a veteran housing service, and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. All of these engagements, as well as those in relation to my Defence Personnel portfolio, were very valuable and helpful for informing the work we are doing here at home.

On the home front, I'm pleased that we continue to make progress in improving the lives of veterans and families.

In the last two Budgets, the Government provided \$322.3 million to employ and retain



Attending the Remembrance Day Service at the Australian War Memorial in Hyde Park, London

additional staff at DVA to get through the claims backlog and make sure it doesn't happen again. One of the key game changers is the expansion of the use of Claims Support Officers across the country. These staff support veterans and families by making sure they have all the information required for their claim before it is submitted for formal assessment.

The Government has also budgeted \$341.1 million to fund the modernisation and sustainment of the IT systems within DVA to support the processing of those claims.

Under the Albanese Government, DVA is now better funded than it has been in three decades, and the benefits of this are showing. In September of last year, DVA's claims backlog had peaked at 45,226 claims yet to be allocated to a delegate for decision. At the end of October this year, it's down to 16,723 – that's a 63 per cent drop from that peak, and it is continuing to fall, with Initial Liability claims to all be with a delegate by the end of this year, and compensation claims to all be with a delegate in early 2024.

The Government committed \$46.7 million to fund the delivery of 10 Veterans' and Families' Hubs in the areas where there is the highest concentration of veterans around the country. This year, I opened the Mates4Mates operated Hub in Darwin and the Caboolture Brisbane North Hub operated by Lives Lived Well. The eight additional Hubs are all progressing and I'll have more to say on those soon.

The Government is also rolling out our \$24 million Veterans' Employment Program to better recognise the pre-existing capability veterans have and make it easier for them to be more universally competitive in the labour market. The program includes the establishment of a

Business Advisory Service, a Recognition of Prior Learning Program, and we'll be rolling out a campaign next year that will promote the diverse and valuable experience and skills of veterans to employers.

I recognise that for many of you it's become increasingly difficult to access a GP that will service you on a veteran card. From 1 November the Albanese Government tripled the "Veteran Access Payment" in an effort to encourage more GPs to service veterans. We have also streamlined and reduced the paperwork for GPs. I encourage you to share this positive initiative with your GP.

The Government has now taken action on all 13 recommendations of the interim report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, many outlined above. Significant work also continues on its first recommendation to simplify and harmonise veteran rehabilitation and compensation legislation.

This is not a small project. We're working to harmonise a century's worth of legislation to move from three active schemes – each under their own separate legislation – to a single ongoing scheme under one piece of legislation.

Thank you to all those who participated in consultations earlier this year. Hearing your lived experience makes a big difference. The Government is aiming to get an exposure draft of legislation out for another round of consultation early next year, and I will be calling on you all in the veteran community once again to weigh in and make sure we get it right.

To all of you in the Defence and veteran community, I hope you stay safe this holiday season and have a very Merry Christmas and New Year with loved ones!



FROM THE ASSISTANT MINISTER

The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP

Assistant Minister for Defence and Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Every year on Remembrance Day, our community pauses at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. This year, I had the privilege of attending the Remembrance Day ceremonies held by the Maroubra and Coogee RSLs where we paused to remember and honour the incredible sacrifice of those who served in our armed forces.

On my recent visit to Papua New Guinea, I saw the conditions faced by our soldiers on the Kokoda Track during the Second World War. It highlighted for me not only the staggering adversity our service personnel faced, but the strength of the Australian spirit to endure.

Whatever the conflict or peace operation, those who have worn our nation's uniform have served with honour and distinction. Many have given their lives. As a nation, we will continue to ensure

that our current and future generations recognise the enormous sacrifices they have made in our name.

I was in Port Moresby to represent Australia at the official opening of the Kokoda Gallery and World War II Exhibition at the National Museum and Art Gallery. The exhibition was co-funded by the Australian Government as a gift to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2020.

There is no greater example of the bonds of our nations' friendship than when we stood together united against terrible adversity at Kokoda. The Australian Government places great importance in our relationship with Papua New Guinea and we remain committed to supporting the security and future of the Pacific family.

In October, I was delighted to join Surf Life Saving Australia and Invictus Australia to announce a unique partnership that will provide opportunities and pathways for veterans and families to

participate in Surf Life Saving. The two organisations signed a memorandum of understanding to support and promote the health and wellbeing of veterans and families. This new alliance provides more local opportunities and pathways for veterans in Surf Life Saving. As a surf lifesaver myself, I can see how it'll bring more veterans together in their community, build mental resilience, and create friendships.

Finally, as we approach the end of another busy year, I thank everyone in the Defence and veteran community for all that we've been able to achieve together. I wish you a safe and restful holiday season.

I also remind those who may find this time of year difficult that the Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling telephone service is available to support current and ex-serving ADF personnel and families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year on 1800 011 046.

Letter to the editor



Thank you very much for your concise yet comprehensive article in *Vetaffairs* on the sinking of the *Centaur* [*Vetaffairs*, August 2023].

We have had a very successful year of commemorations. All the regular commemorative organisations at Caloundra, Brisbane, Point Danger, Dapto, Canberra (AWM) and Melbourne (Shrine of Remembrance) managed to do something special within their normal commemorations, and others arranged special services for the 80th anniversary.

Some who run related commemorations such as the Kokoda Track at Concord Hospital and the Merchant Navy in Sydney made a feature of the *Centaur* for this year. These commemorations are all conducted by community groups such as the RSL, Centaur Primary School, the Brisbane Nurses, Merchant Navy Association, etc. It is good to see that 80 years later people are still remembering the *Centaur* and telling her story.

Thank you for your contribution to our efforts to 'see that the memory never fades and the facts are not forgotten' (from our rationale) and to 'foster a peaceful and forward looking attitude', also from our rationale.

Regards

Jan Thomas

OAM Honorary Secretary

2/3 AHS Centaur Association

UK minister joins Veterans' Ministerial Council meeting

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh hosted state and territory ministers responsible for veterans' matters at the Veterans' Ministerial Council meeting in Perth on 6 October. The ministers committed to strengthening national collaboration on the services and supports available for veterans and families.

Also in attendance was the United Kingdom's Minister of State for Veterans' Affairs, the Right Hon Johnny Mercer MP, who was visiting Australia.

Minister Mercer provided an update on matters of importance to veterans and families and shared insights into the United Kingdom's veteran landscape.

Ministers discussed opportunities for national harmonisation and mutual recognition of relevant identification documents, such as concession cards.

The Council agreed the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has made it abundantly clear more needs to be done to support the mental health and



wellbeing of Defence personnel, veterans and families.

The Council was briefed on the development of the inaugural joint Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and progress on the Veterans' and Families' Hubs program (including a tour of the RSL Anzac House Hub). The Veteran Transition Strategy and the implementation of the recommendations of the Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide were also discussed.

With a commitment to improving mental health outcomes for Australian veterans and families, ministers discussed a national approach to the accreditation of psychiatric assistance dogs and agreed to work together to progress national standards.

Representatives from the Western Australian and South Australian governments delivered

a presentation on the work they are doing to better support and understand veterans in the corrective services system. The Council discussed the need to improve data collection relating to veterans' incarceration and homelessness, with research into veterans' incarceration currently underway.

Minister Keogh closed the meeting by acknowledging the benefits of cross jurisdiction collaboration on programs to improve the lives of veterans and families.

Ministers Emma Davidson (ACT), David Harris (NSW), Paul Kirby (NT), Bart Mellish (QLD), Guy Barnett (TAS), Natalie Suleyman (VIC) and Paul Papalia (WA) attended from the states and territories.

Before the Council meeting, ADF and ex-service organisation representatives joined the ministers at a commemorative service at the Cenotaph in Perth's Kings Park.

DVA services during the holiday season

DVA will continue to provide support to veterans and families during the holiday season. However, please be aware that some services will be impacted.

Counselling and mental health support

The Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling telephone service is available to support current and ex-serving ADF personnel and families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Phone 1800 011 046 toll-free.

Safe Zone Support is an anonymous counselling line that is available 24/7 to support members of the current and ex-service community and families. Phone 1800 142 072 toll-free.

If you require urgent assistance, please call 000. If you are unwell, please contact your local doctor or go to your nearest hospital.

Open Arms centres will be closed for the Christmas / New Year period from Saturday 23 December 2023 to Monday 1 January 2024 **inclusive**, and will re-open on Tuesday 2 January 2024. For further mental health information and support, visit the Open Arms website (openarms.gov.au).

Transport bookings for medical treatment

DVA staff will be available to process transport requests for approved medical treatment on 27, 28 and 29 December. Please call 1800 550 455.

This service will be closed on the weekends as well as 25 and 26 December and 1 January. If transport is required on these days and has not been pre-booked, you can pay for the travel and seek

reimbursement when we re-open. Or, if you are an existing MyService user, you can make new transport bookings and review existing ones online (login.my.gov.au).

For travel in an emergency always dial 000.

VAN offices and general enquiries

DVA offices, shopfronts and general enquiry services do not operate over weekends or public holidays.

Over the Christmas period, they will be closed from Saturday 23 December 2023 to Monday 1 January 2024 **inclusive**. This includes DVA's General Enquiries phone line and our Veteran Access Network offices. These services will resume on **Tuesday 2 January 2024**.

Defence Service Homes Insurance

DSH Insurance and its advisors will be available for support with any insurance needs from 8 am to 5 pm, Wednesday 27 December to Friday 29 December. Outside of business hours, and during weekends and national public holidays, calls will be diverted to DSH Insurance's after-hours service partner, ensuring that support is available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

For enquiries, or help with a policy or claim, phone 1300 552 662.

Online insurance enquiries can be made via the DSH Insurance website (dsh.gov.au/contact-us-form) and will be responded to after the public holidays.



You can also lodge a non-urgent claim via the online claim form (dsh.gov.au/claim-form).

For DSH Insurance's automated payment service, phone 1300 304 989 for the cost of a local call. This service is also available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Hospital admissions

Doctors can admit DVA patients into hospital over the holiday period and request retrospective approval for the admission, where required, when DVA resumes full services.

Pharmaceutical approvals

There will be no reduction in services across the Christmas/New Year period. Providers seeking prior approval for pharmaceuticals can call the Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre 24 hours a day on 1800 552 580.

Pension payments

Pension paydays are not affected over this period. So the last payment in 2023 will be on Thursday 28 December 2023. The first payment of the New Year will be Thursday 11 January 2024. See 'Payment dates' section below.

Incapacity payments

Incapacity payments will be paid as normal on Thursday 21 December 2023. The next payment after this is due on Thursday 4 January 2024. See 'Payment dates' section below.

Payment dates

As a result of differing arrangements by various banks during the holiday period, which are beyond DVA's control, the precise day of the week you receive your pension or incapacity payment may differ from the usual. You may wish to make arrangements to ensure you have enough funds to cover any direct deposit payments.

Client Support Program

The Client Support Program (CSP) provides case management services tailored to the individual needs of clients and families. This program will be closed from Saturday 23 December 2023 to Monday 1 January 2024 inclusive.

CSP case managers will contact their clients prior to this period to discuss support arrangements over this period.

Veteran Support Officers

Veteran Support Officers (VSOs) provide personalised DVA services to ADF members on Defence bases.

VSOs will not be available from 23 December 2023 to 1 January 2024 inclusive.

ADF members can continue to book VSO appointments over the holiday period by emailing vso@dva.gov.au.

Scam and fraud tip-offs

The scam and Fraud Tip-Off mailboxes will not be monitored between 23 December 2023 and 1 January 2024 inclusive.

If you believe you have been the victim of a Scam, please review the options available on the IDCARE Official Website – Identity Theft & Cyber Support (idcare.org).

For all serious matters, please contact your local police.

VETERANS' STORIES

DVA SERVICES

COMMEMORATION

◀ SCAN AND SUBSCRIBE!

Improving DVA medical assessment forms



In May 2023, we commenced a project to review medical assessment forms to improve how DVA obtains medical information from doctors for veteran claims. This review will continue through to mid-2024, but the first seven forms are now in use and have been published on DVA's web page for health care providers.

The review of medical forms is one initiative to gain efficiencies in the claims process

and respond to feedback from medical providers, advocates, veterans and families on their complexity.

The review will deliver forms that are consolidated, simplified and easier for medical providers to understand while helping a delegate to obtain and understand the information they need to make a decision on a claim. The other focus is on

ensuring the medical forms are digital ready and help to improve claim assessment times.

The review process has included internal consultation, external consultation with medical providers and their representative organisations, ex-service organisations and the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government.

In the first stage of the project, the 19 most frequently used forms were reviewed and consolidated into 7 new forms, reducing 33 pages to 17 pages. The second stage has just been completed, which saw another 20 old forms consolidated down to 8 new forms, reducing 56 pages to 22.

To find the new medical impairment assessment forms on the 'Find forms' page, search for them using the title field with the term 'Medical Impairment Assessment'. DVA plans to have all of the forms reviewed, approved and published for use by mid-2024.

For more information visit 'Compensation claims information for providers' on the DVA website. If you have any questions or any feedback on the new or existing medical forms please email Business.Improvement.CBD@dva.gov.au.

New pension rates from 20 September 2023

SERVICE PENSION (total amount)	Old rate (fortnightly)	New rate (fortnightly)	Increase (fortnightly)
Single person	\$1,064.00	\$1,096.70	\$32.70
Couples (each)	\$802.00	\$826.70	\$24.70
Single person – transitional	\$887.60	\$906.80	\$19.20
Couples (each) – transitional	\$716.10	\$731.60	\$15.50
WAR WIDOWS (total amount)			
War widow(er)'s pension	\$1,082.50	\$1,116.30	\$33.80
Income support supplement (ceiling rate)	\$321.10	\$331.40	\$10.30
DISABILITY Compensation Payment (total amount)			
T&PI (Special rate)	\$1,676.20	\$1,729.20	\$53.00
Intermediate rate	\$1,111.30	\$1,146.40	\$35.10
EDA	\$904.60	\$933.20	\$28.60
100%	\$581.90	\$600.30	\$18.40
10%	\$65.12	\$66.96	\$1.84
MRCA*			
Wholly dependent partner payment	\$1,082.50	\$1,116.30	\$33.80
Special Rate Disability pension (SRDP)	\$1,676.20	\$1,729.20	\$53.00

These are the maximum rates of payment and include any Energy Supplement payable. An explanation of these changes is available in the online version of *Vetaffairs*.

*Note that the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) payments are the fortnightly payments amounts, not the weekly amounts.

Increased support for renters and education schemes

The Australian Government has announced indexation changes to help ease financial pressure for eligible veterans and families by better supporting renters and increasing certain payments.

Renters will be supported with a significant increase of 15% to the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance – the largest increase to this allowance in more than three decades.

Eligible recipients of the Veterans' Children Education Scheme and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme will receive an increase of \$40 per fortnight to their Education Allowance base rate.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh said the Australian community expects that veterans and families will be looked after following service.

'Not only does the indexation of these payments help veteran families with the cost of living, certain fortnightly education allowances have also increased, ensuring veteran families are better supported,' Minister Keogh said.

These measures commenced on 20 September 2023 and are automatically applied to payment rates. You do not need to do anything. DVA has contacted eligible veterans and families directly.

New report on veterans' social connectedness

A new Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report has been released, measuring the social connectedness and feeling of belonging and connecting with others amongst our veteran community.

The *Veteran social connectedness* report profiles veterans and presents key insights into their social connectedness, including comparisons to the wider Australian population.

Key findings in the report found veterans were not too dissimilar to the Australian public when it came to social connectedness. However, compared to the broader Australian population, veterans in 2021-22 were more likely to undertake volunteer roles, particularly veterans with a disability, and veterans are more likely to be active members of a club or association than people who have not served.

As well as benefiting communities through providing important services to others, volunteering

can broaden an individual's social network, deepen professional skills, promote good health and decrease social isolation.

Nearly 1 in 10 (9.4%) veterans is socially isolated, similar to people who had never served in the ADF (11%).

Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) veterans were lonely, similar to people who had never served in the ADF (19%).

Over 1 in 4 veterans (27%) did not feel part of their local community, similar to those who had never served in the ADF (26%).

Twenty two percent of all veterans had infrequent social contact with others, similar to those who had never served in the ADF (20%).

It is recognised that due to the unique nature of military service, veterans can experience both protection from and vulnerability to issues with social connectedness. The report finds that veterans who are in poor mental health and/or distress ranked poorly in comparison to those in the general population.

