

VETAFFAIRS

DVA'S FREE NEWSPAPER FOR AUSTRALIA'S VETERAN COMMUNITY

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Parliament passes new veterans' legislation

On 13 February, the Parliament passed the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025* (the VETS Act).

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide recommended the Government simplify and harmonise the framework for veteran rehabilitation, compensation and other entitlements in its Interim Report in August 2022.

The legislation means that from 1 July 2026, the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA) and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related claims) Act 1988* (DRCA) will close to new compensation claims. All claims received from 1 July 2026 will be determined under an improved *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act* (MRCA).

Payments being received under the VEA and DRCA prior to 1 July 2026 will be grand-parented – this means they will continue uninterrupted (and will continue to be indexed).

The VETS Act does not change the existing arrangements for income support payments such as the Energy Supplement, Income Support Supplement or Service Pension. Veterans with Qualifying Service will also continue to be eligible for the Gold Card at age 70.

The start date of the new arrangements gives veterans, families and advocates time to understand how they might be impacted and make plans for their individual circumstances.

Consolidating the legislation into one Act will result in a system where it is easier for veterans and families to understand their entitlements. A single Act for all new claims will also be simpler to administer, benefiting veterans and families over time through claims

being processed in a consistent and timely way.

The Act will implement a range of improvements:

- A new Additional Disablement Amount (ADA), similar to the Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) available under the VEA, will be introduced. Like the EDA, the ADA will compensate veterans who are of Age Pension age or older and who have a high degree of incapacity due to service-related conditions. The ADA will be subject to the same offsetting arrangements that exist for the Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP) under the MRCA, taking account of Commonwealth-funded military superannuation payments.
- The Repatriation Commission will be able to specify injuries and diseases that can be accepted on a presumptive basis where they are known to have a common connection with military service.
- DRCA veterans with high levels of impairment may, for the first time, be able to qualify for Special Rate Disability Pension and a MRCA Gold Card (subject to meeting the relevant MRCA criteria).
- Eligibility for household services and attendant care will be expanded to VEA veterans.
- The higher travel reimbursement amount, regardless of kilometres, will be available to all veterans when a private vehicle is used to travel for treatment.
- The automatic granting of VEA funeral benefits will be retained, with the benefit increasing to \$3,000; and funeral expenses up to \$14,062 for all service-related deaths will be reimbursed.

- Allowances and other payments will be standardised, including acute support packages, education schemes, and additional compensation for children of severely impaired veterans.
- Veterans receiving DRCA incapacity payments will automatically transition to MRCA incapacity payments on the date of commencement.
- Where the Repatriation Medical Authority updates a Statement of Principles (SOP) between the veteran's primary and reviewable decision, the version of the SOP which is most beneficial to the veteran's circumstances will be applied.
- The Repatriation Commission will be able to determine circumstances where a vulnerable veteran must receive financial advice before receiving a lump sum payment, helping recipients make the right decisions.

Part of the VETS Act comes into effect earlier, from 21 April – a single pathway of review through the Veterans' Review Board – read more on page 5.

The VETS Act – MORE INFORMATION

We are committed to making it easier for you to navigate the veterans' compensation system. A range of resources and scenarios can be found on the dedicated Legislation Reform page on the DVA website (www.dva.gov.au/legislationreform).

You may wish to seek the advice of a compensation claims advocate and can stay up to date by following our social media channels and subscribing to our regular monthly newsletter, e-news.



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



FROM THE DEPARTMENT

Alison Frame
Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs

2025 has already been a huge year for the veteran community, with the Australian Parliament's recent passing of the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025* (the VETS Act) and the work we are doing to implement the Government's response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

The new legislation is a significant milestone and will make a real difference to veterans and families by moving to a single ongoing Act for compensation related claims from 1 July 2026. It is important to note there will be no reduction in payments DVA clients currently receive as a result of these changes. If a veteran receives payments under 2 existing Acts – the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence related claims) Act 1988*, they will continue to do so, and those payments will be indexed as normal. (You can read more about the VETS Act on the front page of this edition of *Vetaffairs*.)

The new Act is the result of extensive consultation with the veteran community over the last 3 years, and the lived experiences of veterans and families have been integral to shaping the legislation. In the lead up to 1 July 2026, we will be focused on helping everyone in the veteran community understand what the changes mean for them. A communication and education plan is in

place to ensure everyone is aware of the changes and how they might be impacted.

The VETS Act also establishes a Defence and Veterans' Services Commission to oversee enduring and systemic reform – a key recommendation of the Royal Commission. The Government's response to the Royal Commission provides clear direction to the Department on priority work for the years ahead and marks the start of a new chapter in how DVA supports the veteran community. We are co-designing, with the veteran community, a new agency focused on wellbeing to be established within DVA. We are also continuing consultations on the development of a national ex-service organisation peak body. (Read more on page 5.)

For claims received within the last 12 months, the average time to process an Initial Liability claim was 102 days. This represents a really significant reduction in average processing times but we are aware that waiting times are still too long for many and we are continuing to implement improvements to reduce these waiting times. We look forward to updating you on these efforts and to you experiencing the benefits.

While in Canada recently, I engaged with veteran community representatives and international counterparts on shared challenges

and new approaches to support our respective veteran communities. This included meetings on veteran supports with UK and Canadian counterparts, traversing claims, mental health support, housing, and support for families. It was also good to learn more about Canada's recently established Women Veterans Council, the work of which is directly relevant to work currently underway in DVA to develop a Women Veterans Strategy. (You can read about our Women Veterans Forum on page 6.) These meetings have paved the way for ongoing discussions that will ensure DVA is well positioned to implement global best practices to support the veteran community.

DVA is also supporting the establishment of a new independent veteran advocacy governance body – the Institute of Veterans' Advocacy. Public consultation, including through an ex-service round table working group, indicated significant interest and broad support for the proposal. DVA is now working to support the Institute as a national professional association for veterans' advocates. This Institute will provide leadership and support for advocates, set competency and training standards for the sector, and accredit and register advocates. It will also promote the availability of quality free-to-the-veteran advocacy services – as distinct from services that charge a commission

based on statutory entitlements payments received.

This Anzac Day, we mark 110 years since the Gallipoli landings. For this year's overseas Anzac Day commemorations, for the first time DVA has invited veterans and family members to apply to be part of our delivery teams on the ground. As you can imagine, the call-out attracted great interest from across the veteran community and the selection panel had a challenging task. I am delighted that joining the teams this year, in both France and Türkiye, will be 6 veterans and 2 veteran family members. In addition, one scholar from the Sir John Monash Foundation Scholarship Program will be assisting in France and 2 Gallipoli Scholars will have the same opportunity in Türkiye.

On a recent visit to Singapore, I visited the Kranji War Cemetery and the Singapore Memorial, which bears the names of more than 24,000 casualties of the Commonwealth land and air forces who lost their lives during the Second World War and have no known grave. I found it a deeply moving experience.

This Anzac Day, I hope you have the opportunity to honour all those who have served and remember those who have given their lives in our name. I will be reflecting on their sacrifice as we strive to improve the system that supports veterans and families.



With participants of the 2025 Women Veterans Policy Forum



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On the value of service

Kahlil Fegan DSC AM
Repatriation Commissioner



Standing between the sheep and the wolves are the sheep dogs. It is time we recognised their value.

I recently found myself reflecting on the words of the Pulitzer Prize nominee, psychology professor and veteran Dave Grossman, who uses a simile to describe the value of service men and women. David speaks of how most of the people in our society are like sheep. He means no offence in drawing this comparison, simply implying most people '... are kind, gentle, productive creatures who would only hurt one another by accident.'

He goes on to warn that there are others – the wolves – who always have been and always will be.

These others can have a propensity for evil. They are comparatively few but capable of horrendous acts. He equates them to wolves 'that feed on the sheep without mercy'. Some may suggest drawing this similarity with wolves is horrendously unfair. Some humans can be much worse.

David then goes on to explain that while there are sheep and wolves, there is a special group who are neither. They are sheep dogs who, while peacefully walking among the sheep, have tremendous capacity for violence and the willingness to employ it.

The sheep dog will seek out and confront the wolf – without hesitation and with the knowledge that it may be harmed. It does this to protect the sheep. The sheep dog practices fighting, is ever vigilant and uncompromisingly loyal. It will never harm the sheep.

It is ironic that some sheep may not like or trust the sheepdog: looks a lot

like a wolf, has fangs and capacity for violence. The sheepdog can be noisy and annoying, smells, sometimes chases its tail and digs holes. So, why should the peaceful sheep recognise and promote the pesky sheep dog?

Because the dog is often not appreciated – until the wolf shows up.

Like the sheep dog, our service men and women live constantly attuned to the possibility of conflict and prepare relentlessly for it – studying the controlled application of violence and training to fight and win war on behalf of the Australian people. They do this in full acknowledgement of the risks and sacrifices they and their families make. Like the sheepdog, when called upon they step forward willingly to defend others.

It is easy to accept the metaphor that service men and women are sheep dogs, but in reality they are so much more. Service develops in individuals and our society an immense but at times forsaken value.

I am certain if you ask most veterans what value they got from service they will speak of the satisfaction achieved from working as a member of a team through toil and trouble, and for a cause much greater than themselves. The sense of pride in knowing they have done something most others could or would not. The confidence that when tested physically and mentally, they will prevail, and that their done deeds reflect

values like *respect, integrity, courage, excellence and service*.

The value of service is further articulated and encapsulated in our Australian War Memorial. Here, etched in stone and glass, you will find 15 quintessential qualities developed and displayed by Australians in war. The personal qualities include words like *resource, candour, devotion, curiosity and independence*. Social qualities include *comradeship, ancestry, patriotism, chivalry and loyalty*. And the fighting qualities of youth and enterprise are *coolness, control, audacity, endurance and decision*.

These are the qualities and values developed and engrained in our Australian service men and women, through service. These qualities and values cannot be bought or borrowed and take years to develop. They are as relevant today as ever.

This is what makes the sheep dogs among us such essential components of a healthy society. This is what we are offering our nation's youth when they enlist. By promoting service, we are perpetuating these attributes in our society.

Yet the allure of service seems to be waning. Why is this?

Some may suggest the youth of today are too self-absorbed or weak.

Yet the young men and women with whom I have served in recent years dispel this suggestion.

Some may not see the need to fight for Australia – they have grown up in peace and have become complacent.

Others may have been influenced by rhetoric suggesting all service men and women are damaged – the 'broken digger' narrative, but we know this narrative is a falsehood. (See my column in *Vetaffairs*, December 2024.) Regardless of the reason, as a society if we allow the allure of service to decline, we should not be surprised when the wolves 'feed on the sheep without mercy'.

We are lucky to live in Australia, a beautiful democracy blessed with riches worth fighting for, however there are challenges not far from our door. A responsible society knows this, reflects upon it, and does all it can to invest in the sheep dog and developing the qualities and values I have outlined.

I encourage all of us who enjoy our nation's riches to recognise and promote the value of service, and specifically those who serve, for we need them – before the wolf shows up!