Veterans in poor mental health were nearly twice as likely to have infrequent social contact (47%) as persons who had never served in the ADF (26%).

Over half of veterans in psychological distress (51%) did not feel part of their local community; this was higher than those who had never served in the ADF (39%).

The Australian Government is committed to supporting vulnerable veterans access the health services they need to live well.

Any veteran who has completed one day of full-time service in the ADF can access fully funded mental health treatment through Non-Liability Health Care (mental health) with some reservists also eligible.

Some veterans are eligible for the Coordinated Veterans' Care program, through which social assistance is available to provide short term support with community and social connection.

The Government is delivering on its \$46.7 million commitment to deliver new Veterans' and Families' Hubs across the country. Hubs provide a space for veterans' services and advocacy organisations to co-exist and provide integrated support to current and ex-service personnel and families which may include health and mental health services, wellbeing support,



advocacy, employment and housing advice, and social connection.

DVA also offers free and confidential counselling services to veterans and families, available 24/7 through Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling. For more information or support call Open Arms on 1800 011 046 or visit www.openarms.gov.au.

To read the full report, visit the AIHW website. For more information on loneliness and social isolation, see Ending Loneliness Together (endingloneliness.com.au).

For more information about services and support available visit www.dva.gov.au or call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).



Home building insurance exclusively for serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force

Get a comprehensive building insurance quote at online.dsh.gov.au

Our other insurance services



Landlord



Car



Caravan



Motorcycle

Not just in the bush, bushfires strike in urban areas too. Whether you are staying at home or travelling, Defence Service Homes Insurance offers comprehensive cover for your property 24/7.

Unlike other insurers, DSH Insurance adds value to your policy, assisting veteran and Defence communities in times of need.

- No excess on claims (except for earthquake and some accidental damage)
- Flexible payment options
- Accidental damage (up to \$5,000)
- Automatic flood cover
- Temporary accommodation if your home becomes unfit to live in
- Storm damage to fences



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs



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Preventing heat illness



ANNA COLWELL

Deputy Chief Health Officer

Department of Veterans' Affairs

- **Avoid the sun:** Keep out of the sun in the hottest parts of the day. If you can, exercise in cooler times of the day. If you have a job that involves outdoor activity, schedule in some extra breaks to drink and cool down.
- **Look after others:** Check if people around you are OK. Don't forget your pets! They will need extra fluids and a cool place to rest.
- **Be careful in cars:** Cars in direct sunlight can heat up *very fast*. Never leave kids or pets or alone in a car.

Getting overheated?

Go to a cool place and drink plenty of fluids if you notice a heat rash, muscle cramps, mild headache, tiredness or grumpiness, not going to the toilet as much as usual, thirstiness, feeling a bit sick or dizzy, or getting light-headed when you stand up. On a hot day, these are usually signs of dehydration, heat stress or heat exhaustion.

Call 000 if you or someone near you has signs of heat stroke. This happens when the body can no longer cool itself and overheats, which can damage the brain, heart, kidneys and muscles.

You may also need to put wet cloths on your body or take a cool bath. Seek medical help if you don't get better or feel worse.

Call 000 if you or someone near you has signs of heat stroke. This happens when the body can no longer cool itself and overheats, which can damage the brain, heart, kidneys and muscles.

Heat stroke is an emergency! People with heat stroke may be confused, very irritable or have slurred speech. They will usually have hot, dry, red skin. A headache, feeling sick and vomiting is common, as is a fast heartbeat and breathing.

While waiting for an ambulance, try and get the person into a cool place, remove unnecessary clothing and place cool cloths on them. If they are unconscious, give first aid as appropriate.

Assistance in staying cool

For those who have medically required cooling (or heating) needs, DVA has an annual Essential Medical Equipment Payment. You – or the person you care for – needs to have a specified medical condition, have it certified by your doctor, be contributing to energy costs at an Australian residence and have one of the following: a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Pensioner Concession Card, or Veteran Gold or White Card.

You can find more information about what medical conditions are included and how to apply at www.dva.gov.au/EMEP or call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).



Australian residents who are receiving an income support payment, such as a service pension or permanent impairment payment, may be eligible for a fortnightly or quarterly Energy Supplement Payment. The Energy Supplement is automatically paid fortnightly to eligible people, but can be paid quarterly on request. If you would like to choose between fortnightly or quarterly payments, please contact DVA. (For more information, search for 'Energy Supplement' on the DVA website.)

Stay cool and enjoy your summer!

This summer is predicted to be hot. With a little sprinkling of extra hot.

When it is hot, some people can get sick from the heat, or it can make their usual medical conditions worse. This can happen to anyone but some people are more likely to be affected. Your body might not be able to cool you down as well if you are a child, older person, have certain medical conditions or if you are taking certain medications that make you lose fluid or stop you sweating. Talk to your GP if you think that might be you.

People are also more likely to get unwell from the heat if they are not used to it or there are several hot days in a row without it cooling down much at night. If you have had a prior heat illness you need to be extra careful, as you are more likely to get unwell with a heat illness again.

Beating the heat

There are lots of ways to keep from overheating:

- **Drink enough:** Drink plenty of water, often. You need more than you think on a hot day. Avoid dehydrating drinks like alcohol.
- **Avoid getting hot:** Eat cold foods. Get enough rest. Wear lightweight clothing. Stay indoors with a fan or air-conditioning. Keep curtains closed and block the hot air from sneaking in under doors. When outdoors stay in the shade, away from hot surfaces.
- **Cool down:** Suck on ice cubes, put your feet in a bowl of cold water, use a fan, visit an air-conditioned library or shopping centre, take a cool shower or bath, find a cool breeze.

New Veterans' and Families' Hub for Southeast Queensland

Tailored services and support are now available to veterans and families across Southeast Queensland, with Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh officially opening a Veterans' and Families' Hub in Caboolture in October.

The new Hub means that veterans and families living on the Sunshine Coast, across the City of Moreton Bay and those residing in Brisbane North have improved access to employment, housing, transition, advocacy, mental health and wellbeing support, along with counselling and opportunities to enhance their social connections.

The new Hub is operated by Lives Lived Well and is open to all current and former serving ADF members, including reservists, and their families.

Minister Keogh said Lives Lived Well worked quickly to stand up the

Hub, with its doors opening to the community less than 10 months after he announced the \$5 million grant.

'A key focus will be on assisting recently transitioned Defence personnel and their families to adjust to civilian life and become part of the community,' Minister Keogh said.

'That transition is something we know can be challenging, not only for veterans but also for their families – and we also know a lot of veterans choose Southeast Queensland as their retirement location, with more people transitioning to civilian life in the region than anywhere else in Australia.'

Lives Lived Well has partnered with a number of ex-service organisations and key agencies to ensure they are providing wrap-around support for veterans and their families.

'Between Lives Lived Well's decades of experience in providing



health and wellbeing support, and the Vietnam Veterans Association's experience at the coal face, I look forward to seeing how these organisations, both leaders in their respective fields, work together to connect with and support veterans in Caboolture,' Minister Keogh said.

Veterans and families who live in Southeast Queensland are encouraged to drop by for a cuppa and a chat. The Hub is located at 12 King Street, Caboolture. Support is also

available over the phone or online: simply call 1300 727 957 or send the team an email at vwc@liveslivedwell.org.au.

The launch of the Caboolture Veterans' and Families' Hub is part of the Government's \$46.7 million commitment to deliver eight new Veterans' and Families' Hubs across the country. For more information about the Veterans' and Families' Hubs, visit www.dva.gov.au/vfhubs.

Heart healthy lifestyle tips



Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death for veterans aged 50 years and over? This means that if you are a veteran that age, you are at increased risk of heart disease.

Your heart is a vital organ (actually a muscle) with the very important job of pumping blood all around your body, carrying oxygen and nourishment that you need to be healthy. There is no one thing that causes heart disease but there are risk factors that contribute to your chances of developing heart disease or experiencing a heart episode.

The good news is there are positive steps we can all take to help make our hearts healthier and stronger, regardless of our age or gender.

Even if you have heart disease or have suffered a heart condition in the past, it's not too late to make positive lifestyle changes. Below are some ways you can reduce your risk and lead a heart healthy life:

- Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink. Consuming alcohol can have an immediate impact on the cardiovascular system, increasing your heart rate and blood pressure; it can also reduce the effectiveness of some medications. Long-term impacts of prolonged drinking can lead to a weakened heart and an irregular heartbeat, as well as weight gain.
- Eliminate any exposure to cigarette smoke, as a smoker or from second hand smoke. Smoking can cause your heart rate to increase, restrict blood flow in major arteries and cause an irregular

heartbeat. Furthermore, chemicals in cigarette smoke have been found to cause the blood to thicken, which can lead to clots. Blockages from a clot can lead to a heart attack or sudden death, while restricted blood flow can cause a stroke.

- Be physically active on most if not all days of the week. Regular physical activity makes your heart stronger and can increase the amount of blood and oxygen your heart pumps around your body. Remember – any activity is better than none.
- Eat healthy unprocessed foods, consuming a balanced diet from all food groups. Consuming a healthy diet can help you to manage your weight, cholesterol and blood pressure, which reduces your risk of developing heart disease.

- Connect with others. Strengthening your social network can reduce your risk of heart disease and heart attack.
- Know and manage your risk. The risk of heart disease or suffering a heart episode increases with age. You can reduce this risk by getting regular check-ups with your GP to determine your level of risk. DVA provides eligible veterans with a one-off or annual health check. The Veterans' Health Check is a comprehensive health assessment conducted by your GP. It provides an opportunity to access early intervention care and appropriate referrals when you need it.

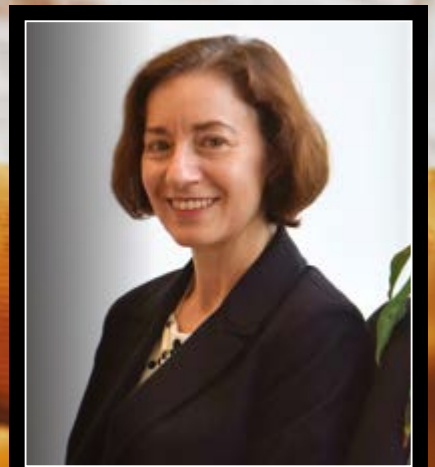
Heart disease is a long-term chronic health condition. DVA offers access to ongoing care for eligible Veteran Gold Card holders with heart disease through the Coordinated Veterans' Care program.

DVA also provides eligible veterans access to the Heart Health Program, which has been beating strong for the past 23 years. This is a free, year-long, national program that helps veterans to prevent heart disease or a heart episode by incorporating health education, exercise and balanced nutrition into their daily lives.

For more information, including eligibility for the programs mentioned in this article, visit the DVA website or call 1800 838 372 (1800 VETERAN).



A little kindness can go a long way



DR LORETTA POERIO

Senior Mental Health Adviser

Department of Veterans' Affairs

As 2023 draws to an end, I thought it fitting to finish the year with a topic from the field of positive psychology, a subfield of psychology. Positive psychology studies those factors that contribute to the wellbeing and flourishing of people. It applies scientific principles to the study of human thoughts, emotions and behaviour that is strengths-based rather than illness-based.

Positive psychology seeks to improve the quality of life of individuals, institutions and communities and provides insights to answer the age-old question of what makes life worth living. Positive psychology not only focuses on studying strengths, values, and self-compassion, it provides tools designed to boost a sense of purpose and wellbeing.

A brief word on wellbeing here, as it is a tricky area given the lack of consensus on what it means. There is general agreement that basically it represents the ability to experience positive emotions, the relative lack of negative emotions, and a degree of satisfaction, fulfillment and positive accomplishment.

Given we are in the season of giving, I am going to look at the benefits of random acts of kindness, for ourselves and others, and how we can incorporate this activity into our lives. Now, some of us may not feel particularly giving, but it may be an opportune moment to take a step back and ask, *When did I give of myself without expecting anything in return?* If you come up blank, then it may be time to consider starting.

Random acts of kindness are activities that we undertake for the benefit of another, a stranger even, without expectation of anything in return.

These acts of kindness are generally manifested as an action or behaviour. It may be complimenting someone, helping a neighbour with their groceries, asking if someone is okay, doing the dishes, buying a colleague a coffee, saying good morning to people on your daily walk, giving a loved one flowers, or cooking a meal for a sick friend.

It may feel a little uncomfortable, at first, but the potential benefits to our lives, and those of others, are significant.

A recent Australian survey on common acts of kindness found that on average, Australians perform 16 acts of kindness every week (see *What are the most common acts of kindness in Australia?* Available on mccrindle.com.au). Interestingly, Australians indicated receiving much fewer acts of kindness (10 on average per week), which may speak to a lack of awareness of people being kind towards us. People noted three areas where they could be kinder:

- Asking more frequently, 'are you OK?'
- Assisting people when they need a hand
- Saying 'Hi' to people we see during the day.

The American-based Random Acts of Kindness Foundation has developed a range of tools and resources to promote kindness as a way of life. There are ideas for school, home and workplace, including a daily dose of kindness and newsletters which can be easily adapted.

These acts can help you feel more connected with others, which helps strengthen a sense of belonging and can directly influence loneliness and improve relationships.

– Diana Samuel MD

What's more, it is not only the receiver who benefits. Researchers have found that random acts of kindness can have a beneficial impact on our self-esteem and the way we see the world. A 2019 study found that people who performed acts of kindness for seven days saw a boost in happiness, with the level of happiness increasing as the number of acts of kindness increased. Other research has shown that regular acts of kindness towards ourselves can build resilience and enhance our wellbeing.

Acts of kindness can have profound effects on our body through the release of a number of neurotransmitters in the brain associated with feeling good, such as serotonin, oxytocin and endorphins. Regular practice has been shown to reduce experiences of anxiety, stress and depression and increase feelings of calmness, reduce blood pressure, improve heart health and increase our sense of connection and optimism.

By committing to undertaking random acts of kindness on a regular basis, towards ourselves and others, we have the ability to modify the brain to be more 'kindness focused' through learning, growing and modifying our neural connections over time. This is particularly important if there is a focus that is oriented to the negative, tending to see the worst in a situation.

Random acts of kindness is one tool in the positive psychology suite of tools that can help move you from good to great and engender a sense of optimism which, given the negativity of our media, may just assist to provide a glimmer of joy in your day and the day of others.

Kindness resources:



- Random Acts of Kindness, 'The Science of Kindness', YouTube
- positivepsychology.com, 'Can Random Acts of Kindness Increase Wellbeing? (+ 22 Ideas)'
- verywellmind.com, 'How Random Acts of Kindness Can Boost Your Health During the Pandemic'
- mccrindle.com.au, 'What are the most common acts of kindness in Australia?'
- The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, randomactsofkindness.org

'Talk about it'

Former RSL NSW President Ray James opens up on prostate cancer

Ray James has a simple message for his fellow veterans: 'If you've got prostate cancer, share that with your wife or partner, and share it with your mates.'

Pauline James, Ray's wife of 52 years, chimes in: 'Blokes think that because they've lost their prostate, that they're impotent. But it's not the end of a loving relationship – there are options.'

Ray James OAM was the first Royal Australian Navy veteran to be appointed as the President of RSL NSW. His father served as a 16-year-old on the Kokoda Track, and Ray himself joined the Navy as a 15-year-old. He completed 20 years full-time and war-like active service, including in the Vietnam War, and a further 26 years in the Royal Australian Navy Reserve.

Ray is in fact a dual 'accidental' cancer survivor. In 2016, while getting a chest scan for asbestos exposure, doctors discovered an aggressive cancer in his thyroid. He thought he 'won't live till Christmas', but his thyroid was removed and the cancer was defeated.

Five years later, when his regular doctor of 45 years retired, Ray's new GP cautioned that a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test result of 4.7 was 'a bit high for your age' and advised further tests. 'I had no symptoms,' Ray says. 'I regularly attended the doctor, and years ago went annually to the prostate clinic at Concord Hospital because my father and brother both had prostate issues.'

When all the tests were done, the cancer discovered was at a stage that the specialist wanted

to operate to remove Ray's prostate immediately. The timing was inconvenient, to say the least. It was October 2021, a COVID-19 lockdown was in place, and Ray was needed to chair a 2-day RSL virtual congress.

'I'm very lucky,' says Ray 'two more weeks and it may have breached the prostate and gone throughout my body.'

'Ray is an inspiration to me – we've been married for almost 52 years,' adds Pauline.

Pauline is highly active in the Defence community. In addition to Ray, her son and grandson are also veterans and she lost three cousins in the Vietnam War. The couple are now on personal crusade to break down the stigma associated with prostate cancer.

Pauline says much of that stigma relates to sexuality. 'Just because you have cancer, your sexuality does not leave you – there is still life in the old boy!' she laughs. 'If you don't take your wife or partner on the journey, you're going to have cranky old men and cranky old women out there.'

The other issue is the probing, digital examination, which Ray confirms can be confronting: 'The PSA is not the be all and end all – get the digital for god's sake – it only takes a sec.' Pauline agrees: 'I would say to the wives and partners – encourage your husbands to have the PSA, but also the digital, and any other tests recommended by your doctor.'

And both agree that open and honest communication is the most important factor in discovering the cancer in time and saving lives.



Ray and Pauline James

'Pauline is the type of person who breaks that barrier down,' says Ray. 'She can talk to the male who couldn't talk to his wife or partner – but he'll talk to Pauline. She talks about my experience and encourages the partner to get involved. We've spoken with veterans who didn't have any symptoms and convinced them to talk to their doctor – unfortunately, some have been diagnosed.'

Ray says he is very happy with the support he has received from DVA through his cancer journey: 'I'm on a Veteran Gold Card – I didn't pay one cent out of pocket.'

If you've been diagnosed by your doctor with prostate cancer and hold a Veteran White Card you might be eligible to receive fully funded cancer treatment under DVA's Non-Liability Health Care (NLHC). For more information, call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

Important update for participants of the 2001 Study of Health Outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel



F-111 fighter plane (Image: Defence)

In 2001, the Department of Defence commissioned the Study of Health Outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel (SHOAMP) to investigate health outcomes in aircraft maintenance personnel who carried out fuel-tank repairs between 1975 and 1999 as part of the F-111 Deseal/Reseal programs.

Some of these personnel volunteered to be participants of the study and donated their blood- serum samples for long-term storage to support the study over time, for example

for conducting further testing should scientific developments enable future analysis.

At the time of the study, some participants agreed to their samples being stored for a period of 50 years and were advised that they would be informed of any changes to serum-sample storage arrangements.

To ensure continued long-term storage, and with the support of the SHOAMP Serum Management Committee (of which Air Force Association is a member) serum samples donated by study participants have been moved from their original storage at QML Pathology to state-of-the-art bio-banking facilities at QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute in Brisbane.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has been contracted – with the support of the SHOAMP Serum Management Committee – to manage the on-going storage of the data-linkage key, which contains the information that allows a participant sample to be identified and withdrawn from storage.

Participants can withdraw consent for their sample to be used in further research. Any SHOAMP participant who wishes to withdraw their consent can contact the Australian Institute of Family Studies at shoamp-requests@aifs.gov.au or complete the online form at aifs.gov.au/shoamp-request.

Participant privacy continues to be a primary consideration. At no time has Defence or DVA received identifying participant information. As outlined in the original information provided to study participants, de-identified participant study data is held by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Ethics approvals were granted by the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs' Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the changes in SHOAMP storage arrangements.

There is no impact on, or change to, SHOAMP Health Care Scheme entitlements. If you would like more information about these entitlements, please visit the DVA web page about the SHOAMP Health Care Scheme.

For more information, visit www.dva.gov.au/shoamp-storage-arrangements.

Everything you need to know about the Veteran White Card

The Veteran White Card provides access to clinically required treatment anywhere in Australia for accepted service-related conditions.

All veterans with at least one day of full time service, and some reservists, are able to access free treatment for mental health conditions through Non-Liability Health Care (NLHC) without the need to prove the condition was caused by their ADF service.

In addition, some veterans are eligible for NLHC for cancer and tuberculosis.

Some states, territories, local governments and private businesses offer concessions or discounts to Veteran White Card holders, however these vary according to your card and the state or territory you live in.

Funded treatment for service-related conditions

The Veteran White Card covers you for clinically required medical treatment in Australia for your accepted service-related injuries or conditions.

This includes treatment at a hospital or day procedure facility, treatment provided by a general practitioner (GP), a specialist, an allied health professional, dental or optical professional, pharmaceuticals, community nursing, and pathology and medical imaging.

Additionally, the Veteran White Card provides access to clinically necessary services and support for accepted conditions. This may include things such as aids for assistive listening, speech and communication, cognition and memory devices. It may also cover bathing, toileting, continence and personal hygiene products, appliances and

home modifications, travel to and from medical appointments and care services (including help around the home and garden). Services and support are free or low cost.

Funded treatment for mental health conditions through Non-Liability Health Care (mental health)

For veterans with at least one day of full time service, part-time reserve members who rendered border protection or disaster relief service, or were involved in a serious training accident, a Veteran White Card can also provide access to NLHC for mental health treatment. NLHC covers the cost of mental health treatment even if it isn't related to your service.

Funded treatment for cancer (malignant neoplasm) and/or pulmonary tuberculosis through Non-Liability Health Care

Some veterans who have a diagnosis of cancer or pulmonary tuberculosis are also entitled to funded treatment. This treatment is available to Veteran White Card Holders with one of the following types of service: eligible war service, operational service, warlike service, non-warlike service, peacekeeping service, hazardous service, and British Nuclear Test Defence service, as defined in the legislation. Veterans with certain peacetime Defence service between 1972 and 1994 are also eligible for this treatment.

There is no need to establish that these conditions were caused by your ADF service.



Using your Veteran White Card

Always check with your medical provider before your appointment that they will accept your Veteran Card.

Treatment by specialists and certain allied health professionals is available on referral from your GP. Medical treatment, services and support are generally provided at no cost if you see a provider who accepts your Veteran Card.

However, there are some services which may incur a cost, including some out of pocket expenses for certain high cost dental items, prescription items provided under the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and contributions towards help provided in the home through the Veterans' Home Care program.

Your card's expiry date is shown on the front of the card. You will automatically receive a replacement card approximately one month before the expiry.

If we know you are eligible, we will send you your Veteran White Card automatically. If you think you're eligible for a Veteran Card or want to find out more, call us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372). You can also lodge a claim online through MyService.

More information about Veterans Cards, including eligibility criteria, is available on the DVA website at dva.gov.au/cards or by calling DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

Veterans Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Scheme payment for 2023



DVA clients may get some money back on what they've spent on prescriptions throughout the year.

If you are eligible under the Veterans Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Scheme (VPRS), you may be entitled to be reimbursed the difference between how much you spent on your prescriptions, and the amount of pharmaceutical allowance you received during the 2023 calendar year.

Reimbursement payments for the 2023 calendar year will be made during March 2024. If you are eligible, a letter containing information about the reimbursement amount and the date of payment will be sent to you in March.

You may be receiving the pharmaceutical allowance as part of the Pension Supplement, Veterans' Supplement, MRCA Supplement or DRCA Supplement.

For DVA to reimburse you, you must have qualifying service and either a Veteran Gold Card or a Veteran White Card, and one of the following applies:

- You receive a Disability Compensation Payment.
- You receive Permanent Impairment compensation under the MRCA (*Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*), either paid on a regular basis or paid as a lump sum.
- We assessed you under the DRCA (*Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation [Defence-related Claims] Act 1988*) as having a permanent impairment.

You do not need to register for the scheme and no claim is required. Your payment will be calculated using data from your pharmacist when you have provided them with your Veteran Gold Card or Veteran White Card.

For more information, visit www.dva.gov.au/vprs.

A fond KISS farewell to veterans and fans

As legendary rockers KISS played their final farewell concert in Sydney in October, they thanked not just their fans, but Australia's veterans.

Concluding their stellar live career, KISS leaves an enduring legacy for both their legion of fans and for military veterans and families through their Support Our Veterans Appeal.

The aim of the appeal was to raise donations and public awareness to support the health and wellbeing of returning soldiers, sailors and aviators. For every concert ticket sold from 5 September, \$10 was donated to Legacy and Wounded Heroes Australia.

Speaking about the appeal on Chanel 7's Sunrise, lead singer Paul Stanley, whose father was a Holocaust survivor, said: 'Whether it's in America, the Wounded Warriors or your Wounded Heroes and Legacy, for us it's a matter of pointing fingers and going: "These are the people who make freedom possible. Freedom is only free for the people who don't have to sacrifice for it." So for us, it's a great way to perhaps give back something and say another thank you to the people who make this all possible.'

Wounded Heroes Australia President Martin Shaw said the charity was incredibly honoured to be chosen alongside Legacy as a beneficiary.

'When we received the news of KISS's support, we were ecstatic!' Mr Shaw said. 'Paul's sentiment hits home and is at the heart of everything we do. KISS's generosity

will help us provide critical support to veteran families Australia-wide. We can't thank KISS enough for shining a light on the cause.'

In addition, KISS made 5,000 free concert tickets available to be distributed to serving ADF personnel and veterans so they could attend and enjoy the day with their families and friends. Both charities also collected donations at Accor Stadium during the concert and activated channels for direct donations.

Lieutenant General Greg Bilton the ADF's Chief of Joint Operations, is a patron of Wounded Heroes and an advocate for Legacy.

'I am extremely proud of the dedication these charities have to support the families of veterans who have lost their lives or been injured as a result of their service,' Lieutenant General Bilton said.

'I would like to also thank KISS for the Support our Veterans Appeal to help raise funds for both of these charities and for extending the opportunity to current and ex-serving ADF members and their families to come and enjoy the band's last concert in Australia.'

The money raised from the Support Our Veterans Appeal is going to Legacy, the iconic Australian charity that has been supporting the families of veterans for 100 years, and to Wounded Heroes Australia, a national defence community organisation that provides 24/7 emergency crisis support to ADF personnel, veterans and their families in immediate financial crisis or experiencing homelessness.



Legacy beneficiary Jacky Gavin and her children with KISS backstage, Lieutenant General Bilton (far left) and Martin Shaw, President of Wounded Heroes (far right). On behalf of the ADF, Greg Bilton handed the members of KISS a genuine Australian slouch hat in appreciation for their generous support. (Image: Wounded Heroes)



(Image: Keith Leroux)



The scholars at the Australian War Memorial

Gallipoli Scholars visit national capital

A message from the Gallipoli Scholarship Fund

The Gallipoli Scholarship Fund seeks to perpetuate among young Australians an understanding of those enduring traditions of perseverance, courage, self-sacrifice and mateship that were established so indelibly in the cause of world peace at Gallipoli, and thereafter on other battlefields and peace operations.

In September, 10 of this year's 35 Gallipoli Scholars from all over Australia visited Canberra, where they met with Director of the Australian War Memorial Matt Anderson, followed by a superb presentation about the memorial and a guided tour.

'The tour was remarkable,' said Jocelyn Mayger, an ADF Bursary awardee from Darwin. 'Like my fellow Gallipoli Scholars, my family has a distinguished record of military service and the tour made me realise how very thankful we should all be for their unselfish efforts in the service of our country.'

The scholars attended the Last Post Ceremony, with the Gallipoli Scholarship wreath being laid by Mara Dalton from Hobart and Max McFarlane from Inverell. Both are awardees of the Ernst & Young Internship Bursary. 'The Last Post is such an unforgettable

experience, and we were honoured to lay a wreath on behalf of our colleagues in recognition of our veterans,' Max said.

The group also had the privilege of meeting with their Gallipoli Scholarship Patrons at Government House the following day – His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley.

Holley Shepperd from Port Lincoln thanked Their Excellencies on behalf of the scholars: 'Such a memorable inter-personal experience, Their Excellencies sought our views and were warm and candid in their advice. Mrs Hurley's singing of the Gallipoli Scholarship Song still resonates,' Holley said.

The Gallipoli Scholarship provides financial assistance to awardees commencing their first year of tertiary study at a University or TAFE at Degree, Diploma or Advanced Diploma level.

Applications for the scholarship open on 1 January and close on 28 February each year. More information, including eligibility criteria, is available at www.gallipolischolarship.com.au.

(To read the full version of this story, see Vetaffairs online.)

Celebrating veteran business success



A message from Prince's Trust Australia

Celebrating the entrepreneurial achievements of Australia's veteran and family business community, the Prince's Trust Australia is delighted to announce the winners of the 2023 Beyond Service Awards. The awards recognise the depth and breadth of skills and experience veterans and Defence Force families bring to Australia's small business landscape.

Michelle Endacott, Chief Executive of Prince's Trust Australia, said that the awards are an insight into the thousands of veteran and Defence family entrepreneurs operating in communities across Australia and overseas.

'We are impressed by the calibre of our winners and the diversity of their business interests and industries,' Ms Endacott said. 'We wish to recognise all of our inaugural award nominees for their exemplary efforts in business and as champions for the skills and experiences the Defence community bring to small business.'

Ian Rawson

**Commonwealth Bank of Australia Business of the Year Award
Community Impact Award**

Ian Rawson, Founder and CEO of Australian Warfighter Coffee, served for 19 years with the Royal Australian Air Force. His business is committed to providing exceptional coffee while raising awareness of mental health issues.

With first-hand experience navigating his own challenges with post-traumatic stress disorder, Ian aims to provide a space for people to connect and share experiences.

'I'm medically discharged ... it's just me doing what I want to do, providing the coffee, meeting a lot of people and keeping to my word,' Ian said.

'I've had my coffee deployed on nearly every deployment so far, and I can boast that we're the only coffee that's had a blend of coffee to fly into an operational war zone on a mission with an aircrew, signed by the crew.'



Ian seeks support for mental health through his "Coffee for Mental Health Conversations" platform. Proceeds are donated to veteran and first responder charity groups working in mental health.

Ian supports veterans to re-engage in employment through barista training and actively seeks partnerships to help create positive change, including with Young Veterans and the Australian War Memorial.

Nadia Teong

The Power of One Award



Army veteran Nadia Teong is a Clinical Psychologist and Founder of Veterans Psychology who has been recognised for her outstanding efforts as an individual who works on their own.

Acknowledging the crisis in veteran mental health, Nadia supports veterans by engaging clinicians with an understanding of the military experience. Her aim is to improve engagement with mental health services and improve mental health outcomes for the military community.

'It's really humbling and reassuring that what I'm doing is worthy of publicity,' Nadia said.

Nadia is an Army Reservist, a mother to two small children, and has served on operational tours in Afghanistan and the Solomon Islands.

Karyn Hinder

The New Mission Award

Army and Air Force veteran Karyn Hinder is the founder of Working Spirit, a registered



charity that supports veterans to find meaningful employment pathways after service in the ADF. Sponsored by Saab Australia, her award recognises the skills and experience veterans bring to civilian businesses.

'I come from a recruitment background in Defence, I've got an admin background and I've worked with some fantastic men and women throughout my career,' Karyn said. 'I thought, well, wouldn't it be good if there was a business where I could help veterans into employment?'

Karyn, a serving Reservist, has invested in a Transition Employment Portal and supports female veterans through the Women Veteran Employment Network. She also offers a Corporate Fellowship Work Experience Programme, and has hosted nine Military to Civilian Career Summits to connect veterans with employers. Karyn and her team have placed more than 250 veterans in employment.

Hayley Boswell

The Defence Family Business Award



Hayley Boswell is the founder of Defence Kidz, which specialises in bespoke resources for Defence children that promote positive mental health, connection and education.

Her award recognises ADF partners and spouses in business, and with first-hand experience of the challenges facing Defence children, Hayley passionately advocates for positive change through Defence Kidz.

'Our community and our policymakers really do want to help veterans and their families, they just don't know how to do it until we speak up and educate them about what we need,' Hayley said.

Hayley is a Defence spouse, a principal solicitor, and mother of two young children who has distributed more than 13,000 books in Australia and overseas, and is currently creating a cartoon animation for children of Defence families.

To find out more about all the Beyond Service Awards winners and finalists, visit princes-trust.org.au/defence-members/beyond-service-awards.

Volunteer finds meaning in rebuilding communities

A message from Disaster Relief Australia

While Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) has a tangible impact in helping communities rebuild after a significant weather event, the impact on the wellbeing of residents is immeasurable, as witnessed by volunteer Dan Allan. The Brisbane-based volunteer has spent almost three years with the organisation and has deployed on 10 of DRA's recovery operations across Australia.

When arriving at a property, DRA volunteers are faced with various tasks to help the residents, who are often unsure about where to start with the clean-up.