Troops from 5/7 RAR and East Timorese locals, 21 February 2000. (Image: Defence)

New Services Guide now available

DVA has released a comprehensive guide to the wide variety of services and support we offer members of the Defence and veteran community.

The 60-page *Veteran Support and Services Guide* provides an overview of the assistance DVA can provide from the moment you join the ADF, during your transition and throughout civilian life.

The Guide can help you understand how DVA can assist you and your family to live well and age well, with information about how to access DVA services and support or how to find out more

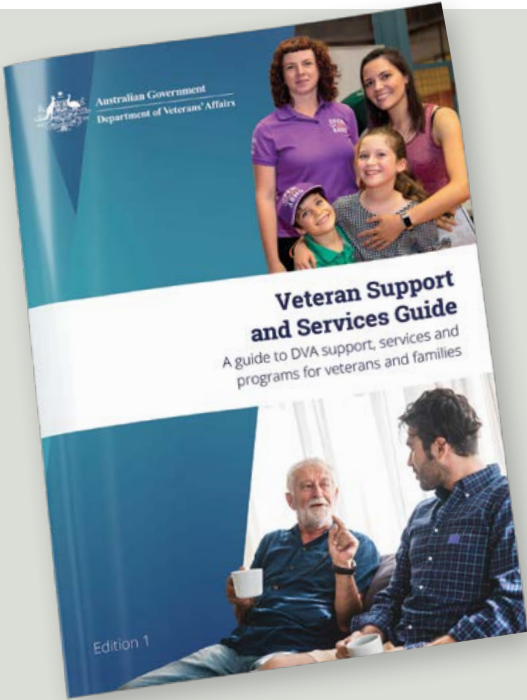
information. Whatever your circumstances, it helps to know the services and support available to you and your family.

DVA provides a range of transition services from education and training, assistance finding a job after leaving the military, to establishing social connections.

The publication of the guide reflects DVA’s commitment to improving the way we

communicate with veterans and families. Hard copies have been distributed to our Veterans’ Access Network shopfronts, Open Arms offices and Veterans’ and Families’ Hubs.

To download a digital copy of the Guide, head to the DVA website (search for ‘Veteran Support and Services Guide’).



SERVICE PENSION	Old rate (fortnightly)	New rate (fortnightly)	Increase (fortnightly)
Single person	\$1,144.40	\$1,149.00	\$4.60
Couples (each)	\$862.60	\$866.10	\$3.50
Single person – transitional	\$941.10	\$944.80	\$3.70
Couples (each) – transitional	\$759.30	\$762.30	\$3.00
WAR WIDOWS (total amount)			
War widow(er)’s pension	\$1,165.30	\$1,170.00	\$4.70
Income support supplement (ceiling rate)	\$346.20	\$347.60	\$1.40
DISABILITY Compensation Payment			
T&PI (Special rate)	\$1,805.30	\$1,812.50	\$7.20
Intermediate rate	\$1,196.80	\$1,201.60	\$4.80
EDA	\$974.20	\$978.10	\$3.90
100 per cent (inc ES)	\$626.70	\$629.20	\$2.50
10 per cent (inc ES)	\$69.60	\$69.85	\$0.25
VETERAN PAYMENT			
Single person	\$1,242.20	\$1,247.30	\$5.10
Couples (each)	\$968.70	\$972.80	\$4.10
MRCA			
Wholly dependent partner payment	\$1,165.30	\$1,170.00	\$4.70
Special Rate Disability pension (SRDP)	\$1,805.30	\$1,812.50	\$7.20

These are the maximum rates of payment and include any Energy Supplement payable. These rates came into effect on 20 March 2025 and the first full payment at these rates is the payday of 17 April.

Letter to the Editor



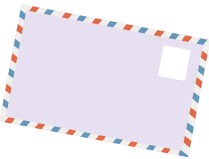
To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the December 2024 edition of *Vetaffairs*. As normal it was both welcome and informative.

I did notice though, the absence of an article on the notable honouring of Richard Norden with a posthumous Victoria Cross for Australia for his actions during the Battle of [Fire Support Base] Coral during the war in South Vietnam. I believe that this notable honouring of a great Australian soldier decades after his action will be most welcome by our veteran community and therefore should be included in *Vetaffairs*.

While timing may have been an issue, given I think notification was made only a short time before the December edition went to press, may I respectfully recommend that such an article be included in the next edition.

Yours sincerely,
Dave Ashley



Dear Dave

Thank you for pointing out this significant omission – timing was indeed the issue. You will find an article about Australia’s highest military honour being bestowed on Richard Norden VC on page 26 of this edition.

The Editor.



Action on Royal Commission recommendations

Implementation of the response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's Final Report has begun. This incremental delivery program will result in significant changes to the culture, systems and processes supporting Defence personnel, veterans and veteran families.

A foundational recommendation was for the establishment of the Defence and Veterans' Services Commission (DVSC), which is to provide independent oversight and drive system reform to improve suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes for serving and ex-serving ADF members.

Mr Michael Manthorpe PSM has been appointed as the Interim Head of the DVSC. Mr Manthorpe served in the Australian Public Service for 37 years, including as the Commonwealth Ombudsman and Defence Force Ombudsman from 2017 to 2021.

The new *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025* brings together the 3 current systems governing veterans' entitlements under a single Act, as well as establishing the DVSC in legislation to commence on 29 September 2025. Mr Manthorpe is leading a team in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) to support the full establishment of the DVSC. The Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee will review the legislation establishing the DVSC and report by 29 August.

A Taskforce has been established within PM&C to support the implementation of the Government's response. The Taskforce will draw on expertise from across Government to consider and advise on the detail of implementation.

DVA has appointed Deputy Secretary Teena Blewitt to lead a taskforce within the Department to deliver on recommendations 87 and 89, focusing on the co-design of the new agency on wellbeing and the national peak body for the veteran community.

The veteran community has been invited to co-design the implementation of the above recommendations with DVA, with the first co-design discovery sessions commencing recently. There will also be an opportunity to share your views via a survey and online submission process – further information will be available via the DVA website and other communication channels.

While the Royal Commission's recommendations provide a foundation for change, we recognise that creating meaningful and lasting improvements requires more than policy directives. What's needed are the lived experiences and first-hand insights of veterans, their families, and others directly impacted. Sharing unique perspectives will help us better understand the real challenges and develop practical solutions to create genuine, lasting change for the veteran community.

DVA is fully committed to implementing the Government's response to the Royal Commission's Final Report. We will continue to work in partnership with Defence, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, other federal agencies, the states and territories, and the veteran community to ensure real and meaningful change for those who have given so much.

Please see the DVA website (www.dva.gov.au) and our social media pages for the latest information, including on how you can get involved in the co-design and consultation process.

Veterans' Review Board pathway to be available to all veterans

Following passage of the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025*, the first level of external merits review for all claim decisions made from 21 April 2025 will be to the Veterans' Review Board (VRB), regardless of which Act a veteran has coverage under.

This extends access to the VRB for veterans whose claims came under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA) creating a 'single review pathway' that aligns the review process for all compensation claim decisions.

Currently, if you have a service-related injury or condition you may apply for compensation. If we make a determination about your case that you are not happy with, an internal review of the decision may occur. This also applies to cases involving claims for service-related deaths.

However, the pathway for external review of decisions made by DVA is different depending on which Act the claim falls under. The pathway for decisions under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA) and the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act* (MRCA) is a merits review of the claim by the VRB. But DRCA clients need to request a reconsideration by DVA before seeking external review by

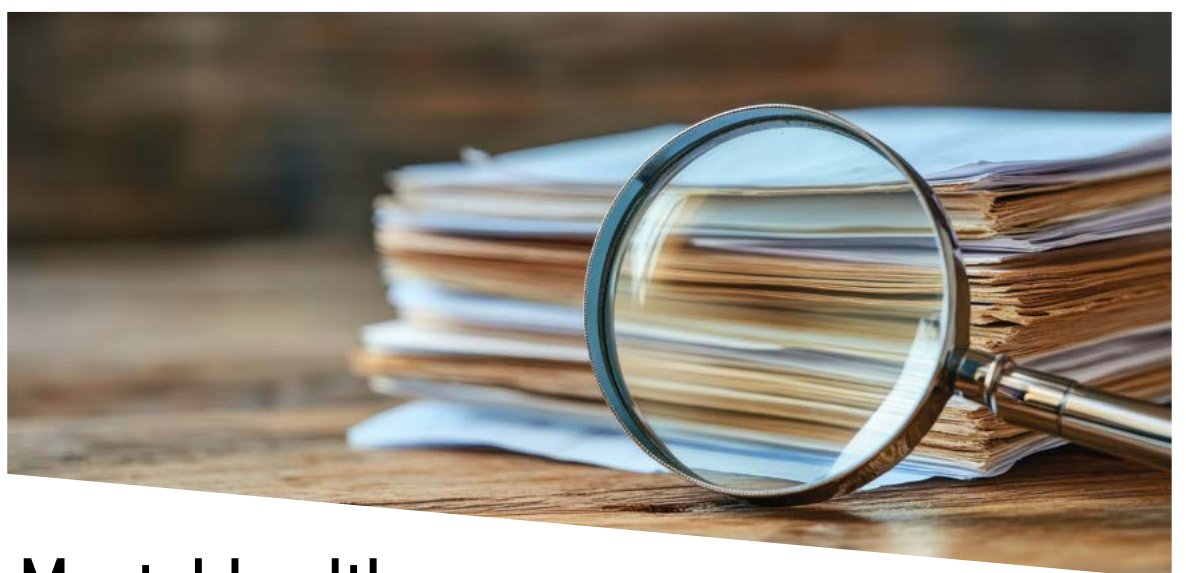
the Administrative Review Tribunal (the Tribunal), formerly the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

The new single review pathway takes effect from 21 April 2025. From this date, decisions made under the DRCA will be open to review by the VRB.

This simply means that from 21 April, if you are not happy with your claim outcome, you will be able to lodge an appeal to have DVA's decision reviewed by the VRB without having to go straight to the Tribunal. Information on how to do this will be included in your determination letter. If the VRB does not uphold your appeal, you can then take the matter to the Tribunal.

The process remains unchanged for MRCA and VEA veterans. If you have already lodged an appeal with the Tribunal, then nothing will change for you.

Further information is available on the DVA website at www.dva.gov.au/legislationreform.



Mental health support available to veterans

Veterans who are struggling with their mental health are encouraged to reach out for support.

Any veteran who has completed one day of full-time service in the ADF can get free mental health treatment through DVA. So can Reservists who have completed disaster relief service, border protection service or who were involved in a serious training accident.

This treatment is provided under Non-Liability Health Care (NLHC) arrangements.

Under NLHC, mental health conditions do not need to be related to military service.

The treatment can be accessed for as long as you need it, at no cost to you.

A Veteran Gold Card or White Card is used to pay for mental health treatment under NLHC. Gold Cards automatically cover

mental health. Many veterans already have mental health treatment on their White Card. To check if your White Card covers mental health treatment, or to apply for a non-liability mental health White Card if you don't already have one, you can use DVA's MyService app or call DVA on 1800 VETERAN.

Before making a medical appointment, check with each provider that they will accept Veteran Cards for payment. DVA also offers free and confidential counselling services to veterans and their families, available 24/7 through Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling. For more information or support call 1800 011 046 or visit www.openarms.gov.au.

For more information about NLHC (mental health) visit www.dva.gov.au/nlhc-mental-health.

MyService updated in response to veteran feedback

MyService (www.dva.gov.au/myservice) is the go-to platform for veterans and their families to carry out the majority of their DVA business online.

We've been listening to your feedback and working to make MyService even better. Recent updates are designed to make your experience smoother, faster and more intuitive.

Here's what's new:

Claiming road toll expenses: An improved process for veterans eligible under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act* (MRCA) who need to submit a road toll claim as part of their travel reimbursement.

Streamlined registration process: Clearer guidance during registration that explains how your details must exactly match your identity documents, so we can confirm your identity seamlessly.

Booking transport to attend treatment: This enhancement is for Veteran Card holders with eligibility under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* who are 79 years or younger and have access to use the Booked Car with Driver service. The treatment location access criterion has been removed to make it easier to book transport to travel for treatment covered by their Veteran Card.

Enhanced list of conditions: We updated the list of medical conditions for Initial Liability claims to better align with the Statements of Principles.

Fix to Representation form processing: A system bug was preventing uploaded Nominated Representative request forms from reaching our processing systems. This meant we often had to ask clients or their representatives to provide another copy. The issue is now fixed. Our apologies to those who were inconvenienced by this.

Enhanced readability: The *Application for Increase* 'View details' screen has been reformatted for better readability on all devices.

A more unified look and feel: Enjoy a more consistent design across the MyService platform, making navigation easier.

Whether it's lodging and tracking claims, applying for DVA-funded mental health treatments, or booking transport for medical

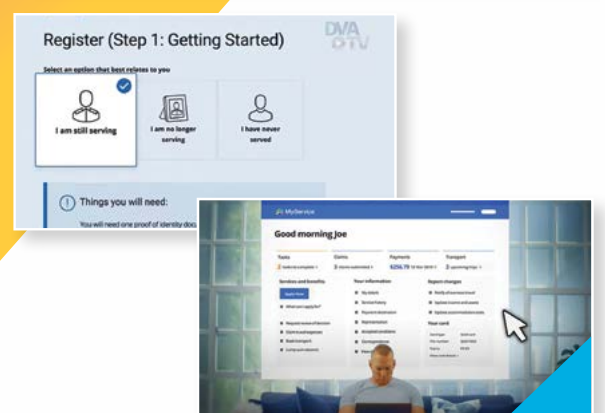
appointments, MyService has you covered. You can also request a decision review, update your personal details, and access your digital Veteran Card all in one place.

Take a moment to explore all the features MyService has to offer. You might discover tools and services you haven't used before, like providing us with feedback, finding a free advocacy service or other options to streamline your DVA interactions.

MyService has been designed to save you time and effort. For a detailed overview of how MyService can support your DVA experience, including video tutorials and step-by-step instructions, visit the MyService page of the DVA website.

Useful videos on how to set up and use MyService

Signing up to and using MyService is easy. And we've created videos that make it even easier:



You can find these videos on the MyService page of the DVA website (www.dva.gov.au/myservice) where you'll also find how-to guides for common tasks.



WOMEN VETERANS POLICY FORUM INFORMS DVA STRATEGY

In March, the annual Women Veterans Policy Forum brought together 42 women who are serving or who have served and to contribute their ideas and insights to the work of DVA.

The forum has been operating since 2016 and provides a platform for women veterans to raise issues directly with the Australian Government and DVA, and to create new channels of communication between DVA and the veteran community.

Across 2 days in Canberra, the forum tapped into the lived experiences and expertise of the community member participants to explore topics of ongoing and emerging significance. It included informative presentations by veteran community organisations about their exciting projects they have in train. Senior DVA staff briefed participants on key new initiatives such as the an Agency focusing on veteran wellbeing and the peak body for ex-service organisations.

There is an invisible bond of service that will forever join us all as women veterans. It's a sisterhood I absolutely cherish.

Forum participant

Top of the agenda was the development of DVA's Women Veterans' Strategy (see *Vetaffairs* December 2024).

Building on the ideas from the forum and the national gender equality strategy, *Working for Women*, DVA believes it's important that we investigate where women veterans are missing out on vital supports, explore what more can be done at every point to address this, and improve their experience and outcomes during service, transition and beyond.

Women veterans are a vitally important and growing

cohort in the veteran community. There is no doubt they face issues accessing support services in a system traditionally designed for men. The experience of women veterans is different, as highlighted during the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

There are many strong, intelligent, capable women who are advocating for the needs of women veterans. We are stronger together.

Forum participant

Participants for this annual, solutions-focussed, co-design event are chosen through expressions of interest. Forty per cent of those attending this year were new to the forum. Joined by DVA Secretary Alison Frame, they took the opportunity to share the big challenges and opportunities facing women in the veteran community, worked together to develop solutions, and provided unique perspectives on work of supporting women veterans.

DVA uses the information and insights garnered at the Women Veterans Policy Forum to directly inform our policy and programs and the ongoing improvement of DVA supports and services. The ideas that have emerged from the forum will help DVA identify key areas for change and ultimately ensure that we better serve the entire veteran community.

My experience and service matter. Together we can make and influence change.

Forum participant

Veterans' and Families' Hubs – a place to connect



The Hub at Oasis Townsville

Veterans' and Families' Hubs provide support across key areas, including health and wellness, employment, housing, and social connection. Open to all veterans, current serving ADF members, Reservists, and families, Hubs offer welcoming spaces and a range of services to meet the diverse needs of the veteran community.



The VeteranHub Spoke at Huon Valley

But the Hubs are more than physical spaces – they connect veterans and families to tailored, accessible and coordinated support.

Veterans' and Families' Hubs are already operating in Perth, Townsville, Adelaide, Wodonga, Nowra, Darwin, Caboolture and Burnie, supporting thousands of veterans, ADF members and families across Australia each year.

RSL Tasmania is also working to deliver a dispersed 'hub and spoke' model to provide support across the state. The main Hubs will be in Hobart and Launceston, with a range of spoke sites at RSL Sub-branch sites. The spokes are physical locations that facilitate local access to the broader range of services offered by the Hub.

In addition, a further 8 new Hubs are being delivered. These Hubs are expected to be fully operational by mid-2026 in the following locations:

- Ipswich, QLD – operated by RSL Queensland
- Queanbeyan, NSW – operated by RSL LifeCare
- Tweed/North Coast, NSW – operated by RSL LifeCare
- Hunter region, NSW – operated by RSL LifeCare

- Hawkesbury region, NSW – operated by RSL LifeCare
- Southwest Perth, WA – operated by RSL WA
- Northern Adelaide, SA – operated by Lives Lived Well
- Surf Coast/Geelong, VIC – operated by RSL Victoria.

Some services may be available in these new locations ahead of the expected completion date, with interim services delivered from temporary sites where possible.

DVA is working with the lead organisations to enhance the Hubs' capabilities. In some locations, the Hubs are already hosting DVA services and initiatives on-site, such as Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling, Veteran Support Officers, and the Veterans' Chaplaincy Pilot Program.

Veterans' and Families' Hubs represent a strong commitment to the ongoing wellbeing of veterans and families, and will help ensure that the support veterans and families need is always within reach. For more information about Veterans' and Families' Hubs, visit www.dva.gov.au/vfhubs.



Improving access for DVA assistance dogs



DVA's Psychiatric assistance dogs have a profound impact on the day-to-day lives of veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These highly trained animals provide support that allows a veteran to safely participate in personal and public activities.

However, veteran handlers have sometimes faced challenges, with businesses and service providers denying them entry to public spaces with their assistance dog. While the dogs wear coloured coats and identifying badges in public, there is currently no national standard to identify accredited assistance dogs.

In response to feedback and concerns from veterans, DVA has developed an Access Rights Card for veterans to present to local operators when they are questioned or refused entry.

The wallet-sized card aims to alleviate issues faced by veterans with accessing public spaces with their dog by educating businesses and service providers that it is an offence to deny entry to a trained assistance dog under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

To be trialled over 12 months, the card has been mailed out to all program graduates of the Psychiatric Assistance Dogs Program, and will be issued to veterans who graduate during 2025.

Psychiatric assistance dogs are at their handler's side at all times, whether to wake a veteran from a night terror, scan the environment for the veteran to reduce hypervigilance, or provide a barrier between the veteran and the public to induce a feeling of safety. To allow them to do their job, assistance dogs are legally allowed to enter public places, including travelling on public transport.

For more information, please search for 'Assistance Dogs and Public Access Rights' on the DVA website.



Help us test the new DVA website

We're updating the DVA website to make it easier for you to access the support and information you need.

From 1 May to 1 June, when you visit www.dva.gov.au you can test new website by clicking a link – HELP US TEST THE NEW DVA WEBSITE – at the top of the page.

You can easily share your feedback directly on the test website.

It's OK to ask questions!



DR ANNA COLWELL

Deputy Chief Health Officer

Department of Veterans' Affairs

You have tweaked your back bending over to pat the dog and now you can hardly walk. You go to the GP, but she doesn't send you for an x-ray. Instead, she tells you to stay active rather than resting in bed. How can this be right?

We know that about 90% of episodes of lower back pain don't need an x-ray. There is no difference between doing an x-ray immediately and starting with pain management, physiotherapy and keeping moving. Staying in bed any longer than a day or 2 causes people to lose muscle strength and balance, with a greater chance of ongoing pain and re-injury. But getting moving as soon as possible helps with ongoing movement and decreased pain.

Rarely, there will be something about your pain that means the doctor wants to rule out a serious condition. Having an x-ray when you don't need it can cause unnecessary worry. It might show changes in your spine that are unrelated to your pain.

But once you know they are there it can worry you or it may lead to more scans to figure out if the changes matter or not.

Low value care

Low value care refers to health tests, treatments or operations that give little or no benefit to patients, or where the risk of harm exceeds the likely benefit. Potential harms include over-diagnosis, over-treatment, antibiotic resistance, operation complications and radiation exposure.

Very large amounts of money are spent on unnecessary tests and treatments. One study in NSW public hospitals estimated up to 9,000 low value operations were performed in one year, which used almost 30,000 hospital bed days that could have been used for other patients. Low value care results in wasted health care and risk of harm, often at the expense of more effective health care.

No test or treatment should be provided without a conversation between you and your doctor about the benefits and harms, and your preferences.

Choosing wisely

The Choosing Wisely program has been going in Australia since 2015. Led by some of our top health organisations, it encourages health care providers and their patients to have better conversations about what care is truly needed for each person. It also identifies treatments that are rarely helpful. More is not always better when it comes to healthcare!

The right choice should be based on the best available evidence and a discussion between the patient and their healthcare team. Choosing wisely is *not* about cutting costs, but minimising harm and unnecessary testing or treatment.