Dan has witnessed many occasions where DRA's presence has given residents hope for the future.

'When we arrive at someone's house, the residents are often down in the dumps not knowing where to start with their clean up, but by the end of our time there they have hope,' he says.

'We go out there and have that tangible experience where we muck out people's houses, remove trees, tidy up access points and use chainsaws,

but our biggest impact is putting hope back in their lives.

'While there is plenty of work to do, we also have a wellbeing impact. We can't measure it, but we can feel it. Our biggest benefit is connecting with the residents.'

DRA is a veteran-led organisation, which is one of the reasons Dan signed up as a volunteer in 2020, along with a desire to help after the devastation of the Black Summer bushfires.

'I saw the Black Summer bushfires and was looking at a way to help,' says Dan. 'The fact that DRA is a veteran-founded organisation and works on the ground to help people was very appealing to me. It felt almost like a calling, it was the perfect opportunity to volunteer.'

Following four years of service in the Australian Army, including a deployment to Afghanistan in 2011, Dan admits he felt like he was unsure of the direction his life would take.

'I was looking for something meaningful,' he explains. 'DRA pulled me out of a limbo towards life, it was a good buffer to get me back to my true



Dan Allan undertaking bushfire recovery work in the Bega Valley, NSW.

self. DRA helped bring back my confidence and purpose.'

Dan has encouraged other veterans to consider volunteering with Disaster Relief Australia: 'If you're feeling a bit lost or need to realign with a sense of purpose – it doesn't matter what stage of life you're at – DRA will help you find your feet again. There is always something out there for you.'

For more information about DRA and opportunities to volunteer, visit disasterreliefaus.org.

Supporting our troops with comforts of home



The RSL Australian Forces Overseas Fund packing crew

A message from the Returned & Services League of Australia

Twice a year, around Anzac Day and Christmas, members of the ADF deployed overseas receive thoughtful care packages from RSL Australia to thank them for their service.

These care packages contain an assortment of quintessentially Australian snacks and treats, along with a letter from RSL Australia on behalf of the nation conveying sincere gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

Deployments can be isolating, and receiving a care package from Australia can provide a connection to home. One recipient expressed: 'It is quite special to be thought of outside of the family back home.' Another remarked: 'To be frank, it made my day as all the items cannot be bought

here. It is very much appreciated and makes a big difference knowing that people and organisations care.'

The RSL tradition of demonstrating gratitude for those deployed began back in 1963 when the RSL organised Christmas care packages for members of the Australian Army serving in Vietnam. Following the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, the RSL resolved to continue to support Australian forces on missions abroad and formally established the RSL Australian Forces Overseas Fund (AFOF) in 1966.

The fund is mainly used to provide biannual care packages, however during the ADF deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, the RSL identified a need to provide additional support for ADF members seriously wounded on overseas service.

The fund was used to create RSL Support Packs for seriously wounded personnel who required treatment through the NATO hospital facilities in Germany and later hospitalisation in Australia. It was also used to offer respite, providing a week-long, all-expenses-paid break within Australia with the family of the wounded ADF member once they arrived home.

Donations to the RSL AFOF, and the support of volunteers who give up two days to assemble the packages at the 39 OSB Randwick Barracks in Sydney, make these care packages possible.

The RSL AFOF Care Packages go beyond the tangible items inside the boxes. This gesture sends a powerful message to our service men and women they are thought of back home and their sacrifices are deeply appreciated.



Assistant Minister Matt Thistlethwaite lends a hand with the RSL care packages.

War Widows Day around Australia

War Widows Day 2023 was celebrated on 19 October in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. This day is significant to Australian War Widows as it is the birthday of our founder, Mrs Jessie Vasey. Our organisation was founded by Jessie in 1945 after the Second World War.

In 2022, the first War Widows Day was commemorated in Queensland

and NSW. This year, there were four Australian states and one territory celebrating the occasion.

Australian War Widows is happy to announce that we are planning a National War Widows Day for 19 October 2024. This will ensure that all war widows in Australia can be part of this day to recognise and honour their sacrifices and the grief they faced due to the loss of their loved ones in the name of our country.

Please get in touch with Australian War Widows if you are a war widow in Victoria, Northern Territory or Tasmania to find out how you can be part of our celebrations in 2024.

– Jenny Gregory, National President, Australian War Widows Inc.

Right: War Widows ACT President Robynne Mitchell (left) with Australian War Widows National President Jenny Gregory



ACT War Widows at the Legislative Assembly, Canberra

Australian Capital Territory

When a child called Jessie Halbert was born in Roma, Queensland, in 1897 our country would have had no idea of the impact she would have on the lives of war widows and their families after the Second World War throughout Australia.

On the 126th anniversary of her birth, we remember Jessie and the loss of her husband, Major General George Allan Vasey. Jessie became a war widow on 5 March 1945 and changed the lives of other women and families who had lost their husband and father defending our country in wartime.

Members of the Australian War Widows ACT Inc are grateful to the ACT Government, especially the Minister for Veterans and Seniors Ms Emma Davidson and her team, who worked tirelessly to put on a morning tea at the ACT Legislative Assembly.

MC Nicole Longley did a heartfelt welcome to our distinguished guests, widows and the representatives of the organisations who have given their support to the Australian War Widows ACT, some since its inception in 1965.

Other special guests were the great niece of Jessie Vasey, Jocelyn

Vasey-Flannery and her family, as well as Victoria Benz, DVA Deputy Commissioner for the ACT and NSW. The highlight of the morning was the Military Wives Choir taking us back to the war years where we knew all the words and were able to join in with a singalong.

The afternoon reception began with a one-on-one audience with our Patron, Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley, and Governor General His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) at Government House. Mrs Hurley ensured the spirits of the audience were uplifted by a singalong of tunes of the era we all remembered – and she did not forget “You are my Sunshine”.

We also welcomed representatives of organisations where their veteran members have passed on and their widows are in left in their care. Among these were the National Council of the Vietnam Veterans Associations, as well as state presidents who were unable to celebrate this day in their own state and are behind us for next year when we are planning for War Widows Day to “go national”.

– Australian War Widows ACT

New South Wales

This year, Australian War Widows NSW (AWW-NSW) partnered with Sydney Legacy to mark War Widows Day. This partnership is more than symbolic: it is a commitment to war widows and the families of veterans that our two organisations will stand together supporting our shared community. Together, AWW-NSW and Sydney Legacy support more than 4,500 widows in NSW.

A service was held in the afternoon at The Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney. The focus was on war widows past and present, with widows holding a floral tribute of their own: one by one, they stood at The Cenotaph to lay a branch of wattle, in remembrance of each other's, and indeed their own, sacrifices and in acknowledging their priceless contribution to our nation.

Prior to this service, NSW war widows were hosted by the Governor General and Mrs Hurley at Admiralty House for morning tea, which was followed by a lunch at the Fullerton Hotel. At the service, we had the privilege to hear from the great niece of Jessie Vasey, Ms

Pru Bennett, who shared the experiences of her great aunt and how and why she established the Australian War Widows organisation.

The service featured a War Widows Day address given by Afghanistan war widow Bree Till who spoke of the harsh reality of being left behind and raising a family following the passing of her husband, Brett Till. She spoke of her heartbreak when sitting with a friend on her first wedding anniversary after Brett had been killed.

In NSW, the day had traditionally been observed as Founders' Day and used to feature war widows walking through Hyde Park en masse to be seen and heard. To see it now turn into a formal day recognised by the NSW Government makes it a priority for the people of the state on that day. It is our honour to provide the platform for our widows to tell their stories in the most public way possible. To be seen and be heard.

– War Widows NSW Ltd



Queen Dunbar, State President of War Widows NSW Ltd, with Heather Gillam

WIDOWS' NEWS

Queensland

War Widows Day serves as a platform to raise awareness about the resources and support available to war widows and widowers. It also stands as a poignant reminder of the profound loss experienced by the families and friends of those who have served Australia. War widows have consistently played a crucial role in supporting their loved ones, both during and after their military service.

Although there was no official event this year, throughout the month of October branches across Queensland hosted their own unique celebratory events to honour this significant date in our organisation's history.

Iconic landmarks once again illuminated the night sky in blue and white, including City Hall, Story Bridge, Parliament House, Government House, and Sandgate Town Hall. Additionally, our Australian War Widows Queensland banner was proudly displayed on the Story Bridge.

Last year the Queensland Government pledged funding for an oral history project dedicated to Jessie Vasey. This year, the digital story was officially launched by the State Library of Queensland at the Anzac Square Post 1945 Galleries, with Governor Dr Jeanette Young and Mr Bart Mellish, Assistant Minister to the Premier for Veterans' Affairs, in attendance.

The digital story features two of Mrs Vasey's granddaughters and celebrates her remarkable contribution to supporting Queensland's war widows; it can be viewed on the Queensland State Library's website.

The Queensland State Guild, now known as Australian War Widows Queensland, owes its success to the founding members who rose to the challenge in the early years following the establishment of the Guild. Current war widows today enjoy security and benefits thanks to the efforts of Mrs Vasey and the women she inspired to work alongside her.

– Australian War Widows QLD



AWWQ State President Judy Smith with Governor Dr Jeanette Young and Chair of AWWQ Mr Stephen Scott

Western Australia

Australian War Widows WA celebrated its first ever War Widows Day on 19 October with a morning tea hosted by our Joint Patrons, Governor Christopher Dawson and Mrs Darrilyn Dawson.

Joining our widows were Paul Papaia, Minister for Police, Corrective Services, Defence Industry and Veterans Issues, Peter King, DVA Deputy Commissioner for WA and Mr Alan Vasey, grandson of our founder Mrs Jessie Vasey, and his wife Andrea.

Our widows were delighted to be at Government House and they are very honoured to have an official day where they can be acknowledged and remembered. War Widows Day should remind all Australians that the great lifestyle we enjoy is due largely to the ultimate sacrifice made by the loved ones of our

widows, widowers and their families in defence of our country.

Alan gave a very poignant recollection of his grandmother. He recalled her being a very busy but kind woman and, together with her husband Major General George Vasey, one who thought deeply about other people. In particular, how they could improve the lives of those who had lost their partner because of war.

Jessie Vasey's vision was to bring war widows together to speak with one voice on the improvement of their own circumstances and to help each other overcome the disadvantages they had suffered. There have been many tenacious women over the past 76 years, none more so than Jessie Vasey, who have shaped Australian War Widows into what it is today.

– Emily Cook, WA State President



L to R: Peter Williams (Virtual War Memorial), Jan Milham (AWW-SA Vice President), Governor Frances Adamson, Jan Grosvenor (War Widow), Geoff Brock (SA Minister for Veterans' Affairs), Diane Carr (AWWSA State President), Thao Coates (War Widow), Maria Barclay (War Widow) and Jill Davidson (War Widow)

South Australia

In a poignant and heart-warming display of gratitude and remembrance, the inaugural War Widows Day in South Australia was celebrated with an event at the historic Ayers House. It was a resounding success, bringing together nearly a hundred war widows for an afternoon of camaraderie and reflection.

With the accompaniment of a Scottish piper, the event exuded a profound sense of respect and unity. The gathering, organised in recognition of the sacrifices made by war widows and their families, was a testament to the enduring strength and resilience of those who have lost loved ones in service to their country. Amidst the backdrop of Ayers House's grandeur, attendees were treated to a delightful high tea, leaving with beautiful gift bags curated by Australian War Widows SA with donations from local business partners.

The day's significance was further elevated by the reception held at Government House, graciously

hosted by our patron, Governor Frances Adamson, who paid tribute to the war widows and acknowledged their sacrifices in the name of South Australia.

In attendance at the reception were other distinguished figures, including the Minister for Veterans Affairs Geoff Brock and former Premier Steven Marshall. Their presence symbolised the government's commitment to supporting and honouring those who have suffered loss due to war.

A particularly heartfelt gesture by the government was the illumination of South Australia's Parliament House in the colour of royal blue, which is a symbolic nod to war widows. It was a testament to the enduring strength and resilience of the war widows, as well as a gesture of gratitude from the government and the community.

As this day finds a place on South Australia's calendar, it promises to become an enduring tradition of respect for years to come.

– Australian War Widows Inc (SA)



Hazel Donald (AWW-WA Member), WA Deputy Commissioner Peter King and Clare Curtis (AWW-WA Member)

Make social connection your New Year's resolution

COMMISSIONER GWEN CHERNE

Veteran Family Advocate

 Gwen Cherne VFA  @gmcherne  Gwen Cherne  vfacommissioner_gwencherne



As the year draws to a close, the holiday season is a perfect time to enjoy some cherished moments with family and friends. It's a chance to recharge and celebrate with the people who matter most.

But as we celebrate with our loved ones, we must remember that for many the holiday season can also be a time of intensified feelings of loneliness and grief, especially for many veterans and veteran families. Our bonds with family, friends, colleagues and our broader community can enrich our lives. So, when these connections are lacking, their absence is keenly felt. The weight of grief can also be particularly heavy during this time.

Building and maintaining strong social connections is crucial for everyone. Yet, current research shows a decline in these connections. We have fewer close friends, and meaningful interactions have become rarer. Loneliness is now chronic in Australia.

Loneliness is more than social isolation. It is not just an absence of interactions, or our number of social ties. It is about the quality and quantity of our connections and how they meet our expectations. Loneliness is a feeling of distress that your



With war widow Maria on War Widows Day in Sydney

social needs aren't being met. Momentary loneliness is normal, like fleeting hunger. But chronic loneliness is like starvation.

Prolonged feelings of isolation, loneliness and grief can lead to deep emotional pain, a burden that veterans and families often carry. Without the right support, these issues can escalate

and become more costly, both emotionally and mentally.

As a society, we are getting better at recognising the importance of self-care practices. The next step is being more intentional about checking in on whether our social needs are being met. And for those who have experienced trauma or grief, it is about learning how to reconnect with the world.

The impact of these seemingly small changes can be substantial. But connection alone is no longer enough. Our families and veterans require profound and meaningful connections. As we delve further into this critical issue, it becomes evident that addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach.

So, what actions can we take to help alleviate the problem of loneliness? One step is to build stronger connections within communities, including the veteran support sector.

This year, we have seen numerous ex-service organisations come together to engage in discussions about potential models for a national peak body. Such a body would help build greater consistency of support across the sector, which could strengthen communities and close service delivery gaps. Actions that help veterans connect to communities would assist in combatting loneliness while also improving the delivery of vital services. I encourage our ESOs to continue to pursue this important work.

Recently, I visited Family by Family at The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) in South Australia. While there, I gained a deeper understanding of alternative family support models and explored potential ways DVA could engage with families.

At the core of TACSI's philosophy lies the fundamental belief that individuals are the foremost experts in their own lives. TACSI holds that the most effective innovations arise from collaborative efforts alongside individuals who directly confront the challenges we seek to overcome. There are also valuable lessons we can draw from TACSI's approach that could assist in addressing loneliness. Particularly its emphasis on the significance of lived experience in the process of identifying and implementing more holistic and effective outcomes for families.

Building on these insights, it's clear we need to ensure that veteran and family voices are integrated into government decision-making processes. Empowering families with the right tools and information is crucial for their wellbeing. This requires investing in quality programs, services and available supports across all regions.



With fellow attendees of the Legacy Centenary Dinner in Melbourne

It also means making sure families have the right information at the right time for where they are in their lives.

It is clear there is much more work ahead to address loneliness, along with the many other challenges facing our veteran families. There are still hurdles that prevent them from accessing the support they need and we must simplify and streamline pathways to care.

For many of us, our families are the cornerstone of our lives. They are some of our most important connections and greatest safeguard against falling into loneliness. Veterans, like all of us, lean on their families in tough times, and it's only fair that families have dedicated supports available to them.

But while systemic work continues to progress, it is also important to be mindful of what each of us can do as individuals for the people around us. This holiday period, please take a moment to reach out to your loved ones. Don't underestimate the difference emotional support can make to someone's life, especially for veterans and veteran families who may be navigating grief or loneliness.

It's a time to rekindle and savour the company of others and provide the emotional care and understanding that is especially needed during the holidays.

Before I close, I also want to acknowledge the many people who are out there working tirelessly for our community. I commend your efforts. You are creating a groundswell of recognition and change. Your work improves the lives of veteran families every single day. Please keep it up. You are making a difference!

Veteran Transition Strategy released

The Veteran Transition Strategy, the first of its kind, is a joint initiative between Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC) – agency partners in the Joint Transition Authority (JTA).