Choosing Wisely suggests the following 5 questions to ask your doctor or other healthcare provider before you get any test, treatment or procedure.

1. Do I really need this test, treatment or procedure?
2. What are the risks?
3. Are there simpler safer options such as lifestyle changes, eating healthier foods, exercising more?
4. What happens if I don't do anything?
5. What are the costs – financial, emotional, time? Is the cost reasonable or is there a cheaper option?

Some veterans aren't used to asking questions or making decisions about their healthcare. You as a patient can help make better healthcare choices by:

- booking a longer appointment if your issue is more complex so there is time for discussion and a shared decision
- asking the above 5 questions
- telling your doctor if you don't understand (sometimes doctors seem to talk a different language, don't be embarrassed to ask them to explain)
- taking a relative or friend to important appointments in case you miss something
- discussing it calmly if you think you need a particular test or treatment. (If your doctor *doesn't* order a test, it is usually because that test isn't going to be helpful. It is your right to ask questions or to get a second opinion if you are not happy with the treatment plan.)

The Choosing Wisely website (www.choosingwisely.org.au) can help you with tips about preparing for appointments and talking with health providers.

How can DVA help?

You might be eligible to book a funded Veterans' Health Check with your GP to look at your current issues and have some extra time to talk about a treatment plan.

Your GP can organise a DVA-funded Home Medicines review to ensure you understand what each of the medications you take is for and why you need it.

Your GP can help you access DVA-funded allied health treatment to help you establish some lifestyle changes or exercises to help with common health conditions.

DVA supports funding the necessary health care that you are eligible for. We encourage you to make wise choices after you talk with your healthcare team about what health care you really need.

Examples of low value care

Arthroscopy

Arthroscopy (inserting a telescope) of the knee used to be very common for osteoarthritis and degenerate meniscal tears. The evidence now suggests that this procedure is no better than non-surgical treatment (like physio) in uncomplicated knee arthritis or meniscal tears, but has more complications. It should be avoided in people over 50 years of age.

Antibiotics

Using antibiotics when they are not needed can lead to them no longer working to treat infection as the bacteria become resistant. Most colds and flus are caused by a virus and antibiotics won't help you get better any faster (but might give you diarrhoea). This is why your GP is reluctant to prescribe antibiotics for these illnesses.

Other unnecessary medications

Sometimes a person will start a new medicine – from their doctor or bought at the chemist – and they just keep taking it, even though the reason they started taking it has improved. Sometimes they get a side effect from the medicine, like nausea, and another medicine is added to treat that.

Their GP may not be aware of everything a person is taking if it was started by another doctor or at the chemist. You can see how easily people can end up on several medications that are no longer needed. The more medications you take, the greater the risk that you will get a side effect, or that they will interact and cause harm.

Introducing DVA's inaugural Chief Psychiatrist Associate Professor Jon Lane



Jon Lane at the Role 3 Medical Treatment Facility, Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan



The Department's new chief adviser on mental health policy and programs brings expertise direct from the front line.

DVA has created a significant new executive position to provide the Department and our clients with dedicated psychiatric expertise.

Reporting directly to the Secretary, DVA's first Chief Psychiatrist, Associate Professor Jonathan Lane, leads the psychiatric, mental health and clinical governance work in policy and programs across the Department. His extensive military, medical and psychiatry experience strongly supports a direct connection and deep understanding of veteran needs.

Jon (as he prefers to be known) is looking forward to leveraging that experience in the job.

'I experienced my own mental health struggles after my deployment to Afghanistan,' Jon says, 'so I am a firm believer in providing military-aware mental health support to veterans, current ADF personnel, and their immediate families.'

Jon enlisted in the Australian Army in 1989. He completed a psychology degree part-time while working as a soldier before being accepted into Medicine as an Army-sponsored medical student in 2000. During 2007–2010, he worked as a Regimental Medical Officer for

the Army, then transferred to the Reserves to undertake his psychiatry training in Hobart.

Jon continues to serve in a range of Reserve roles and is currently a Lieutenant Colonel.

In 2013, Jon deployed to Afghanistan as an embedded psychiatric provider with the US Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit in Kandahar for 6 months, where he was the first ADF psychiatrist to be embedded with US forces. This experience gave him direct exposure to the immediate consequences of combat, as well as the acute impact it has on the service personnel involved in operations.

This was a pivotal moment in both his life and career: 'It gave me a concrete personal insight into operations, operational mental health, and the consequences,' says Jon.

Post-deployment, Jon experienced challenges known to other veterans when transitioning from operations: depression, PTSD, burnout, and having to deal with the impacts on himself and his family. He navigated all of this while concurrently treating many of his patients for similar issues.

Jon now brings this lived experience to his work, both in informing Departmental policy and procedure, and assisting others to understand the veteran experience:

'My passion for improving the mental health of military, veteran and emergency services

personnel comes from my lived experience, as well as the burden of responsibility I feel for my mates,' he reflects.

'It's important to me to help service personnel understand their sense of service identity, service culture, the transition process from the ADF, and to improve their mental health, well-being and social functioning.'

Driven by this passion, Jon was awarded a 2015 Churchill Fellowship to pursue these goals. He developed and delivered culturally specific peer-led group programs for military, veterans and first responders to help them understand and manage the impacts of their service. His most recent is an 8-week Stress, Resilience and Functioning program currently being delivered by Open Arms in Tasmania. (See *Vetaffairs* August 2024.)

Jon believes that service personnel, including those who struggle with exposure to traumatic events, need first line interventions such as these forms of community-based programs rather than relying solely on mental health clinicians.

'Programs that focus on improving functioning, delivered by people who have "been there and done that", without medicalising or pathologising their experiences, are an important part of recovery,' he explains.

Jon's commitment to mental health extends beyond research and clinical practice. He does archery as both a sport and an activity that improves mental wellbeing and was the archery coach for the Australian Invictus Games team from 2017 to 2022.

Jon is the current chair of the Network for the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Military, Veterans and Emergency Services Personnel at the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. He has submitted evidence to various commissions of inquiry, including the Royal Commission, and is an accomplished academic.

Jon sits on a number of advisory groups for veterans and first responders. He is also actively involved with ex-service organisations and delivers teaching and training to a wide range of organisations for these personnel.

'My philosophy is that as veterans, we need to help ourselves,' he says. 'I see my job as helping people do that – empowering them to be the best they can.'

We look forward to tapping into his expertise to improve the mental health of veterans – welcome Jon!

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Have your say on aged care services and supports



Veterans and their families are encouraged to complete a short survey to share their experiences accessing aged care services and supports, and provide suggestions for further improvement.

Navigating aged care services can be challenging and confusing for veterans and their families. The survey aims to better understand the needs of ageing veterans and help to tailor and improve our service offerings.

DVA offers a range of care services that can help you stay in your home or support your return home after a hospital stay. These services also help

your carer, or can guide your move into residential aged care.

The survey should only take around 10 minutes to complete, depending on your answers. Participation is entirely voluntary and your responses will be anonymous.

To provide feedback, visit www.dva.gov.au/aac-survey.

Did you know there are DVA offices in most states and territories, but **we only have ONE postal address?**



To ensure we receive your mail quickly, always address it to:
GPO Box 9998, Brisbane QLD 4001

Redirecting mail from street addresses and outdated PO boxes costs time and money. By using the one correct address, we can respond to you faster and avoid unnecessary expenses.

If you don't want to send postal mail, you can always reach us via:

MyService: through www.my.gov.au

Telephone: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

Email: www.dva.gov.au/about/contact-us/feedback-form

Access a fully funded health check with your GP



Have you recently left the ADF?

Veterans are most at risk of mental and physical health conditions in the early years after they transition out of the ADF.

To help you manage your health, take action to stay well, address health concerns and develop a relationship with your GP, you can access a fully funded Veteran Health Check through DVA.

The Veteran Health Check is a comprehensive health assessment completed by your GP that covers all aspects of your health and wellbeing, including your physical and mental health.

Veterans who have served at least one day in the ADF and transitioned out of the Defence Force since 1 July 2019 are eligible for an annual Veteran Health Check for the first 5 years following transition.

A one-off Veteran Health Check is available to all other ADF members who transitioned prior to 30 June 2019.

You can access this service through your DVA Veteran Card, at no cost to you.

Keep on top of your health and book in for a 45-minute appointment with a GP. (Just make sure they accept the DVA Veteran Card.)

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

Who can access the Booked Car with Driver service?



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Veteran Card holders with eligibility under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 who are:

- ✓ **Aged 80 years or over OR**
- ✓ **Living with dementia (any age) OR**
- ✓ **Legally blind (any age) OR**
- ✓ **Receiving DCP Special Rate (TPI) or EDA**

OR ✓ **79 years or younger and meet one or more of the specified conditions**

Specified conditions for veteran card holders 79 years or younger

- A chronic or temporary condition that makes using public transport challenging.
Including but not limited to frailty, incontinence.
- Any mental or physical condition that severely limits independence.
Including but not limited to respiratory issues, amputation, arthritis, cardiac disorders, vascular disease, paralysis, significant muscle control or coordination issues, significant mental disorders, psychosis.
- Recent surgery or treatment that makes travelling by public transport difficult.



www.dva.gov.au/bcwd

Veteran White Card holders who meet the above criteria must be travelling for treatment of a condition covered by their card to access BCWD. To discuss your access or to make a booking, call 1800 550 455.

Disability Compensation Payment (DCP) at the Special Rate (commonly known as TPI) or the Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) rate automatically meet the medical condition criterion

PO4510 FEB2025

Upgraded systems a feature of new Abrams tank

All-digital systems, a remote weapon station and the capability to fire airburst rounds feature on the Army's newly arrived M1A2 Abrams main battle tank.

Warrant Officer Class One Bernie Maus said the tank's most significant upgrade was a commander's independent thermal viewer, a sighting system that operates separately from the turret. 'If my main gun is facing 3 o'clock, I can scan in another direction and quickly bring the main gun on target without needing to direct the gunner,' WO1 Maus said. 'That's a huge upgrade to the system.'

The M1A2 also comes with an ammunition data link that allows for programming new ammunition coming into service for different effects, like point detonate, delay and airburst. Additionally, the electrical system is now fully digital, powered by 2 computers that continuously analyse and process information across the system.

'From a maintenance perspective, we've reduced the effort by about



40 per cent because the system tells the crew exactly which subsystem has an issue, so they don't need to check everything manually,' WO1 Maus said. Improved diagnostics allow for immediate repairs, as the crew can access system error codes, address specific issues and get the tank back into operation faster.

Another upgrade is the tank's remotely controlled weapon station, enabling the crew to operate a mounted weapon from inside the vehicle, keeping them protected from enemy fire. The new fleet will comprise 75 upgraded M1A2 SEPv3 tanks by 2025, with crew conversion training already under way.

Honouring the courage and sacrifice of Sheean VC

The Australian Navy Cadets Training Ship *Mersey* has been renamed Training Ship *Sheean* to honour the sacrifice of the late Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean VC in the Second World War. Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Mark Hammond announced the renaming after a Remembrance Day ceremony in Latrobe, Tasmania, while unveiling a new statue of Sheean VC funded by the Tasmanian Government and Latrobe Council.