The strategy aims to align stakeholders with a shared vision for what it means for a veteran and their family to transition well.

The strategy has six priorities:

- Veterans and families plan and prepare early for their transition.
- Veterans and families are aware of and able to access support appropriate to their needs.
- Families are engaged through transition.
- Veterans and families have access to employment, education and skills opportunities.
- Financial wellbeing for veterans and families.

- Veterans and families feel supported and recognised.

The priorities outlined in the strategy were developed following extensive consultation with serving ADF members, veterans, families, ex-service organisations, Commonwealth and state and territory government agencies, academia and industry.

DVA, Defence and CSC are all critical partners in supporting the effective transition of ADF members and families to civilian life. Together, we are working to improve the transition experience through the sharing of data, addressing gaps in services, integrating existing services, and influencing new services as they are developed. To this end, a dedicated Transition Branch has been established to drive these efforts within DVA.

Building on the vision outlined in the strategy, initiatives have already been put in place to improve the services and supports available to veterans in transition:

- the skills recognition program, which translates military training to civilian qualifications. (This means ADF personnel are better recognised in the civilian workplace for the skills, training and experience they have gained in service.)
- improved, individualised support for personnel transitioning
- amendments to Defence Housing rules to allow members to occupy a rent allowance property before they leave the ADF to help them get established in the community they wish to live
- allowances for transitioning ADF members to attend civilian GP appointments to support the



handover of any medical care needs from Defence Health to the GP who will manage their health care after transition

- out-of-hours transition coaching to better support families, to be piloted later this year
- expansion of some transition services to be available throughout an ADF member's career.

The strategy and related action plans will evolve as needed, particularly in response to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The Veteran Transition Strategy is available on the Defence website.

Building connection and camaraderie across Australia

A message from Mates4Mates

Mates4Mates is one of Australia's leading veteran charities, actively changing lives for current and ex-serving ADF members, and their families, who are impacted by service.

Almost 10,000 veterans and family members have directly benefited from Mates4Mates services since it was first established by RSL Queensland in 2013.

At Mates4Mates, we know support looks different for everyone, which is why we are committed to providing many pathways to recovery for those impacted by service. This includes mental health and physical rehabilitation services, skills and wellbeing programs, and social connection activities.

In 2023, the Mates4Mates Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centre was opened in Stuart Park, Northern Territory with the help of a \$5 million grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs as part of the expansion of its Veterans' and Families' Hubs.

This centre in the Northern Territory joins other Mates4Mates centres located in North Queensland, South East Queensland and Tasmania.

Mates4Mates also provides services in outreach locations around Australia, and online, to support veterans and family members who are unable to attend face-to-face services as a result of distance, illness or injury.

Knowing the power of mateship and camaraderie, Mates4Mates holds regular social connection activities in each of our locations and online, helping to provide a safe space for veterans and family members.

These activities, like all Mates4Mates services, are free and include weekly BBQs, coffee catch ups, hikes and walks, creative art workshops, and unique experiences, all dedicated to supporting veterans, partners and families who may be feeling socially disconnected.

Recently, our Tasmanian 'Mates' went on the ride of a lifetime with an adventurous day of dog sledding at Lonnavele. For the attending veterans and family members, this experience provided a great opportunity to get outside, broaden social circles, and try something new – and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Social connection activities like this one help to build a supportive community for Defence personnel

and their families. The community of Mates across Australia and online encourage one another to get involved, offer peer-support and help develop a sense of camaraderie that many are searching for.

If you're a veteran or family member and want to find out more about how Mates4Mates can support your mental, physical or social health, reach out to us on 1300 4 MATES (62 837) for a confidential chat or visit our website: mates4mates.org.



Mates4Mates dog sledding at Lonnavele, Tasmania



SEEKING PARTICIPANTS

for a research project that focuses on better understanding how veterans disclose mental health and other medical conditions in the workplace.

This research aims to improve the disclosure process and outcomes for veterans, their employers, and co-workers.

Are you a veteran or employer/co-worker of veterans?

Please consider volunteering in a survey or interview about your experiences.



Please scan this code to access the short survey.

If you are also interested in participating in an **interview**, or would like more information, please contact the researchers at: **vetdisclosure@uq.edu.au**

<https://bit.ly/veterandisclosureproject?r=q>

Ethical clearance for this study has been obtained from the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee (489-23) and The University of Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (2023/1400127).

TRANSITION

Winners of the Prime Minister's National Veterans' Employment Awards

The winners of the 2023 Prime Minister's National Veterans' Employment Awards were announced by the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Matt Keogh, on 13 September at an event in Canberra.

VETERAN ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Nathan Bligh, Informattech



After he transitioned from the Royal Australian Navy, Nathan worked on a number of key projects for government agencies before finding himself back in Defence, working on the largest IT projects and programs in the Southern hemisphere. Nathan then made the decision to start his own ICT consultancy business, Informattech.

The Navy instilled in Nathan the values of honesty and integrity – and he learned how to meticulously plan, lead and inspire – skills that he later employed to build the success of Informattech, which has grown to 210 staff across five states.

VETERAN EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Aaron Cornwall, Australian Catholic University



Aaron joined the Australian Army at the age of 19. In 2012, he transitioned from the ADF and decided to study at the Australian Catholic University where he later began working as the Student Veteran Services Manager.

His work has eliminated barriers for veterans by introducing a student veteran support network and increasing the number of members from 22 to 251. The program brings veterans from multiple disciplines of study together from university entry through to graduation, offering comprehensive support. Aaron also created the *Soldier Five to Study: Tips for Soldiers from Soldiers* handbook to assist veterans transitioning into higher education.

PARTNER ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Angie Weeks, PTSD Dogs Australia



Angie and her co-founder Roger Weeks established PTSD Dogs Australia as a non-profit organisation that trains and provides service dogs for veterans and first responders suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Over the years, Angie has trained and placed 26 service dogs with veterans and first responders suffering from PTSD.

Angie and Roger have seen firsthand the transformative effects that the dogs have had on their clients, reducing anxiety and depression and improving their overall quality of life. They have also witnessed the positive impact that the dogs have had on their families, helping them to reconnect and improve their relationships.

PARTNER EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Julie Hall, Commonwealth Bank of Australia



Julie Hall is a resilient, energetic, self-driven and customer-centric Business Banker at the Commonwealth Bank. Julie is well-known for her combination of leadership, communication and interpersonal skills.

Using experiences gained from more than 15 years of working as a business owner and manager across the hospitality, banking and finance industries, Julie established a new role for herself as the Creator of CommBank for Veterans, a newly formed industry segment assisting veterans to set up their own business. Julie is dedicated to aiding veterans in their business transactions and also volunteers her time to share financial literacy advice to the broader veteran community.

TRANSITION

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR – LARGE

Saab Australia



Saab Australia specialises in the development, integration, production and support of advanced operational systems. Saab has 113 veterans in its Australian workforce of 762 employees and has maintained the proportion of veterans at about 15% of its workforce for the past seven years.

Saab Australia has always benefited from a high proportion of veteran employees, but the organisation started actively

engaging with the broader veteran community by running a series of informal veteran employment activities in 2017. Initially driven by a Veteran Employment Advocate, this initiative was formalised into a Veteran and Defence Partner Employment Program, supported by a Charter and a Veteran Advisory Committee.

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR – SMALL

Zilor Group



OUTSTANDING EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR

Zilor Group specialises in management consulting, strategy transformation, and IT service delivery. It is an Australian, veteran-owned business that is committed to supporting veterans, serving members and their partners who are seeking employment opportunities or considering a career change. The company employs 10 full-time employees, nine of whom are veterans.

Leveraging their personal ADF service experiences, both domestic and operational in the Middle East, the leaders of Zilor Group understand and recognise the sacrifices made by veterans, serving members and their families, and the challenges they may face in finding work that matches their unique skills and experience.

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR – MEDIUM

AMS Group



AMS Group is an Australian-owned company providing safe, secure, mission-critical solutions and services to government and industry, such as designing, installing and maintaining 700 maritime navigation aids throughout Australia and the region.

The company offers a dedicated veterans portal including news and events, a military skills translation resource and a veterans' network to allow veterans

to connect and provide peer support. The executive team fosters the company culture through careful staff selection. Ex-military personnel are very well aligned with their company's core values: innovation, accountability, excellence and respect. It is for these attributes AMS Group actively seeks out former ADF personnel.

EXCELLENCE IN SUPPORTING VETERAN AND/OR PARTNER EMPLOYMENT

RSL Queensland



Since RSL Queensland launched its employment program in early 2018, more than 1,000 veterans and current and ex-defence partners have secured employment through the program. More than 250 veterans and partners secured jobs in 2022, with 83% of clients in the same or a better job six months after placement.

RSL Queensland has established an evolved service channel which is aimed at rapidly identifying and supporting clients with complex or multiple return to work barriers and now has a database of more than 1,200 employers that offer opportunities to veterans and their partners for meaningful employment.

For the full list of winners and finalists, visit veteranemployment.gov.au/awards.

A conversation with Kahlil Fegan

Australia's new Repatriation Commissioner

Continued from page 1

'I have very fond memories of all us military kids playing together in the clubs and messes – it was almost like a big family, it was extremely comforting,' he recalls. 'So when I joined the Army, initially as a soldier, I just felt at home. I love that sense of camaraderie, mateship, adventure, being in the bush – everything about it.'

After three years, Kahlil was accepted into the Royal Military College Duntroon, where as a young officer cadet he immediately became conscious of the responsibility of leadership.

'I had the good fortune of spending four years as a platoon commander,' he says. 'I was given strong support and mentorship, in particular by some senior NCOs [non-commissioned officers], who were exceptionally impactful throughout

my career and enabled me to step up into leadership positions. One of them was Don Spinks – my predecessor in this role.'

Kahlil calls his initial operational deployment to East Timor 'an awakening' – not just for himself, but for the ADF – as it had been a long time since Australian troops had been sent into a conflict zone.

'There was sudden realisation that this was not like the movies,' he explains. 'The impact was very close and very personal. While most of us found helping the East Timorese people very fulfilling, some were detrimentally impacted.

'And that was the other realisation – that conflict has an impact – not only on those who deploy, but also on their families. I experienced that first hand when I met my first-born child, who'd come into the world mid-way through my deployment.'



As a Lieutenant-Colonel in Afghanistan (Image: Defence)



With Major Asmawi during of the Royal Brunei Land Forces at Exercise Mallee Bull 2022



But his next mission was about to get a lot more "kinetic". In 2004, Kahlil was called upon to lead a company of 100 service personnel in Baghdad's 'red zone' protecting Australian consular officials during a ferocious insurgency by Islamic militants in Iraq: 'The responsibility for keeping both our diplomats and my men alive rested heavily on my shoulders.'

Promoted to battalion commander, Kahlil led a battle group in Afghanistan, where he learned about the importance of relationships with all people, particularly those from other cultures, and about the immense value of the families being affected by the service of his troops.

In 2012, Kahlil received the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for his command and leadership in warlike operations in Afghanistan. 'I wear it, in my mind, on behalf of the taskforce – I don't see it as *my* DSC,' he says. 'That tour was confronting and particularly dangerous, and I see myself as the custodian of our award. The thing that I'm most proud about is that we were the first taskforce to bring all our soldiers home.'

When asked about his thoughts on the ongoing Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, he reflects on the members of that taskforce since lost to suicide: 'It doesn't end when the operation ends – it's felt for many years afterwards – and it is something we still live with today.'

So when, as Commander of the 3rd Combat Brigade in Townsville, he was called up to testify before the Royal Commission in June last year, Kahlil was grateful for the opportunity to learn, to adjust policies and procedures, and better support his people.

'As the commander of 3,000 personnel in Australia's biggest garrison town, this experience really forced me to critique how I had been doing business, how I had applied policy,' he says. 'I'm a huge fan of the Royal Commission, and I have

great admiration for the three Commissioners. Having lost soldiers to suicide, I feel an immense responsibility for assisting to implement the Royal Commission's recommendations in a meaningful manner.'

Now as a member of the Repatriation Commission, Kahlil's official function is to provide oversight in administering the legislation that provides benefits and support to Australia's defence and veteran community. 'The rules are applied by well qualified DVA officials, but we sit on top of that to make sure that the relevant Acts are applied appropriately to protect and enable veterans,' he explains.

But it is the prospect of engaging with veterans that brings a gleam to Kahlil's eyes: 'We engage as deeply and as extensively as we can with individual veterans, ESOs and other stakeholders to gather information and feed that back into DVA, to advocate, inform policy, influence government and assist ministers to make the right decisions.

'The vast majority of veterans make a successful transition and go on to make a wonderful contribution to our society with unique skills and attributes. I have direct experience with young, contemporary veterans and I've just been through transition myself. I've seen how good the process can be, but I've also seen firsthand where the challenges are – and the challenges were emotional for me.

'I'm most concerned about that very small component of the veteran community who are deeply detrimentally impacted by their service, who may not want or resist support from anybody, who have adversarial relationships with departments or ESOs. And that is the element of the community I will try to influence positively in some manner.'

Kahlil's statutory appointment as Repatriation Commissioner is independent of DVA. You can read his official profile on the DVA website.

Veteran music group keeps on jiving

For the past eight years, 15 or so Canberra-based veterans have met every week to play all kinds of music – jazz, country, whatever takes their fancy. Some of them hadn't played an instrument before and many of them now attend religiously.

Navy veteran Col Greef is a member of the Canberra Veterans Guitar Group (formerly the Canberra Soldier On Music Group).

'For some of the veterans, it's a Godsend,' he says. 'Some of them have PTSD, others anger issues. One tells us that he has absolutely nothing else in his life. So meeting once a week like this is a real outlet for them.'

DVA recently provided the group with a \$2,000 Health and Wellbeing grant (see below) that has helped them get useful equipment like amps and microphones.

Vetaffairs went along to one of the group's sessions and had a chat with a few members.

Peter Carter served in the Navy for five years, then as an airport firefighter for 33 years. He's relatively new to the group but had been playing the guitar for quite a while beforehand:

'I heard about it on Facebook and got in touch with Col,' he says. 'Everyone treats each other really well. It's like being back in the armed forces where everyone's a mate and helps each other out. And there's no pressure. You can take the lead, or take it easy and just strum along.'

The camaraderie is what appeals to Steve Laughlin. He served with the RAAF as an airframe fitter for nine years, some of that time in Vietnam. When he transitioned out of the military, he worked for the Department of Defence.

'I played band for years from when I started as an apprentice,' he says. 'When I retired I wanted to do something more. Then this came along. Some of the characters I knew from other social activities. I've been enjoying it ever since. It's a bit of a debrief in some ways. You can come here and feel totally relaxed, because of the common backgrounds.'

Another Vietnam veteran in the group is Bill Kitto, who was a National Serviceman. He finds being part of the group helpful from a mental health perspective. 'I'm still dealing with [Vietnam] but the music's great.'

It's not only military veterans who are members. Hilary Fletcher served with the Australian Federal Police for 32 years, most of that time as a forensic examiner. She joined the group two years ago.



From left: Bill Kitto, Gavin French, George Przybylak, Geoff Earley, Hilary Fletcher, Steve Laughlin, Col Greef

'When you've had trauma in your work, there's no one you can really talk to about it,' she says. 'But these guys just get it. You don't have to tell them much. It's a supportive, friendly, safe environment. And the guys are really lovely people. It's really about the music and the friendships. I look forward to it.'

'I had a year's guitar lessons first and my playing's got better. I do a bit of singing and everyone's very forgiving. There's no judgement.'

Col says they're always looking for new members, so any Defence or emergency services veteran in the Canberra / Queanbeyan area is welcome to get in touch. You don't need to know how to play as Col and other members are happy to teach you.

You don't even need an instrument as Col's got plenty to spare. And if you're a veteran and you

think your child would like a guitar, Col can help you out with that too.

Over the last few years, he's given away around 400 donated guitars to veterans, disadvantaged kids and the homeless. He often visits areas affected by natural disasters in regional NSW and hands out the instruments to those who might benefit.

'I started doing it several years ago when I gave a veteran a spare guitar I had,' Col says. 'Just the look on his face made me want to carry on. Sometimes I go to schools in rough areas where the music teachers don't have enough instruments and help them out. I also give guitars to the kids themselves, and again the look on their faces is just brilliant. I love it.'

- Ex-service organisations can apply for \$2,000 grants as mentioned above by getting in touch with a DVA Community Support Adviser. See the Community Support Team page on the DVA website (dva.gov.au) and search for 'community support' for more information.
- If you are a Defence or emergency services veteran and you want to get involved with the Canberra Veterans Guitar Group, get in touch with Col on 0455 143 581 or cagreef@gmail.com. He is also happy to give advice

to anyone in Australia keen to set up a similar group.

- If you live in the Nowra/Kiama area in NSW, you might want to join the Veteran Guitar Group there. Contact Craig McCorkell on 0408 711 966 and look for it on Facebook.
- Penrith RSL runs guitar groups in the Sydney suburbs of Penrith, St Marys, Castle Hill and Windsor/Richmond. It also runs a pipes and drums (marching band) group. You can find out more by emailing the RSL sub branch on subbranch@penrithrslsubbranch.org.au.

BOOKSHELF

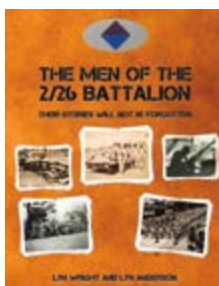
The following books, often self-published, have been written by, for and with veterans. The books and their descriptions are submitted by readers. DVA takes no responsibility for the accuracy of their content or the opinions expressed in them.

The Men of the 2/26 Battalion: Their stories will not be forgotten

By Lyn Wright and Lyn Anderson

In 1942, the men of 2/26 Battalion were captured by the Japanese in Singapore after valiantly fighting down the Malay Peninsula to Singapore. The men spent 3 ½ years as POWs of the Japanese before the survivors were released and returned to Australia. They were told never to tell anyone about their time as POWs as no one would believe them. The men kept their silence. As the men reached their 80s, they started to share some of their stories at reunions. Two of their daughters listening to these tales decided to capture them in a book before they were lost.

- **Pages:** 971
- **Cost:** \$90 plus postage
- **To buy:** roadley@optusnet.com.au



Sisters in Captivity

By Colin Burgess

Sub-titled *Sister Betty Jeffrey OAM and the Courageous Story of Australian Army Nurses in Sumatra, 1942-1945*, the book tells the inspiring true life story of Sister Jeffrey, who kept a secret diary during her three-year captivity by the Japanese, later published as *White Coolies*. Along with her Australian Army Nursing Service colleagues, she endured the Japanese invasion of Singapore and the tragic sinking of the *Vyner Brooke*, narrowly escaping the massacre of 21 Australian nurses on Bangka Island. Held in filthy, pestilential jungle camps, and deprived of sustainable food and medicines, most survived by forming a strong bond of sisterhood to see them through until liberation.

- **Pages:** 331
- **Cost:** \$34.99
- **To buy:** Simon & Schuster (Sydney)

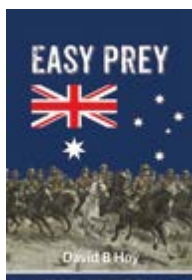


Easy Prey: Volume 1 - An Imperial Challenge

By David B Hoy

Easy Prey is a systematic and thorough evaluation of Australia's capability in defending itself as an independent nation from the perspective of the history of its military intelligence. *Easy Prey* explores the successes and, more notably, the shortcomings and all-too-frequent stumbling in Australia. It ranges across a panoply of involved parties: the military; the politicians; the early days of the colonies, then later, the states and the Commonwealth; the early settlers; the geographic imperatives; the 'Mother Country'; a horde of others, especially the Russians, French and Japanese.

- **Pages:** 252
- **Cost:** \$32.50 plus postage
- **To buy:** Boolarong Press, Dymocks, Booktopia, The Booktree, Rhonda's Refits

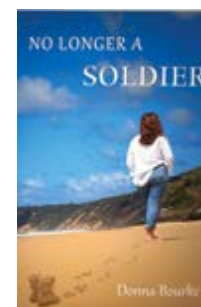


No Longer a Soldier

By Donna Bourke

Donna Bourke's story *No Longer a Soldier* is the long-awaited sequel to her memoir, *Hidden Courage - My Life as a Female Australian Soldier*. Donna's post service story continues from the day of her medical discharge from the Army after a career spanning over three decades. Despite the reality and challenges of managing post-traumatic stress, debilitating physical injuries and facing the darkness of suicidal ideations, this story is one of courage. But this time, it isn't all about Donna. Five current and ex-serving veterans have added their voices with powerful stories that will surprise and educate the reader on a life of service.

- **Pages:** 240+
- **Cost:** \$28.95
- **To buy:** inhousepublishing.com.au



Running Deep - An Australian Submarine Life

By Commodore Peter Scott CSC RAN (Retired)

'Service with our Navy's main strike weapon is a mystery for most Australians. If we are to comprehend the terms of our survival, we must know. This beautifully written memoir is our key.' - The Honourable Kim Beazley, AC. In this honest and enlightening tale, Peter Scott shares his quest for self-acceptance, and for the courage, commitment and compassion to lead the warriors of Australia's Silent Service.

- **Pages:** 288
- **Cost:** \$34.99
- **To Buy:** Fremantle Press, Amazon, Booktopia, and all good bookstores in hardcopy, e-book and audio-book formats

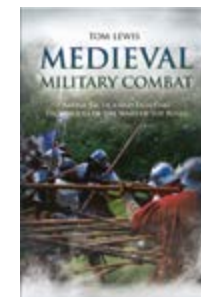


Medieval Military Combat

By Dr Tom Lewis

Medieval Military Combat - Battle Tactics and Fighting Techniques of the Wars of the Roses is an expose of how medieval warriors actually fought as opposed to the myths of movies. The Honourable Austin Asche AC QC, a Second World War veteran, writes: 'The author's careful research convinces us that, particularly in the medieval period, descriptions of battles and the amount of men fighting in them are often exaggerated. The author gives rational and persuasive arguments why the number of men involved and the numbers of the dead and wounded were grossly inflated; as was the significance of any particular battle.'

- **Pages:** 256
- **Cost:** \$45.00 including postage
- **To buy:** Email the author tom.lewis2619@gmail.com

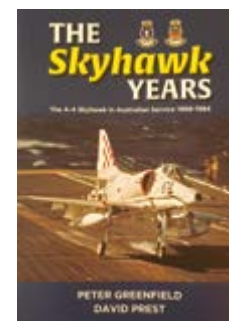


The Skyhawk Years - The A-4 Skyhawk in Australian Service 1968-1984

By Peter Greenfield and David Prest

The Skyhawk Years is a story of busy and varied deployments around Australia, Southeast Asia and regularly to the multinational RIMPAC exercises in Hawaii. A particular highlight was a long cruise to the UK in 1977 and participation in the Spithead Naval Review, part of the celebrations for Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee. The challenges of operations from the world's smallest aircraft carrier are well explained with first-hand stories from pilots and maintainers. Some thrilling stories of air combat manoeuvres against fighters from other countries are also told, with the A-4 often surprising more well-credentialed adversaries.

- **Pages:** 216
- **Publisher:** Avonmore Books
- **Cost:** \$49.95
- **To buy:** avonmorebooks.com.au



Jellybeans in the Jungle

By Bob Whittaker

Jellybeans in the Jungle is one man's attempt to make sense of his experience as a conscripted soldier during Australia's war in Vietnam. Bob Whittaker was called up for National Service when he was a primary school teacher and deployed to Vietnam in 1970. Bob describes his service, punctuated by some grim encounters with both enemy and friendly troops, his R & R in Bangkok, his return to Australia and rehabilitation as a teacher of children with disabilities. Bob returned to Vietnam in 2006 and 2007, and his reflections during these journeys provide a fascinating insight into conflict and reconciliation.

- **Pages:** 173
- **Cost:** Hard copy - \$32.00 incl. postage (within Australia); e-book - \$7.50
- **To Buy:** jellybeansinthejungle.blogspot.com



BOOKSHELF

The Lost Boys

By Paul Byrnes

In the First World War, thousands of boys across Australia and New Zealand lied about their age, forged a parent's signature and left to fight on the other side of the world. *The Lost Boys – The untold stories of the under-age soldiers who fought in the First World War* captures the incredible and previously untold stories of forty Anzac boys from Gallipoli to the Armistice. Featuring haunting images of the boys taken at training camps and behind the lines, these tales are both heartbreaking and rousing, full of daring, ingenuity, recklessness, random horror and capricious luck.

- **Pages:** 368
- **Cost:** \$20.00 – \$30.00
- **To buy:** Booktopia, Big W and other book sellers

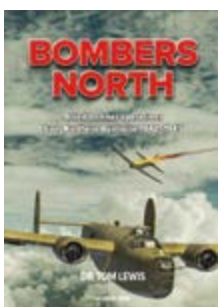


Bombers North – Allied bomber operations from Northern Australia 1942–1945

By Dr Tom Lewis

In early March 1942, amid fears of a Japanese invasion of Australia, two understrength RAAF squadrons of Lockheed Hudsons began a brave fight back against the enemy from the Darwin area. These modest initial efforts were the beginnings of an unwavering campaign by Allied bombers waged from Northern Australia until the end of the war. Drawing on a wealth of new sources, *Bombers North* presents the full story of a little-known bomber offensive waged from remote northern Australia.

- **Pages:** 156
- **Cost:** \$39.95
- **To buy:** avonmorebooks.com.au

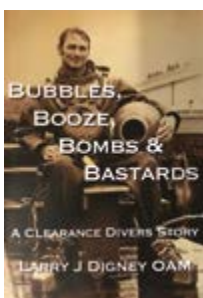


Bubbles, Booze, Bombs and Bastards – a clearance diver's story

By Larry J Digney OAM

This highly illustrated and detailed book covers the exciting life of a Warrant Officer Clearance Diver, Larry J Digney OAM, from his enlistment, through to his war service in Vietnam, service in HMA Ships *Stalwart*, *Parramatta* and *Supply*, Clearance Diving Teams, multiple deployments, salvage of HMAS *Arrow* following Cyclone Tracy, recovery of the downed Sea King helicopter, Personnel Exchange Programme in the US Navy, discovery of WW2 depth charges at the entrance to Pearl Harbour, experimental diving to 300 metres, and much more.

- **Pages:** 322
- **Cost:** \$65.00 plus postage
- **To buy:** Contact Larry Digney at digger.tassie@gmail.com



The Power of Love

By Bob Sten

The Power of Love is set in South Vietnam in early 1968 and begins when a combat engineer (tunnel rat) is sent to a manor house in a rubber plantation to search for hidden mines and booby traps. Based on real events, the first volume of *The Conscript Diaries* begins a unique yet universal saga about the savagery of war, the failings and nobility of the human condition and, ultimately, the power of love.

- **Pages:** 400
- **Cost:** \$29.50 (soft cover), \$35.00 (hard cover)
- **To buy:** bobsten.com



Now And Forever – never walk alone in the dark

By Michael John Barnes

Now And Forever is a graphic novel containing a collection of short stories that uniquely deals with tragedy and the inevitable grief that follows. Each story has a problem and a solution. Although the novel has dark undertones, it has a bright overtone and a common theme: to keep moving forward. I also talk of how tragedy has changed me, and about how I try to manage it. I asked my longtime friend, former Regimental Sergeant Major of the Special Air Service Regiment Wayne Weeks to contribute a similar piece on how he deals with tragedy and grief, having experienced it at levels beyond most.

- **Pages:** 50
- **Cost:** \$30.00 plus \$9.00 postage
- **To buy:** Email michael@michaeljohnbarnes.com.au

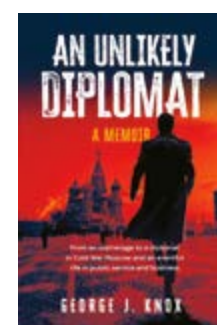


An Unlikely Diplomat – A Memoir

By George J. Knox

An Unlikely Diplomat – A memoir from an orphanage to a diplomat in Cold War Moscow and an eventful life in public service and business is a true-life story told by a man who believes that, despite his start in life, he succeeded in reaching the almost impossible goals he set for himself at Joint Staff HQ – Office of the Air Attaché, Washington DC; with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade at missions in Moscow, Santiago de Chile and Chicago; through PTSD, and in various businesses, before returning to the public service.

- **Pages:** 359
- **Cost:** \$29.95
- **To buy:** Booktopia, Angus & Robertson, Amazon and other book sellers

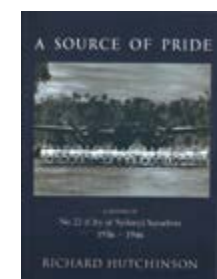


A Source of Pride – a History of No 22 (City of Sydney) Squadron 1936 – 1946

By Richard Hutchinson

The squadron was formed in 1936 after the Australian Parliament took the advice of the father of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, who was concerned about the war clouds gathering in Europe. No 22 Squadron's first assignments of the Second World War were as a training unit covering army support and towing targets for anti-aircraft practice. It served in New Guinea and the South Pacific, and attained the RAAF's only Victoria Cross in the South Pacific – for Flight Lieutenant W. E. Newton VC.

- **Pages:** 460
- **Cost:** \$55 plus \$15 postage
- **To buy:** alanlyons@optusnet.com.au



Fading Memories of an Old Soldier

By Elvis Bray

Elvis Bray's memoir about his two years in Vietnam as a US Army helicopter crew chief includes a story called 'Australians in the Mine Field'. Elvis was flying medical evacuation (dustoff) out of Vung Tau and assisted the Australians evacuate the wounded while their helicopter was being overhauled. It was one of the best times Elvis had while working with the Australians. He said they were as good as any US soldiers he worked with.

- **Pages:** 139
- **Cost:** \$17.00
- **To buy:** Amazon



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

COMMEMORATIONS

Commemorating Remembrance Day

On 11 November, we remember and honour Australian men and women who have served and died for our nation, as well as recognise the sacrifices made by their families. The Armistice, which signalled the end of fighting with Germany in the First World War, was signed on this date.

The annual Remembrance Day commemorative package has been sent to ex-service organisations, schools and community groups across Australia.

More than 17,500 copies of the commemorative package, which includes a variety of printed resources paying tribute to veterans, are distributed each year. This will increase awareness and understanding of Australia's wartime history, ensuring that the significance of Remembrance Day is carried forward to the next generation.

The package includes two Remembrance Day posters, a poster honouring National Service, the 2024 edition of DVA's annual wall calendar, and the 13th book in the Century of Service series, *Chivalry: Stories of the Royal Australian Air Force*. This volume tells the stories of Australian men and women who have served

with the RAAF in wars and conflicts since the First World War. The books are a joint project between DVA and the Australian War Memorial.

The resources included in the commemorative package are available in digital format on Anzac Portal. If you would like your own printed copies, please email education@dva.gov.au.



Tickets now available for Anzac Day services in France and Türkiye

Australians planning to honour the fallen at the 2024 Anzac Day Dawn Services in Türkiye or France can now register for their free attendance passes at commemorations.teg.com.au. Registration is essential.

The Anzac Day Dawn Service in France will take place at the Australian National Memorial near Villers-Bretonneaux, followed by a service at the Digger Memorial, just outside the town of Bullecourt.

The Dawn Service in Türkiye will be held at the Anzac Commemorative Site Gallipoli, followed by a mid-morning Australian Memorial service at Lone Pine.

Sandakan Memorial Park Pavilion upgrade



The Interpretive Pavilion at the Sandakan Memorial Park in Sabah, Malaysia, is temporarily closed for a major upgrade and is expected to reopen in April 2024. Visitors still have access to the park itself, the memorial obelisk and the guided app tour of the park during this time.

Sandakan Memorial Park was built on the grounds of the former Sandakan Prisoner of War camp and commemorates all Australian and British prisoners of war (POWs) who suffered or died at the camp and on the Sandakan death marches during the Second World War, as well as the locals who risked their lives to help them.

Inaugurated in 1999, the original Sandakan Memorial Pavilion was built predominantly of hardwood timber and requires replacing to ensure it is safe and can withstand the harsh

tropical climate. The Australian Government announced a funding commitment of \$5.1 million to upgrade the pavilion in the 2022-23 Federal Budget.

As part of this upgrade, the interpretive content within the pavilion will also be refreshed to transform a traditional panel exhibit to one with more imagery and use of other media. The refreshed exhibit will better convey the experience of the Australian and British POWs and the locals who helped them while they were interred – and who helped the six survivors of the death marches to escape.