While serving on board HMAS *Armidale* in December 1942, the ship came under aerial attack from Japanese aircraft. Ordinary Seaman Sheean helped free a life raft, allowing his shipmates to escape the sinking ship, before he returned to the ship's Oerlikon gun and fired at the enemy, hitting at least 2 of their aircraft. Despite being wounded in the chest and back, the 18 year old strapped himself to the gun and continued firing until the ship sank, taking him to his death.



A valuable exchange in Ukraine

Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) soldiers extolled the value of training with Australian personnel on the latest courses to assist their fight against Russia's illegal invasion of their country. Despite having extensive experience on the frontline, they said it was beneficial to exchange ideas, and that the Australian soldiers provided them with a different perspective when planning tactical actions.

'The Australians have taught us how to plan everything step by step instead of just passing information person to person, and they have taught us how to do the planning process very thoroughly,' said an AFU soldier on the platoon commander battle course. 'It has broadened our horizons on how to approach things. Sometimes our method works well and other times we can take some great experience from the Australian Army teachings.'



The 3 key training activities being conducted were trench warfare, live-fire training and urban operations with a focus on tactical care of the combat casualty, explosive ordnance and drone capabilities.

Australian contingent commander Major Ben Carolan said Operation Kudu was a unique experience because of the mutual learning between the training staff and trainees. 'There's combat veterans here, and they educated us on what it's like to fight on the frontline, and to fight for their friends and families,' he said. 'For Australia, it is important for us to provide support and assist Ukraine to help fight for their sovereignty.'

Resupply missions underway for icy continent



Defence has delivered much-needed supplies to help scientists in Antarctica discover the secrets behind prehistoric climate change. Under Operation Southern Discovery, Air Force provides regular airlifts for the Australian Antarctic Program supporting scientific research such as the Million Year Ice Core project.

Air Force flew 2 trips from Melbourne to Antarctica in November, carrying more than 20 pallets of food, building materials and general cargo. Crews fly during the Antarctic summer months, but even in the comparatively warm period, the weather was still an element to be reckoned with.

Loadmasters had a window of less than 2 hours to unload their cargo and take off before the weather turned. If meteorologists warned about hazardous weather, the crew would be forced to leave as quickly as possible. If there was ice on the wings, the aircraft wouldn't fly properly.

It was the first time RAAF C-17A Globemaster III pilot Flight Lieutenant Andrew Muhl had landed his 128 tonne – plus cargo – aircraft on an icy runway atop a 150m-thick glacier. 'The Wilkins Aerodrome staff till the top of the glacier so the runway's grooved and there's a bit of friction,' he said. 'When we landed and turned around, you could see where the tyres had been. There was pretty much ice under the tyre tracks.'

Open Arms' Community and Peer Program celebrates 5 years

It is just over 5 years since Open Arms' Community and Peer Program was formally opened to veterans and families throughout Australia to help support them through their mental health recovery journeys. Since then the program, through a Lived Experience Workforce, has become an integral part of Open Arms.

Community and Peer Workers are veterans and veteran family members who walk along side Open Arms' clients and their families. They utilise their lived experience and expertise to understand and overcome client challenges and access the support they need to live their best lives.

We thank those who were there at the beginning, those who have made the program such a success over the past 5 years, and the Lived Experience Workforce who have supported so many veterans and family members.

Here are some of their stories.

OPEN ARMS
Veterans & Families Counselling

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

PEER JOE 'Just a dude on the recovery bus'

Just 18 months ago Joe, one of Open Arms' newest recruits to its Community and Peer Program, admits he was in a bad way struggling with chronic anxiety.

'I'd always wanted to serve in the Army and when I got out in 2018, I mourned my old life and wondered who I was without that green uniform,' Joe explains. 'Over time I became snappy, developed insomnia, was not loving life and my mental health was going south.'

'Added to that, my oldest son's disabilities had gone to extreme levels. We'd actually lost count of the number of operations and procedures he'd had. After my family and close mates convinced me to get help, I called Open Arms in 2023 and saw a psychologist for 10 months.'

'I haven't looked back. Not every day is perfect but my anxiety has got so much better.'

Armed with a more positive outlook on life, the Army veteran decided to pay it forward by joining Open Arms later that year to help others get their own lives back on track.

'A mate sent me the position, told me to apply for it and said he would be angry if I didn't because it fitted me to a tee,' Joe says. 'And I'm glad he did. I haven't felt this kind of purpose since my time in the green. This was the work I was meant to do and I love it.'

In his new role, Joe describes himself as just 'a dude on the recovery bus' who helps veterans to climb into the driver's seat, put both hands firmly on the wheel and steer their own journey to good mental health.

'I know what it is like to go down a dark road, make the difficult decision to seek help and discover there is light at the end of the tunnel,' he says. 'I am on the same mental health journey as the veterans I help, I am just that little bit further along.'

Joe also hopes that he can help dispel any remaining stigmas around mental health which may still exist for some veterans.



'There is nothing shameful about seeking help or doing what you need to do to make the best possible recovery,' he says. 'I've seen the effects my mental health has had on my family. My wife also shared that experience with me. Getting help means I am now a better husband, father and am generally travelling better.'

Joe says that after just 12 months in his new role he has already had a 'goosebumps' moment at a community engagement event.

'Having a client approach me who wasn't aware of what supports they have available to them,' he said. 'I'm now part of their recovery journey. Being involved even in a small component of someone's recovery is an honour.'

Joe says he is very happy to have joined the ranks of Launceston's Open Arms Lived Experience Workforce, who are all dedicated to making a genuine difference to the lives of local veterans: 'I work with an awesome team of Peers and Clinicians and as a team, we help clients to achieve some pretty amazing goals.'

OPEN ARMS

PEER ROB

'I realised it was not my role to fix people'

When Rob left the military in 2011 with significant lower leg injuries, Community and Peer work wasn't on his radar when it came to his dream job.

'I didn't know what being a Community and Peer Worker was. I wanted to be a police officer, a firefighter or a paramedic,' Rob says. 'After doing some career counselling, peer work actually came in 10th on my list!'

Fast forward to 2019 and, after seeing an ad for the new program, he knew instantly this was the role he had been looking for.

'I felt that the job description was written for me' Rob recalls. 'After I transitioned from the Army, I went through some mental health challenges along the way and really did struggle. I knew I could use my experiences to support veterans and family members to overcome challenges in their lives. I understood what they were going through and felt I could draw on those experiences to ensure their journey didn't have to be as difficult as mine.'

Three months down the track Rob knew he had made the right decision: 'At that point I had a really heartfelt, deep moment with a client where I had supported him to make a drastic life change. I knew then that it was going to be a very rewarding career for the soul. I can honestly say for the first time, post service, I was genuinely happy. I felt like I had a purpose again.'

Rob says that in the 4 years he was an Open Arms Community and Peer Worker he came to understand the importance of empowering veterans and families to make positive changes in their lives.

'I realised it was not my role to fix people, rather it was to help them along their journey to make changes if that is what they wanted to do, and to identify what recovery could look like for them,' he explains. 'In a peer-to-peer relationship we can use shared experiences and stories to help each other understand what might be happening in the client's life.'

'Being intentional in how I share my recovery story allows the client to connect to elements and see that recovery is possible. The way they think, feel and act today doesn't have to be their reality of tomorrow.'

The relationships Rob developed with clients had a significant impact on his own wellbeing. In fact, he credits one of his veteran clients for changing his life for the better.

'A client and I started going to lawn bowling every Wednesday to help him connect with people and to be part of a group,' he says. 'It made such a difference to both our lives, we actually started a bowls group in WA for veterans, families and first responders, which has gone on to make a positive impact in so many other peoples' lives.'

'I now play competition bowls (and) it is something I do for me. Having that community connection and social engagement fills my cup. I get a chance to recharge and that makes me a better husband and father in the long run.'



While Rob eventually left the Community and Peer Program to seek new challenges within DVA, he has since returned to Open Arms to the Community and Peer Program in a management role.

'I feel very fortunate to be able to continue supporting veterans and family members,' he explains. 'Being a Community and Peer Worker changed me as a person, for the better. It helped me to understand who I am and how I could use my experiences to help others. There are times when I miss the people and the work and being invited into someone's life to help them with their personal growth.'



The popular Military Life podcast recently interviewed two Open Arms' Community and Peer Workers (Peers), Jess and Sarah, to shine a spotlight on how their lived experience plays a vital role in helping veterans and families to overcome mental health struggles.

The 30-minute episode was recorded to celebrate the 5-year anniversary of the Open Arms Community and Peer Program. By sharing their military backgrounds and experiences of mental health struggles, Jess and Sarah provide understanding and empathy for people in the veteran

community struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.

As a veteran and the spouse of a veteran, Jess (pictured on the right) says having lived experience helps Peers connect with clients on a deeper level.

'The main difference between our Peer workers and our other services within Open Arms is that we are a non-clinical service so we are not offering counselling,' explains Jess. 'We're helping with that mental health journey with other support services that are non-clinical.'

TUNE IN – it's a Military Life

'It's not just linking in with support networks, it's also around helping with figuring out what they're doing for employment, so linking in with services that can help with job resumes, helping to look for jobs, but also having someone to sound-board ideas off.'

'They might have a milestone happen, a marriage breakdown, some conflict in the family due to mental health issues, they might just need extra support either as a carer of someone with mental health issues or, on the other side, they are the person who has the mental health issues.'

Jess also fully understands the impact that transitioning from military to civilian life has on both individuals and families.

'Transition, whether it's for a family member or a veteran, is a huge milestone,' she adds. 'The demands that Defence members have – whether they are current serving or once they are ex-serving – are very unique to the general population.'

As the spouse of a current serving ADF member, Sarah sees her role at Open Arms as a great way to give back to the Defence community.

'Having had a mental health recovery journey of my own, it was really a good chance to jump in and support the community that has not only supported me, but who have so many unique challenges and who also have a lot of amazing strengths,' Sarah says.

'As family members and spouses of Defence members, we are constantly transitioning – we are good at it. It is something that we may not necessarily want to do but it is a skill in the end. My clients can be really proud of those skills, it can see them move forward with a positive outcome.'

You can listen to the podcast with Jess and Sarah, on Apple Music or Spotify or visit the Military Life website at <https://militarylife.com.au/podcast/#episode183>.

Employers get taste of Reserve service



In February, nineteen senior executives from some of Australia's top private and public organisations were put through their paces as would-be Reservists at ADF's Boss X International. The event provided employers of ADF Reservists and leading influential business people with first-hand experiences of Reserve service.

Held in Malaysia, the executives from some of Australia's largest employers, including Qantas, Boeing and BHP, learnt basic field craft and participated in military training activities with safety and supervision by Australian Army Rifle Company Butterworth.

Head Reserve Cadet Support Division, Major General Doug Laidlaw, said Boss X International helps employers gain a deeper understanding of the training, skills, knowledge and capabilities that Reservists bring back to their civilian workplaces.