For more information on Sandakan Memorial Park, visit the DVA website and stay tuned for news on the unveiling of the upgraded pavilion.

Gold award for Hellfire Pass Interpretive Centre

The Hellfire Pass Interpretive Centre, which is proudly managed by DVA, is among four winners to receive a Gold Standard Award in the 2023 Thailand Tourism Awards in the Historical and Culture category.

Located in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, the centre and its memorial site, including the Memorial Walking Trail, are dedicated to those who suffered and died during the construction of the Burma-Thai railway during the Second World War. More than 60,000 Allied prisoners worked on the railway with an estimated 12,500 losing their lives, including 2,800 Australians.

The centre and its surrounds offer a place for solemn commemoration and reflection for veterans, their families and the broader community.

The Thailand Tourism Awards are considered to be the most prestigious award given to the popular holiday destination's travel industry.

The awards were announced in Bangkok on 27 September, World Tourism Day, in a ceremony presided by Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya Sirivadhana Barnavadi of Thailand. The Hellfire Pass Interpretive Centre was selected for the award under criteria such as product and services quality, community engagement, and public safety.

You can find out more about the centre, the site and its story on the DVA website.



Operations Manager Juthaporn Pansomboon (Nan) received the award on behalf of the centre.



Making commemorative services work

Paul Richardson guides a group of veterans through the Runnymede Air Forces Memorial near Windsor, England.

An important part of DVA's role is to acknowledge and commemorate all those who have served Australia and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations.

Commemorative events raise community awareness and understanding of the service and sacrifice of our military personnel and families, and promote improved veteran wellbeing outcomes through recognition and respect.

Paul Richardson CSC OAM is the Director of Commemorative Events at DVA.

'For a veteran, it's about remembering those you tragically lost, those you served with, engaging with the families, and an opportunity to reflect on what you did as an individual, a unit and most importantly with your mates,' Paul says. 'It goes towards making veterans feel proud about their service. And it's an education process – making the younger generation aware of what these veterans did for us.'

A veteran himself, Paul heads up three small teams in the department's Commemorations Branch that are responsible for organising the annual Anzac Day services in Gallipoli, Türkiye, and Villers-Bretonneux, France, as well as significant domestic commemorations in Australia as directed by the Government.

He says the two major challenges in delivering appropriate commemorations are the logistics and getting the narrative right. Paul takes as an example the National Commemorative Service marking the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, which took place on 18 August in Canberra. (See *Vetaffairs*, August 2023).

'The key for us to get that right was to listen to those who served in

Vietnam,' Paul says. 'The hard part was telling their story appropriately and accurately – not just the Army but the Navy and Air Force as well as National Servicemen, civilians, nurses, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and families.'

'Families are that critical link. They were stuck at home, not knowing what's going on. The Vietnam War became unpopular. Families were critical in helping them deal with what they had been through, and the families themselves can be affected by that.'

That's why the DVA team ensured that both veterans and families were directly involved in the National Commemorative Service. In particular the descendants, widows and other relatives of some of the 523 personnel killed.

Paul's teams start planning for events like Anzac Day about six months out from 25 April. But for the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, planning began in 2021.

'Apart from developing the commemorative medallion and certificate, the main reason was engagement,' Paul says. 'We met with a Vietnam Consultative Committee every couple of months, where we asked their views on every aspect of the service. Talking to Vietnam veterans was important to ensure that we understood how they felt our preparations would be viewed by Vietnam veterans.'

Paul's team also worked very closely with the ABC on the live broadcast and to produce three episodes of *Our Vietnam War*, telling the broad story of Australians' experience of the war.

A big focus of the commemorative program was ensuring that the service and sacrifice of all Vietnam veterans was acknowledged,

regardless of their role or the duration of their tour.

'Even though it was a memorial service, we wanted to thank those veterans for their service and their contribution to society,' Paul says. 'And draw that link between the current Australian Defence Force and themselves. We introduced a general salute for the veterans, which I believe was well overdue and well received. We also went to great lengths to make sure all the associations were represented, where possible. Everyone one of them laid wreaths as that was considered to be essential by the veterans.'

'The biggest lesson we learned was to listen. To find out what veterans wanted and expected. Being a veteran myself makes that easier because I still speak military-speak. There are some other veterans in the team too and that helps.'

'Organising it was demanding but extremely rewarding for all of our team,' he says. 'I think it went a long way to making those veterans who felt their service had never been appropriately acknowledged, feel that it now has been.'

'I can confidently speak on behalf of my team when I say that it was an absolute privilege to deliver these

commemorations that honoured the service and sacrifice of all those who served during the Vietnam War, including those who tragically did not return.'

Though just a handful of DVA staff planned the event, around 40 staff from elsewhere in the department turned up on the day to ensure things went smoothly.

Paul's team also relies on other staff to provide support for the major commemorative events on Anzac Day in France and Türkiye, which DVA co-organises with the host nations and New Zealand.

Paul is hoping to get the Anzac Day host nations more involved in the future.

'What we deliver is based on very traditional customs and protocols but we have to add contemporary elements to it,' he says. 'It would be great for instance if a Turkish teenager could take part in the pre-service activities at Gallipoli, giving their great-great-grandfather's perspective of the campaign. Getting Australian and New Zealander kids involved would be great too, just to pass on that understanding.'

To read the full version of this article, see *Vetaffairs* online.



The Vietnam War 50th anniversary National Commemorative Service

COMMEMORATIONS



A lasting tribute to HMAS Magnetic

A message from the Maritime Museum of Townsville

Anzac Park in Townsville is a place of reflection and remembrance to those who served their country. Yet most people don't realise that during the Second World War, the southern end of the park was the site of a large Navy Base – HMAS *Magnetic* – an establishment of 500 personnel and 50 buildings.

The Maritime Museum of Townsville believes that this little-known contribution to the dark days of the war in the Pacific should be remembered. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs awarded a grant under the Saluting Their Service grants program to the museum to erect a plaque in the park at the approximate location of HMAS *Magnetic*.

The plaque was unveiled on 10 October by Townsville's Mayor, Jenny Hill, and the federal Member for Herbert, Phillip Thompson. Navy Commander Chris Kerr began the speeches with an outline of the critical strategic situation that faced Australia in the early 1940s. This threat from the enemy led to the creation of HMAS *Magnetic*.

Mayor Hill directed her remarks to the work of the Women's Royal Australian Navy Service (WRANS) in intercepting signals from enemy shipping and translating the messages into a form of phonetic Japanese. She had the crowd amused when recounting the practice of some WRANS, who hid their civilian party clothes in bushes just outside the base, allowing them to



Above: Mayor Jenny Hill and Phillip Thompson MP unveiling the plaque.

Left: When not on duty, WRANS were able to relax in their own mess. (AWM 017463)

enjoy the nightlife of Townsville undetected.

HMAS *Magnetic* played a significant role in defending Australia. Its activities covered communications, Port Examination Services, transit and repairs for Allied warships and the defence of the Port of Townsville.

HMAS *Magnetic* was commissioned in September 1942 and the main base was located on The Strand. There were administrative and warehouse buildings, workshops, quarters and a supply jetty along Ross Creek with refuelling facilities.

But the role of HMAS *Magnetic* extended beyond the base as all naval activities in Townsville were under the command of the Naval Officer-In-Charge. There were actually two HMAS *Magnetics* – the base and a ship which undertook inspection and escort activities.

The Port of Townsville was a busy place during 1942 and 1943. It

handled over one million tons of war materials, including 5,500 vehicles and 70,000 tons of oil and petroleum products.

By late 1942 there was a significant presence of women service personnel attached to HMAS *Magnetic*. Section 'Y' Wireless Signal Station was a secret facility where WRAN telegraphists intercepted and recorded messages transmitted by enemy ships. Those who worked at the main base were accommodated in a purpose-built WRANNERY from which the WRANS would march each day to the base.

The Maritime Museum of Townsville intends to have a permanent exhibition about HMAS *Magnetic* at the museum in addition to the plaque in Anzac Park. (For the full version of this story, see *Vetaffairs* online.)

Schools honour veterans through Anzac Day Schools' Awards



Some of the winning team from John Edmondson High School

Fourteen schools across the country have been awarded a share in \$39,000 in prize money for their projects that commemorate Australia's Vietnam War service as part of the Anzac Day Schools' Awards.

The national competition has become a source of innovation, offering students the opportunity to connect with veterans and explore Australia's wartime history. This year's theme, *Commemorating Australia's Vietnam War Service*, was

chosen to complement the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

John Edmondson High School in Horningssea Park, New South Wales, won the national prize. Students from different year levels collaborated on an impressive website exploring the theme. They conducted extensive research and interviewed Vietnam veterans, showcasing their learning of the era's history, including battles,

conscription, the role of Australian women, poetry, and artwork.

The judging panel said: 'Their reflections demonstrated heartfelt empathy and understanding about this time in our nation's history.'

Baranduda Primary School, a first-time participant and the Victorian state winner, created a lesson about Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War aiming to improve future understanding of veterans' service and sacrifice. The judging panel commented: 'This student-led initiative will undoubtedly serve as a timeless resource, allowing future generations to grasp the true extent of the service and sacrifice of our veterans.'

Mountain Heights School students crafted a replica of the Long Tan cross in their woodwork class, serving as a lasting tribute to our veterans. The judges agreed that 'this inspiring piece not only showcases the craftsmanship of the students, but also becomes a constant reminder to never forget the sacrifices of those who served.'

Moorooka State School's Year 6 students demonstrated their exceptional research skills by seeking and conducting interviews with local veterans to gain insights into their experiences. This earned the school the Brigadier Bill Rolfe AO Award for Veteran Involvement.

Technology played a significant role in maintaining connections. Students extended the learning experience beyond the classroom through collaboration with local ex-service organisations and members of the defence community.

Entries are now open for next year's awards and close on 31 May 2024. The theme is *Discover the stories of veterans in your local community*, encouraging students to connect with veterans in their community, learn about their experiences and gain a personal understanding of Australia's wartime past.

To learn more about this year's winners, enter in the 2024 awards, and to see the wonderful ways schools honour the service and sacrifice of veterans and serving personnel, visit the Anzac Port

Veteran reunited with his medals after 50 years



Alan Garret (photo courtesy of the Townsville Bulletin)

In 1971, Alan Garret returned from a tour of Vietnam and was posted to Lavarack Barracks in Townsville prior to being honourably discharged. Having been presented with his Vietnam Medal and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, he decided to get them framed.

The medals were passed to a sergeant who was in a position to arrange this. But soon afterwards, the sergeant was posted to Vietnam and that was the last Alan saw of his medals.

Until this year. That's because Alan opened the December 2022 edition of *Vetaffairs* and as usual scanned the notices, reunions and medals pages at the back. It was there that he spotted a notice placed by another Vietnam veteran, Garry Heskett. Garry was looking for Alan because he had his medals.

The notice jumped out of the page at him. 'It seemed ten times bigger than it actually was,' says Alan.

He got on the phone and before long Garry, who lives in Coffs

Harbour, sent the medals to Alan, who still lives in Townsville. Alan had the medals replaced in 1979 but there's nothing like the real thing.

'I was so appreciative,' says Alan. 'I was just stunned when I opened the package. I hadn't seen them in 50 years. And they were still in their original condition.'

Garry and Alan decided to meet when Garry came up to Townsville for the 2nd / 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2/4 RAR) reunion in mid-August. Alan made a point of buying Garry a well-deserved beer.

Garry isn't exactly sure how Alan's medals came into his possession. He thinks someone must have handed them to him many years ago when he was doing voluntary work for Vietnam veterans' organisations.

'I can only surmise that someone came into possession of Mr Garret's medals, handed them to me in an effort to find the owner and return them. I obviously put them aside and forgot about them until I found them while rummaging through some boxes last year,' Garry says.

Garry served in Vietnam with 4 RAR / NZ (ANZAC) Battalion for nearly a year and he understands perfectly well why Alan was so thrilled to see his medals again.



Garry Heskett and Alan Garret

'Medals are very important,' he says. 'They are the visual acknowledgement that a person has served. It's recognition that you a returned serviceman and that you have served our country.'

Alan meanwhile was called up to serve in Vietnam as a National Serviceman. Over the years, he's rarely marched on Anzac Day but he reckons that now he's got his medals back, that might change.

'Fifty-two years,' he says. 'It shows you that miracles do happen.'

To learn more about Alan and Garry, read the full version of this article in Vetaffairs online.

Remembering the Burma-Thailand Railway 80 years on



Prisoners of war carrying sleepers in Burma. (AWM P00406.026)

The prisoners of war who were forced to work on the Burma-Thailand Railway during the Second World War occupy an important place in Australia's wartime history.

The terrible conditions and brutal treatment they endured serve as a reminder of the horrors of war.

The Burma-Thailand Railway was built in 1942-43 with the intent of supplying Japanese forces in Burma. The sea routes previously used were vulnerable after the Allies prevailed at the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in May and June 1942.

The Japanese aimed to finish the railway as quickly as possible to supply their armies in Burma in preparation for operations against British India. To do so, they used some 60,000 Allied prisoners who had been captured from across Asia and the Pacific in early 1942.

When the labourers were unable to keep up with the timetable, the Japanese instituted the 'Speedo', a period of intense, almost around the clock work. Along with the prisoners of war, some 200,000 rōmusha (Asian labourers) were forced to work on the railway.

The workers battled gruelling conditions, starvation, mistreatment and diseases as they toiled away on the 415-kilometre stretch of railway. The largest and deepest cutting across the length of the railway is known as Hellfire Pass, where some 700 Allied prisoners of war died between April and June 1943. (See article on page 26.)

Bombardier Hugh Clarke of the 2/10th Australian Field Regiment, who survived the ordeal, said the railway 'looked like a scene out of Dante's Inferno' as prisoners worked through the night by the light of flaming torches.

About 13,000 Australian prisoners of war were forced to work on the Burma-Thailand Railway, and by the time it was completed on 16 October 1943, some 2,800 Australians, 11,000 Allied personnel and 75,000 rōmusha (Asian labourers) had perished.

The Japanese captured over 22,000 Australians during the Second World War. More than a third of these men and women never returned home. Eighty years on, we pause to honour their memory.

Peacekeeping woven into history

The Australian War Memorial has acquired four traditional woven Tais cloths made by a remarkable women's weaving collective in Timor-Leste. The cloths represent the East Timorese people's path to independence.

The colourful Tais were created to represent the shared history between the East Timorese people and the ADF during the Australian-led Peacekeeping mission, International Force East Timor (INTERFET), between 1999 and 2000.

Matt Anderson, Director of the Australian War Memorial, said the acquisition of these beautiful Tais allows the Memorial to tell the story of the Australian-led deployment to Timor Leste. 'But most importantly, it also allows us to consider the impact of the conflict on the East Timorese people and to see it through their eyes, and expressed in their culture,' Mr Anderson said.

'The four Tais were selected for their significant cultural values and ritual uses. They will help us to reflect on the resilience and strength of the East Timorese people. We are honoured to have these items in our collection and to be

better able to tell the story of the causes, conduct and consequences of successive Australian deployments to Timor Leste in a way the Australian public can both understand and appreciate.'

The Tais were crafted by the LO'UD Cooperative, a small non-profit organisation run by rural women living in a remote area on the southern tip of the island. They reflect the diverse voices in the Memorial's collection that represent the ADF's role in peacekeeping in the region.

Deb Salvagno, President of East Timor Women Australia, said that LO'UD's journey is Timor's journey: 'Their experiences mirror the

nation's, and their Tais reflect the nation's culture and spirit,' she said.

'The weaving of Tais cloths has a deep cultural significance, because the work is highly symbolic of the remarkable bravery and resilience of the resistance movement that was present in Timor-Leste during the Indonesian occupation.'

Before independence, many East Timorese were killed, and as many as 500,000 were displaced from their homes. About half of these left the territory, in some cases under threat of violence. The acquisition of these Tais cloths is a testament to the Memorial's ongoing commitment to honouring the shared history of Australia and its neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region.



ITEMS FOR SALE AT THE MEMORIAL SHOP

Proud poppies

The poppy. Striking and symbolic, this humble flower evokes thoughts of remembrance for those who lost their lives in the service of Australia.

Designed exclusively for the Australian War Memorial and suitable for all commemorative occasions, our best-selling poppy pins, brooches and scarves make a meaningful and stylish addition to any outfit.



**Flanders poppy
lapel pin - \$9.99**



**Memorial poppy brooch -
\$19.99 (small) or \$39.99 (large)**



**Vibrant poppy scarves - \$29.99
(available in black or navy)**



Visit shop.awm.gov.au to explore our exclusive range of poppy apparel.

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

NOTICEBOARD

REUNIONS

HMAS *Nirimba*, January 1972 MOBI reunion

19–21 January 2024, Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron

Members of the last MOBI intake and their partners are invited to attend. Accommodation available at the nearby Manly Marina Cove Motel.

Contact: Ron Bullock

☎ 0418 367 320

✉ rbullock7@bigpond.com

HMAS *Leeuwin* April 1968 23rd Intake

26 February–1 March 2024, Victor Harbor, SA

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

Contact: Charlie Cifala

☎ 0457 634 486

✉ cjcifala@yahoo.com.au

RAN 27th Stevenson Division 1969 55th Anniversary

1 April 2024, Glenelg, SA

As time is marching on without some of us, we would love to see any JR's who may not have been contacted to date.

Contact: Jurgen ‘Yogi’ Andt

☎ 0409 699 053

✉ js.andt@bigpond.com

All RAAF Apprentice intakes 1948–1993

22–28 April 2024, Wagga Wagga, NSW

All members and partners are encouraged to attend the 76th Anniversary.

Contact: Martin Holland

☎ 0499 229 911

✉ mholland@electriciansplus.com.au

🌐 raafapprentices.com.au

60 Year Reunion 19th VM Army Apprentices

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

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

Contact: Peter Leslie or Pete Culnane

☎ 0413 620 945 or 0439 726 100

✉ pete128@outlook.com

RAAF Apprentices 1974 – 28 Scorpions

23–26 April 2024, Wagga Wagga, NSW

Planning is in progress for our intake's 50th anniversary event. All 28 Scorpions and their partners are welcome. Includes Anzac Day march and celebrations. Expressions of interest through Facebook – 28 Scorpions or via email.

Contact: Chris Nielsen

☎ 0403 943 029

✉ chris.nielsen@live.com.au

Australian Army Aviation Unit

26 April 2024, Brisbane, QLD

The biggest reunion since the invention of the helicopter. Any Corps, any Service. If you worked at one of our Units, you're invited. Visit the website to register your interest.

Contact: Kerry Ellem

✉ aaavn.reunion.2024@gmail.com

🌐 aaavn-reunion.org

HMAS *Nirimba* reunion

13–17 May 2024, Mercure Hunter Valley Gardens, NSW

The January and July Intakes of 1964 are holding a 60th reunion – Meet & Greet and Formal Dinner. Accommodation available at the venue. Contact us, if you would like to attend with your partner.

Contact: Glen Friedrich or Keith Chay

☎ 0407 917 827 or 0447 169 610

✉ glenfriedrich924@gmail.com

✉ kchay@bigpond.net.au

Australian Army Training Team – Iraq (AATT-I)

24–26 May 2024, Kedron-Wavell Services Club (KWSC), Brisbane, QLD

A Meet & Greet will be held on Friday 24th. A Commemorative Dinner will be held on Saturday 25th to recognise the 20th anniversary of the deployment of the first Iraqi Army Training Team. On Sunday 26th, there will be a Memorial Service at the KWSC, which will be open to the public. Full details are available on the AATT-I Facebook page.

Contact: Rocky McKelvie

☎ 0419 679 378

✉ secretaryaatti@optusnet.com.au

🌐 Facebook: AATTI Association

🌐 Instagram: [armytrainingteamsaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/armytrainingteamsaustralia)

RAAF Comms Reunion

25 May 2024, Brisbane, QLD

All Comms Musterings (both ex and serving, plus partners) are invited to attend our yearly Djinnang Association reunion. If you are interested, please visit our website for all relevant information. Please add your name to the list if you are attending so we can organise finger food.

Contact: Gail McDermott

🌐 djinnang.com

21ST UNOPAA reunion

27–31 May 2024, Darwin, NT

The NT Branch of the United Nations and Overseas Policing Association of Australia is hosting a reunion for all serving or retired state/territory and federal police, including partners, who have served in any of the UN or other peacekeeping missions since 1964. There is no requirement to be a member of the association. East Timor members especially welcome.

Contact: Allan Mitchell

☎ 0417 804 546

✉ darwinreunion2024@gmail.com

9th Intake HMAS *Leeuwin* 60 Year reunion

4–7 July 2024, Ballina, NSW

If you are interested, or know of anyone who was in the 9th Intake, please contact me.

Contact: Allan James Watt

☎ 0402 749 582

✉ jakknco@bigpond.net.au

B Company 2RAR veterans, 2nd tour 1970–71

16–21 August 2024, Rainbow Bay, Gold Coast, QLD.

All veterans and partners of Bravo Company are invited to attend.

Contact: Philip Burke

☎ 0412 739 435

✉ reunion24@familia.com.au

Headquarters 1st Australian Task Force and D&E Platoon

21–25 November 2024, Adelaide, SA

A commemorative lunch will be held on the 23rd at the Training Depot, Torrens Parade Ground. The lunch will be preceded by a dedication service at the Pathway of Honour (Adelaide War Memorial) where our own memorial will be unveiled. After lunch, our commemorative service will be held at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, Torrens Parade Ground. Both services will be open to the public.

Contact: John Verhelst

☎ 0437 212 121

✉ jeverhelst@gmail.com

🌐 hq1atf.org

MEDALS LOST AND FOUND

LOST

John Roberts, Serial Number 213329

Seeking my father-in-law's medals. John was a WO2 in the Australian Army. It is very important to have these medals returned to my wife.

Contact: Dave Beck

☎ 0403 976 192

✉ becksrus@bigpond.com

Peter Aiden Gresser

Seeking my great uncle's WWI medals. He was born in 1894 at Duramana near Bathurst NSW, and was a gunner with the 5HTMB AIF. A found notice about the medal was published in *Vetaffairs* in 2015, submitted by Kath Richards, but her phone/email have been disconnected. I would love to be able to tell my father where these medals are.

Contact: Amanda Norris (nee Gresser)

☎ 0437 976 866

✉ kaetyns.mum@gmail.com

FOUND

Supt J L D'Souza, 1ACF, 7227121

Medals recently purchased from second hand shop in Woodford, QLD – Indian Service Medal and Indian War Medal from WWII, and the Indian Independence Medal, 15 August 1947. Would like to return the medals to family.

Contact: Lawrie Bowman

☎ 07 4163 8833

✉ lawriebowman@hotmail.com

Pte GAW Jones VX148137

WWII medals: Pacific Star, Star, Australian Service Medal, Defence Medal and War Medal; 7th Australian Infantry Battalion. Born in Echuca, locality of enlistment in Balranald NSW, place of enlistment Kairi, QLD. Would like to return these medals to family.

Contact: John Delia

☎ 0408 054 122

✉ johnmdelia@gmail.com

Pte Jake Ryan 8585771

A set of dog tags have been handed to Plympton Veterans Centre, Adelaide. Pte Ryan was a member of 3RAR in 2013/14.

Contact: Donna Dei-Rossi

☎ 0419 463 296

✉ donna@plymptonvc.org.au

Murphy's Pacific Star medal (WWII)

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

Contact: Brett

☎ 0419 235 586

W A Leslie R93355 and H A Leslie WX60351

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

Contact: Trevor Smith, Curator, Caloundra RSL Military Display

✉ curator@caloundrarsl.com.au

1557 PTE James Vincent Molloy

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

Contact: Robert Millar

☎ 0412 514 902

✉ bmillar@ozemail.com.au

2794915 W G Willis

Australian Defence Medal

Contact: Reception

☎ 02 6057 2000

✉ elizabethstreet@commercialclubalbury.com.au

4/604 (formerly SX500199) WO1 William Vaughan Clark

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

Contact: RSL Millicent Sub-Branch

☎ 0456 086 262

✉ millicent@rslsa.org.au

R E Roberts B4574

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

Contact: Menetta Walker

☎ 0429 948 315

✉ net62@bigpond.com

These notices have been provided by readers of Vetaffairs. DVA takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information they contain.

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

NOTICEBOARD

NAVY

Seeking former WRAN Sandra Tillman

She served at HMAS *Cerberus* in 1968. It's in regard to her late brother Graeme, ex ABQMG.

Contact: David Davies
☎ 0402 313 935
✉ dd130694@gmail.com

Seeking Commander Tom David Rowling

Odd Steinar Raneng would like to reconnect.

Contact: Odd Steinar Dybvad-Raneng
☎ 0401 254 195
✉ osdr19@gmail.com
📖 vikingsaga.tribalpages.com

ARMY

Bravo Coy 2/4RAR Townsville

Seeking contact with 3 members with whom we have lost touch – 1294631 Lindsay O’Keefe 2/4 RAR, 1973–1975; 315929 Ron Stoertebeck 2/4 RAR, 1973–1979; and 221959 Mark (Spike) Tyndall 2/4RAR, 1973–1976. Hoping to renew old friendships.

Contact: Warren Dowell
☎ 07 5578 3228
✉ warren.dowell@gmail.com

Seeking Ray Johnson

RAAOC Ammo Tech. Last known address was Kingston, Tasmania.

Contact: Michael Cooper
RAAOC Bandiana
☎ 02 6024 6529
✉ mcooper88@bigpond.com

17th & 18th Battalions AMF – CMF

Seeking information, photographs and other material relating to these Sydney-based Infantry Battalions: 17th Bn (The North Sydney Regt) 1921–1944, 18th Bn (The Ku Ring Gai Regt) 1921–1944, 18th/51st Bn 1935–1936, 17th/18th Bn (The North Shore Regt) 1948–1960, 2/17th Bn’s RNSWR 1960–current. Their customs and traditions are currently retained by the 2nd/17th Bn Royal NSW Regiment.

Contact: Roderick White
☎ 0419 477 179
✉ rdw1788@gmail.com

Seeking a copy of the book *Yours Faithfully*

A record of service of 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in Australia and South Vietnam from 19 Feb 1969 to 16 Oct 1971.

Contact: E ‘Dutchy’ Lensing
☎ 0418 952 850
✉ dutchyle@bigpond.net.au

Seeking contact with the family of Ron ‘Chad’ Hansen – QX26788 and 1/280

Chad served with the 62 Bn then 2/13 Bn. He then was a founding member of the 66th battalion and served in 2 RAR for 17 years. He served in Puckapunyal, Korea, Enoggera, Malaya, and Holsworthy before he discharged to Moorooka in Brisbane. We would dearly love to contact the family of this legend.

Contact: Jason Harrison, Volunteer Curator, 2 RAR Historical Collection
☎ 0419 749 198
✉ 2RAR.Museum@gmail.com.
📖 Facebook – The 2 RAR Historical Collection

Seeking Larry Ryan

Formerly a member of 6 Pl B COY 4 RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Bn Svn 1971.

Contact: Chris Burgess
☎ 0409 219 806
✉ chrisburgess01@hotmail.com

Seeking a good image of the Command Post Tannoy Box

Trying to complete a mock-up display of a Vietnam artillery battery command post but missing a good image of the BCP Tannoy Box. Anyone with either a good front-on image, or who has a Tannoy Box to either donate or send an image, would be appreciated.

Contact: Jim Box
☎ 0411 758 433
✉ 42.105as@gmail.com

Seeking Darrell Ford ex 5 RAR and 7 RAR Vietnam

Course facilitator and clinical psychologist Lynn Williams is seeking to re-establish contact.

Contact: Les Vincent
☎ 0439 413 304
✉ vinnos@bigpond.net.au
✉ isis2@ozemail.com.au

Seeking Sergeant Patricia Mitchell (maiden name)

I met Trisha in 5 Sig Reg in 1972 when I was placed on her 24 hour shift roster in Victoria Barracks. She later married another sergeant in 1974. Would love a catch-up chat.

Contact: Steve Clarke
☎ 0410 436 471
✉ steve.clarke7788@gmail.com

Seeking members of the 2nd/27 Battalion AIF

John W Nankervis is seeking contact with anyone from this battalion, or their relatives, who served in New Guinea and Borneo during WWII. While this was a South Australian battalion, John lives in Mornington, Victoria.

Contact: Brian Nankervis (John’s son)
☎ 0409 806 577

Seeking information/return of a valuable trophy, The Galway Cup

The trophy, which belongs to the Royal South Australia Regiment Historical Collection, was last seen at the Army Museum of South Australia on 27 March 2004. The cup is of Georgian design and has a lid. On one side is the 27th Battalion badge, a rising sun with a stag’s head on top. A small, engraved plate on the base reads: “presented by the club for award to the most efficient company in battle craft.”

Contact: Des Hawkins
☎ 0434 676 050
✉ desmondh@ozemail.com.au

Seeking Sister Postlewaite

She was at 4 Camp Hospital, Townsville, 1975. I would like to catch up.

Contact: Stephen Jacka
☎ 0490 374 256
✉ stephenjacka58@yahoo.com

AIR FORCE

Seeking RAAF friends

I would like to catch up with Rick Morris (cook), Darren Lane (transport driver) and Sharon [?] (Clerk A AOC/Co Secretary), Fairbairn 1983.

Contact: Steve Napper
☎ 0458 438 149

Remembering WWII pilot F/O Geoff Waugh

We have restored a telephone booth that survived the blast of a bomb that killed Australian pilot Geoff Waugh who flew with the RAF’s 247 Squadron during the Second World War. The booth will be on display from January 2024 at the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum, West Sussex in the UK. Any relatives or descendants who would like more information, are welcome to get

in touch. More information at dva.gov.au/Waugh.

Contact: Ken Rimell
✉ ken.rimell@vintagespirit.co.uk
📖 steamheritage.co.uk/vintagespirit

MISCELLANEOUS

‘Lest We Forget’ dress watch and soldier statue

I have for sale, a men’s dress watch with a Guess watchband, with the words ‘Lest We Forget’ on the watch face. It is 2 years old and never been worn. I also have a heavy, black-coloured statue of a solder holding a rifle. It is 35 cms high, numbered, and only 5,000 were made four years ago.

Contact: John Kearns
☎ 0488 292 139

Books for sale

The Great War – The Standard History of the Worldwide Conflict. Complete set vols. I – XIII, \$550, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. Complete set vols. I – XII, \$800 and First Edition WAR PAPERS. Front pages reproduced from John Frost historic newspaper service \$70. I am in Denmark, WA – postage/carriage extra.

Contact: Sally Prickett
☎ 0428 747 262
✉ sallypp65@gmail.com

ANZACs laid to rest in India

The Australian High Commission in India has produced a substantive compilation of the 91 Australian and New Zealand service personnel who died in India during WWI and WWII. The book is intended to provide meaningful but succinct information on the ANZACs as a mark of respect for their selflessness. It can also serve as a guide for those able to physically visit India’s Commonwealth War Cemeteries and Memorials.

Contact: Major Daniel White
☎ 02 6212 0208
✉ daniel.white4@defence.gov.au
✉ ndli.defence@dfat.gov.au

Calling all former Defence Prince of Wales Award (POWA) Alumni

The POWA was first awarded in 1984 and ADF Reserves and Employer Support are calling for previous recipients to be part of the 2024 Awards by attending a ceremony to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the scheme.

You are invited to express an interest to be a part of this momentous occasion.

Contact: Karen Harriss
☎ 0402 087 871
✉ ADFRES.HQ@defence.gov.au
📖 reserveemployersupport.gov.au

Western Front battlefield tour, 1st Field Squadron Royal Australian Engineers Association

23 April 2024, France

A 10-day tour beginning in Paris, including visits to battlefields and memorials, a dedication ceremony of the new Engineer Memorial Bridge in Amiens and Anzac Day at the Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, escorted by Nick Fletcher from the Australian War Memorial.

Contact: Michelle, Boronia Travel
☎ 1800 035 350
✉ battlefieldtours@boroniatravel.com.au
📖 battlefieldtourspecialists.com.au

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 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. Just an hour or two a fortnight can make a big impact to someone’s life.

Contact: Emily Ledger
☎ 07 5390 1218
✉ companions@comlinkaustralia.com.au
📖 comlinkaustralia.com.au

Diabetes

Seeking any service personnel who may have come down with Type 1 Diabetes whilst serving in an offshore conflict zone.

Contact: Lloyd Willmann
☎ 0429 614 892

TO UNSUBSCRIBE ✨

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

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