'Boss X International is a key Defence activity that showcases the benefits of employing Reservists and allows us to thank those employers for their valued support,' Major General Laidlaw said. 'Leadership, motivation and teamwork are core values developed and used by Reservists and, of course, these skills are also highly valued by any employer.'

'Understanding the benefits of a shared workforce will enable employers to manage that workforce for the benefit of their organisation, their employees and more broadly the Australian community.'

The Australian Army Research Centre recently conducted group interviews with 60 Army Reservists and a nationwide survey of 800 civilian employers or managers, capturing their views about the inclusion and treatment of Army Reservists within their organisation.

Boss X International 2025 participants; Leonie Nowland is third from the right. (Image: Defence)

According to the research, civilian employers have limited appreciation for the transferability of skills attained through Reserve service. This factor, coupled with the short notice that Reservists are often provided to attend ADF courses, creates or exacerbates workplace conflict.

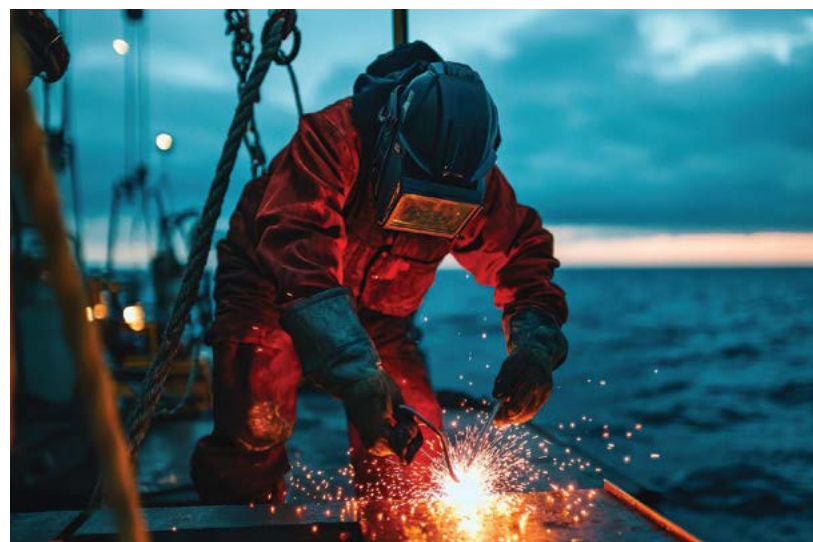
However, it also found that belief that the military is intrinsically important significantly increases employer/manager support for their employees' part-time military service. It is also a critical motivator for Reservists to continue their military service in the face of workplace obstacles and disincentives.

One satisfied Boss X International participant who concurs is DVA's own Leonie Nowland, head of Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling. Leonie said she was privileged to attend the exercise.

'The purpose of this immersion experience was to become familiar with the work undertaken by ADF Reservists,' Leonie said. 'It was a very humbling experience to witness the hard work, dedication and conditions willingly endured by the Reservists. I was also impressed by the very strong sense of teamwork and leadership displayed, as well as the sense of humour!'

'A highlight of the trip was flying in the C-17 aircraft and meeting other employers of Reservists. The experience has emphasised the role we employers can play in supporting both the individuals concerned and the broader role of the ADF, and has reconfirmed my support for our Reservists.'

For more information on the benefits of being a Defence Reservist employer, visit www.reserveemployersupport.gov.au.



Defence industry careers resource to help veterans

Western Australia launched a new online resource to help Defence veterans transition to careers in Western Australia's defence industry.

The Veterans Defence Industry Career Explorer resource helps veterans to see how their ADF skills and experience align with occupations across the defence industry domains of maritime, air, land, space, and information and cyber.

The Career Explorer encompasses more than 150 occupations, including the 21 in-demand jobs required to sustain current and upcoming defence projects. Occupations span the fields of engineering, information and communication technology, project management and supply chain.

The interactive database enables veterans to determine which defence industry occupations are likely to be a suitable job fit, based on their ADF role, rank and qualification. It gives veterans a comprehensive overview of specific defence industry occupations, including each occupation's job description, salary range, the day-to-day tasks and activities, and the qualifications required.

The Career Explorer is an invaluable resource for the specialist defence industry careers team at the Rockingham Jobs and Skills Centre, who work closely with veterans to determine training and career pathways into the defence industry.

Each year in WA, approximately 300 ADF members transition into a civilian life and the next stage of their career. Veterans have many transferable skills and combined with their defence security clearance status, are excellent candidates for careers in the defence industry.

You can try the Veterans Defence Industry Career Explorer at www.theotherforce.wa.gov.au/veterans-defence-industry-career-explorer.

Guiding our future leaders – Australian Army Cadet Volunteers

Article courtesy of the Department of Defence

The Australian Army Cadets are looking for veterans to “answer the call” to support a worthy organisation.

With nearly 20,000 young people currently involved in the Army-enabled Youth Development Program, the Australian Army Cadets offers a unique opportunity for former serving members to assist in shaping Australia's future community leaders.

Volunteering as an Army Cadet Staff (ACS), veterans can share their lived experiences, skills and leadership principles through army-like activities in a safe learning environment to youth aged 12 to 19.

Brigadier David McCammon DSM and Bar, Commander of the Australian Army Cadets, said the positive impact ACS provide is tangible.

‘A leader is only as good as their role model, and with the Army Cadets that role model can set a path to greater things,’ Brigadier McCammon said. ‘Volunteers with

the ACS deliver approved programs which have consistently inspired and built the resilience of participants, some of whom have gone on to serve the nation within Defence.’

While the focus is squarely on the execution of the Cadet-led activities, for ACS, particularly veterans, the experience and environment can be like a visit from a familiar friend.

‘Due to the nature of the Cadets and its place with the Australian Army, many veterans involved in the program find a sense of solace and rediscover purpose that is sometimes lacking post-service life,’ Brigadier McCammon said. ‘That feeling of belonging, underpinned by the familiar core values of Army and the uniform, make volunteering as ACS very rewarding.’

For veterans who want to be involved with the Australian Army Cadets, the process starts with a

visit to the official website, where all the information is available.

The Australian Army Cadets is an opportunity to volunteer alongside other like-minded individuals, forge new friendships and importantly undertake youth development in support of Army's nation-building initiatives as part of a great team.

For more information visit: www.armycadets.gov.au



Top right:
Australian Army Cadets
Captain James Cox

Right:
Cadet Fatima Naseer (left)
and Cadet Under Officer
Olivia Ambrosini



VetPaths – A support pathway for veterans entering the Australian Public Service

Each year, approximately 6,000 members leave the ADF with unique skills, perspectives, and experiences that they can bring to the Australian Public Service (APS). VetPaths promotes employment opportunities to the veteran community and supports veterans to secure APS employment, which in turn enriches the APS through the unique skills, experience, and perspectives they bring.

DVA is the lead agency delivering VetPaths on behalf of the APS, having first piloted the program in 2022, then expanded it to include Services Australia and Defence from last year.

We have used insights gained from the 2024 pathway to enhance VetPaths and in 2025 are refreshing our approach. The pathway will be delivered over a 6-month period, with support centred around the pillars of development, connection and wellness. As before, participants will engage in formal learning and development, career mentoring, and activities for wellness and peer support to ensure they thrive in their APS careers.

Through the pathway, participants will be equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed at work. They will build a strong support network and be offered a series of wellness workshops tailored around their identified needs.

For more information about the VetPaths, visit the DVA website (search for ‘VetPaths – the APS Veteran Employment Pathway’).

New guides, tools and webinars from the Veteran Employment Program

The Veteran Employment Program has launched a new range of resources now available online to help Australia's employers tap into the rich pool of veteran skills.



Matthew Lodden from Zilor Group

The resources include templates, guides and strategies to support recruitment, retention and support of veterans in the workplace. They also provide guidance on creating inclusive environments, establishing mentoring programs, and offering professional development to support veterans in their roles.

These resources align with the 3 pillars of DVA's Veteran Employment Commitment (VEC) which include Recruitment, Support and Retention, and Leadership and Public Commitment. The VEC recognises organisations for their workplace policies and

practices that support veteran employment.

Depending on the veteran employment activities actively demonstrated, an organisation may be recognised as a Veteran Employment Supporter, a Veteran Friendly Employer, or a Veteran Employer of Choice.

Heath Smith, Managing Director of GSA Management Consulting, a Veteran Employer of Choice, says: ‘If you don't have your door open to the value of veteran employment inside your organisation, you're missing out. Being a member of the VEC provides great access to

resources that can make sure that we stay sharp in terms of our value proposition to veterans.’

Matthew Lodden is the Managing Director of Zilor Group, another Veteran Employer of Choice and winner of the Outstanding Employer of the Year Award at the Prime Minister's National Veterans' Employment Awards 2023.

Matthew is also keen to highlight the importance of supporting veterans: ‘As a business owner and veteran, I feel extremely proud to assist other veterans in their careers.’

To further support employers, DVA is also delivering a Veteran Employer Webinar Series. These webinars are designed to provide practical advice from employers and subject matter experts on implementing and improving veteran employment practices.

Organisations of all sizes and industries are encouraged to explore these resources, register for upcoming webinars and find out how to join the VEC today on the Veteran Employment Program website at www.veteranemployment.gov.au.

SONGS OF **Anzac**

Music has a way of evoking emotion, connecting us to a moment in time or sometimes to someone we've never met. Music ensures we never forget. The songs of Anzac Day in particular bring about a special set of emotions and take us back to the battlefields where so many of our own fought and fell.

James Blundell's family inspirations

***Almost Anzac Day* is one of those songs, from award-winning country music artist James Blundell. Written by Terry McArthur and Mika Koukkanen, the song reminds us of the toll of serving your country.**

'Our family has been involved in service for generations,' says James. 'My brother and I have been the first to not serve. My father and grandfather both served, and my grandfather saw major conflict in the Second World War. My oldest mentors have also been returned service personnel from the Second World War.'

'They've always inspired me with their resilience and stoicism, but I've also seen the struggle.'

James thought his life would be all horses and cattle after growing up on a farm in Stanthorpe, Queensland. However, after he started singing in his early twenties, he travelled a different path.

'Music's been in my life right from the start,' he says. 'I can't remember ever not playing the guitar - I picked it up when I was 4 and it just became a lifelong passion.'

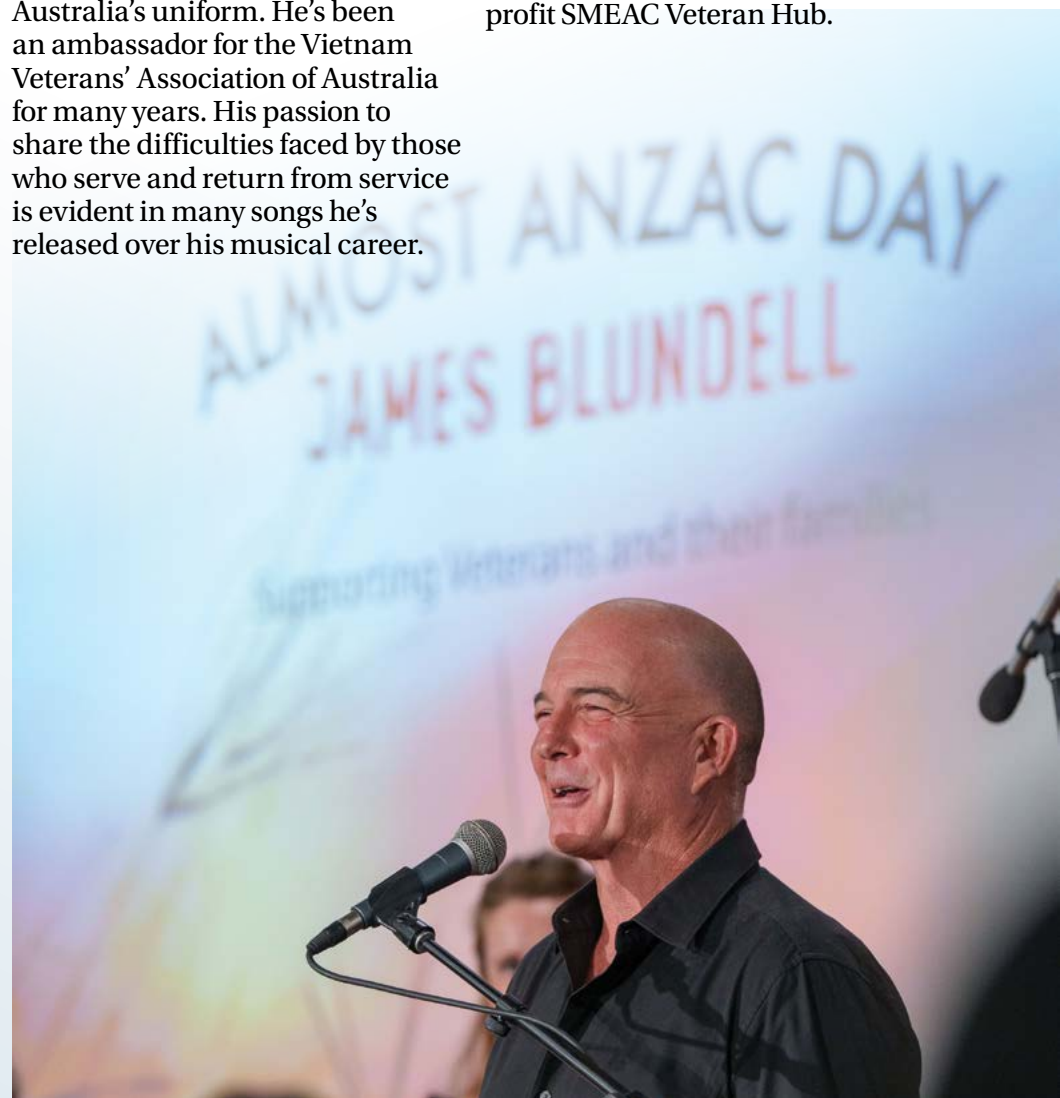
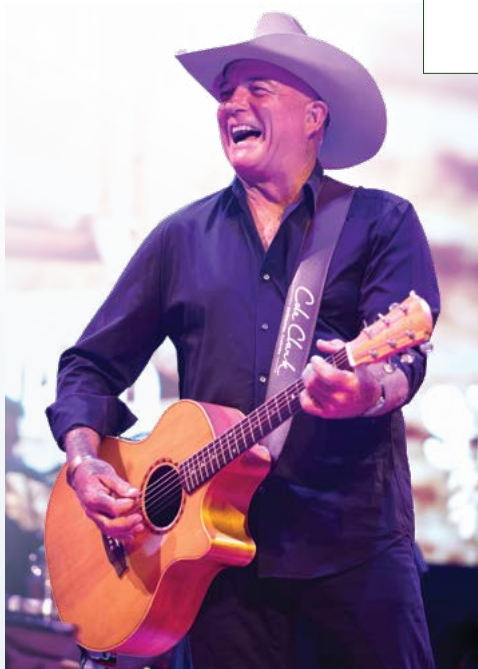
'I've been privileged to perform in several theatres across the last 20 years where we have been deployed as a nation. In every single instance, I come away from there thinking that the people who represent us in uniform abroad are some of the best in Australia. They have an ironclad reputation

for being hard and fair, incredibly efficient soldiers.'

James has always been very appreciative of those who wear Australia's uniform. He's been an ambassador for the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia for many years. His passion to share the difficulties faced by those who serve and return from service is evident in many songs he's released over his musical career.

'The minute I saw the lyrics for *Almost Anzac Day*, which articulated a reality for so many, I was reminded of my work with veterans over the last 30 years. I felt compelled to record the song. I'm a big fan of the song and I get a thrill out of performing it every time.'

The launch of *Almost Anzac Day* at Hyde Park Memorial in Sydney in April 2024 was an enormous success. All proceeds from the sale of the single are donated to not-for-profit SMEAC Veteran Hub.





Amanda's song from the heart



When Amanda Heartsong left the military, she never thought she would become a singer and songwriter. It hadn't crossed her mind that she would be able to express her experiences through music.

'I started in the military quite young - in the air training corps from my teenage years and the Air Force for 15 years before being medically discharged after Afghanistan,' Amanda says.

In 2007, Amanda, also known as 'Helmi', deployed to Iraq. When she returned home, she had her son. That changed everything.

'Afghanistan was my first deployment after my son was born and it really affected me,' she says. 'Some of the things we saw there were horrific. I thought about dying over there and my son being left without a mum.'

After Amanda was discharged, she stumbled into a musical career, attending the Country Music Academy in Tamworth where she started songwriting. It was here that Amanda wrote a song that drew on all these experiences - *I can't come home from the War (The War Song)*.

In the song, Amanda asks her father to be her pallbearer as she contemplates ending her own life. 'When I returned from Afghanistan, I was in a dark place and I attempted suicide,' she shares. 'My dad was there when I woke up in the hospital and he was beside himself. He couldn't imagine what I was going through.'

'During an online songwriting retreat with the academy, I realised he would have been my pallbearer if things had been different in that moment. With that thought, the song just came out.'

'Writing a song about the experience was like exposure therapy, helping me re-live the experience in different forms. When I play it on stage, I have the memory of people and their responses rather than the memory of war. Even when I recorded it, I had the memories of being in the studio rather than the memories of war.'

Amanda feels her experience after the military changed her perspective on Anzac Day. It is no longer just about being proud of the country and mateship.

'When I got out of the Air Force and my partner had taken his life, Anzac Day took on a whole new meaning. I couldn't function, let alone go to any marches after that. Anzac Day would only make me think about how all those young men, some as old as my own son now, would have felt. They probably thought they were so lucky to sign up with their mates and then they actually had to face the reality at that beach in Gallipoli.'

'For 10 years, I couldn't move past it. Then eventually, I was invited to sing the National Anthem at my local RSL and I was reminded again of how important it is. I still think about the trauma of those soldiers in Gallipoli, but now I can associate Anzac Day with mateship and community again.'



Peter Cambell's tribute to uncle Jimmy

Anzac Day is one of Peter Campbell's favourite days of the year. If he had to choose to wake up in a loop repeating the same day over and over again, it would be Anzac Day.

The Toowoomba singer songwriter started out in a cover band as a teenager before joining the Army and then the Police Force for 25 years. Eventually, he fell right back into music.

Peter was inspired by his great uncle's story to write The Lost Soldier with help from his friend Brendon Walmsley. The song won the Anzac Song of the Year Award at the 2020 Tamworth Songwriters Association Awards.

'I remember mum talking about Uncle Jimmy who served with the 31st Battalion and was killed in the First World War at the Battle of Fromelles,' says Peter. 'His body was never recovered.'

Peter is a former soldier from the 8th/9th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (8/9 RAR) himself and came up with the idea of the song while at the 2014 Anzac Day march in Toowoomba.

He wrote the chorus in his head and, after the march, rushed off to write it down. But with no pen or paper to be found, he ended up sending it to a friend in a text message.

Through the song, Peter was inspired to tell the story of Private James Stephen Farrell (Uncle Jimmy) writing to his family from the battlefields, when one day his mail stops arriving at the homestead. A story familiar to so many. Sadly, the family come to find that their son has been lost, never to return home.

A series of eerie coincidences followed as Peter unravelled the story of Uncle Jimmy to include in the song.

'As part of the promotion for the song, I was featured in the local paper and that's how I met my distant cousin, Brett Farrell, who was also related to Uncle Jimmy,' Peter recalls.

'As it turns out, Brett and I have been living parallel lives.'



Brett also served in 8/9 RAR, used to live in the same suburb as me, went to the same primary school as my kids, and played in the same rugby club as my son. To top it off, Brett's sister married the guy who stood next to me in roll call at school every morning!

'It's been an interesting journey. I would never have met my distant cousins if I'd never written the song. We've become good friends and are in regular contact.'

When Commonwealth soldiers were discovered in a mass grave near Pheasant Wood in Fromelles, Peter provided a DNA sample in the hope



one could be his Uncle Jimmy. However, it didn't match any of the bodies they identified.

Peter keeps the memory of his great uncle alive through the song. Lost but never forgotten.

You can listen to James Blundell's 'Almost Anzac Day' via his website (www.jamesblundell.com.au).

Amanda Heartsong's 'The War Song' is available on Spotify.

Peter Campbell's 'The Lost Soldier' is on YouTube.

If you need support, Open Arms Families & Veterans Counselling is available 24/7 on 1800 011 046.



Sailing into skills and serenity

When it's veterans training veterans in on-water skills, it's more than just a boating course.

Rick Allen finds it difficult to move around these days. Severe back injuries and Charcot foot from his Navy days have slowed him down. But once on deck, the Captain of the *MV Southern Explorer* finds his sea legs and gets the old glint back in his eye.

'They love it, they're gob-smacked about how much they learn,' he says of the trainees he welcomes aboard. 'As a bonus, I teach everyone how to skin, bone and gut a flathead in one movement!'

Rick joined the RAN in 1972 at just 15 years of age. He departed as an Electronic Technical Weapons specialist after 16 years of service in the permanent Navy and Reserves.

Rick's varied post-naval career has included work as a saddler, a ferry driver on Sydney Harbour, and Head Skipper for salmon industry giant Tassal, where the course originated. 'I just wanted a deckhand, but the program I developed back then was so successful that a local Registered Training Organisation picked it up and I delivered it in collages around Tasmania,' he says.

In 2018, Rick 'found the right vessel' and set up his own boat cruise business. Then he was struck down by Charcot arthropathy of the foot, the investment backer pulled out, Rick lost his deposit, and COVID-19 hit – 'all within 3 weeks'.

Rick was eventually able to buy another boat – the *MV Southern Explorer* – but by this time his perspective had changed.

'My new goal was to offer the vessel to veterans and first responders – to give something back,' he says. And so the On Water Skills Course with Marine Radio – in 3-day and 9-day versions – was born.

It started with day trips and a crew of 3–4 fellow veterans Rick met through Mates4Mates. The



The MV Southern Explorer (aka The Classroom)

course now teaches seamanship skills such as all manner of rope work, rigging gear and loads, securing anchors, operating winches, windlasses, hawser and moorings. It includes all aspects of safety at sea including "man overboard" drills, lashing and securing equipment, and towing and being towed.

Each Task Book Module course is free and takes only 2–3 participants to ensure their training is comprehensive, their supervision close, and the assessment worthy of its completion certificate and Marine Radio Ticket.

One satisfied graduate is Sister Heather Cowled, a former RAAF Chaplain who continues to serve in hospitals, aged care facilities and at disaster sites.

'I was highly impressed with the ability of the course to be adapted to the needs of the participants and the teaching skills and patience of the instructors,' says Heather. 'I was also impressed with the variety of activities and the way the itinerary allowed time for relaxation and gave us the opportunity to chat informally – I found the one-on-one time with the crew highly valuable.'

Picking up on the last point, Rick says that the trainees have a wide range of reasons for coming on the boat, but it's the lasting personal connections that often end up being the most important.

'They might come for their well-being, or because they want to get into boating or yachting, or to work in the industry,' he says. 'Once the veterans get on board, I tell the crew – "It's not about us, it's about them".'

'They might start off a bit quiet, but by the end of the 9 days they've told you their life story and they want to know ours. The more you deal with veterans the more you realise there are lots of people out there facing the same problems.'

'We're all screwed up in one way or another – we've all faced the demons, PTSD, have been through Open Arms courses etc. You think they're OK on the outside, but inside it's a different story – and that's what we're here for – to help them through.'

Having run 8 courses in the first year, Rick is looking to do 10 during 2025, running the boat down the channel from Hobart and up to 20 miles into the Southern Ocean.



Navy veteran Rick Allen, Captain of the MV Southern Explorer, with Chief Petty Officer Jasper



Former Army Ordnance Sergeant Mel Triffett at the helm of the Southern Explorer

And while his physical health has suffered, Rick Allen's mind is in no danger of slowing down. He is also a published author, with a memoir out on his time as a horseback tour guide.

Rick is currently writing book 4 of 7 in a fictional series about the military exploits of a group of veterans following a nuclear apocalypse. Meanwhile, the *Southern Explorer* continues its journeys of healing for veterans in the calming coastal waters of Tasmania.

Rick Allen's Tasmanian Adventure Cruises, in consortium with RSL Tasmania, has been supported to deliver the on-water skills courses by 2 DVA Veteran Wellbeing Grants. For more on Rick's literary endeavours, visit www.rickallenbooks.com.

‘They saved dozens of lives’

Charity Working Paws Australia is lending a hand to retired military working dogs.

Two veterans in Perth have teamed up to make sure military working dogs enjoy a healthy and happy retirement. Ryan Wilson and Jason Kelly founded their charity Working Paws Australia to provide financial support to handlers when their retired dogs require health care or emergency medical treatment.



Working dogs serve across the ADF: with the Army's Military Police, Combat Engineer Regiments and Special Operations units, as well as the Air Force's Security Forces Squadrons. They work side-by-side their handlers during missions, exercises and training. You'll find them sniffing for armament and bombs, securing air bases, tracking targets and clearing buildings.

It's not an easy life, but for Ryan, their value cannot be overstated.

Ryan served for 19 years with the Army, initially as a Reservist and then 13 years full-time with the Special Air Services Regiment (SASR), completing multiple tours in Afghanistan.

In 2013, Ryan was on patrol with an SASR handler when their dog, Fax, charged into a nearby creek bed. Fax had detected a Taliban insurgent lying in ambush and began attacking immediately, suffering multiple gunshot wounds as a result. The noise alerted Ryan and his partner to the danger and allowed them to engage the insurgent.

Sadly, Fax died because of his wounds, but Ryan has no doubt that the dog's actions saved their lives.

‘No doubt, if Fax wasn't there that day and didn't do his job properly, we would have walked straight into [the Taliban] and one of us, if not both of us, would have been killed,’ says Ryan. ‘That's just one story. Everyone had a story about how a dog saved their life. They would have saved dozens of lives over in Afghanistan.’

Following the incident, Ryan dedicated the rest of his career to working with military dogs. He became a handler himself and was given Keni, a combat assault dog. Keni participated in exercises and training across Australia and internationally, often fast roping from Blackhawk helicopters and parachuting from aircraft.

It was during his time as a handler that Ryan met Jason, an Air Force veteran and dog handler with a 12-year career training and developing new working dogs.

Keni was retired due to spinal injuries caused by his intense service in 2017, and Ryan adopted him. It's standard practice for handlers to take in their retired dogs, however, they receive no further support from the ADF. Like Keni, many of the dogs have service-related injuries or health issues, such as arthritis, and treatments and surgeries can cost thousands of dollars.

‘We didn't think it was quite right that these injuries were caused due to their service and then when they retire, they become the sole financial burden of the veteran,’ Ryan says.

This is where Working Paws Australia seeks to help. Handlers can register their retired military working dog with the charity and donations are used to cover the cost of any treatment. Ryan and Jason are also working hard to establish partnerships with veterinary clinics and animal health organisations to access free or subsidised treatment and vaccinations.

While it's the dogs receiving medical care, Ryan emphasised Working Paws Australia is just as much about supporting their veteran handlers.

‘If they have to make the call that they can't pay for a dog's surgery because they don't have the money, or have to pay for their children, which is totally understandable, then that has a mental impact on them, because they feel like they are letting down their mate,’ Ryan says.

‘We are helping the veteran by removing the financial burden and mental stress that comes with taking care of the dogs in retirement.’

Ryan's dog Keni is 14 years old now, so they have traded swims at the beach for movie nights at home together.

Today, Working Paws Australia supports more than 40 dogs across Australia. Ryan and Jason hope that one day every retired military working dog will be registered with the charity and receiving the care and support they've earned through their service.



Top left: Keni in her service days

Top right: Ryan Wilson (right) and Jason Kelly with Keni

Bottom right: Australian Army special operations soldiers and military working dog Kuga prepare for patrol in Afghanistan. Kuga was the first Australian dog to be awarded the Dickin Medal, colloquially referred to as the ‘Victoria Cross for Animals’. (Photo: Defence)

Working Paws Australia has released a 2025 charity calendar, which features the photos and stories of the retired working dogs it supports. If you are interested in donating or learning more, visit: www.workingpawsaustralia.com.

Looking to connect?

Just get on the radio

By John Saunders
President, Redcliffe and Districts Radio Club
Coordinating Chaplain, 8th Brigade,
Australian Army

These days most people view Ham Radio as a sort of historical sci-fi, but gone are the days of dimly lit sheds, glowing dusty valves, and a plethora of mysterious dials and switches.

No longer the domain of bespectacled old men hunched over Morse Code keys tapping away, modern Amateur (Ham) Radio is a global hobby well and truly in the digital age. It utilises software-defined equipment, ultra-modern transceivers and built-in touch screen interfaces. We're communicating via satellite tracking or bouncing signals off the moon, as well as off the invisible ionosphere.

Ham Radio has come a long way.

Communications modes these days are diverse. There are still some of us who use the old faithful Morse Code, but today even the more modern AM, FM and SSB (Single Side Band) have been supplemented by all forms of digital modes, including digital voice over the air and via interconnected computer systems.

If there is a new mode and a new frequency to be developed, Ham Radio operators will be there experimenting. One of the most exotic modes I've come across involves digital communications at microwave frequencies, bouncing signals off the fuselages of distant aircraft to boost signal ranges.

For those who are technically minded, the sky is no longer the limit with what you can do, what you can construct, and what you can learn. If you can communicate with it, generally we can build it and perfect it.

People who love to communicate, like this Padre, can engage with people down the street, across town or literally around the world. Did I mention chats with astronauts on the International Space Station (ISS)? The ultimate fail-safe for ISS communications is Amateur Radio and all astronauts on the ISS are licenced to operate, and (albeit infrequently) they do.

Ham Radio operators, both men and women, are drawn from all walks of life: doctors, scientists, teachers, caterers and engineers. All of us share a common interest



Ham Radio enthusiast Wendy Cosgrove

in electronics and communications, and yes, we can still build our own equipment and antenna systems!

There seems to be a uniquely high percentage of military and ex-military people involved in the hobby. I guess the camaraderie and the technical nature of what we do appeals to the military type. We are accustomed to working in a regulated environment, and Ham Radio has those familiar left and rights of arc, yet it is technical. Those of us trained in RATEL (radio telephony) will find the transition to the hobby second nature.

Within that familiarity there is tremendous freedom for enjoyment and life enrichment. Mateship with like-minded people is still pivotal to our identity and so it is in the Ham Radio community.

In our club, a large slice of our membership are ex-servies and quite a number of us are veterans. We are drawn from all 3 services and across the enlisted and officer ranks. A signals background is an obvious drawcard, but not a prerequisite. We all come from a variety of corps, trades and musterings. I recently even discovered my (serving) Brigade Commander also holds an Amateur licence.

Ham Radio opens up a broad vista of community and engagement for people with mobility issues – disability is no limitation. My club has members with mobility issues, including one lady who is wheelchair-bound, and even for those with visual impairment, whom we call “white-stick operators”.

During COVID-19 when everyone was locked down and unable to meet with their



Army Chaplain John Saunders



Daniel Pritchard is on the radio while his father Laurie, a veteran of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals, listens in.

friendship groups, Ham Radio operators were non-plussed. We simply continued doing what we always do and got on the nets and radio bands as we always did. Yes, we were unable to meet up at our usual club haunts, but we were still able to engage in our communities via radio.

Entry to the hobby is open to anyone and everyone with a technical itch to scratch. Unlike the familiar UHF CB (citizens band) radio under the dash of your 4x4, or 27MHz CB from your teenage memories, Ham Radio requires technical training, exams and formal licencing. But getting the entry level foundation licence is not at all onerous. Amateur Radio clubs like ours provide weekend training and exams to get people up to speed and on-air as soon as possible.

No matter where you live in this great country, there will be a nearby group of Ham Radio operators. The easiest way to find us is through the Wireless Institute of Australia – all you need to know is at www.wia.org.au. Come along to a nearby club, meet the people and check out the hobby!

ESO advocates help families too



Ex-service organisation (ESO) advocates can play an important role in connecting veterans and family members with DVA services and support for wellbeing and claims assistance. They provide a holistic approach with a focus on wellbeing and understand the full range of DVA services and programs available to you.

Importantly, the services ESO advocates provide are free. There is no need for veterans or family members to pay or give up a portion of their entitlements when an advocate provides advice or helps them to submit a claim to DVA.

We recently spoke with Bruce, whose partner Belinda served with the RAAF from 1988 until shortly before she passed away in 2021.

As a war widower, Bruce knows first-hand the value of seeking support from an ESO advocate. Bruce says he doesn't think that he would have managed without the help of an advocate.

'When Belinda passed, I lost my business partner, my best friend, and my wife all at the same time,' he told us. 'I was so grateful to have someone I could turn to for help – who knew the DVA claims system. I knew the process could be time-consuming and stressful at any point in time, let alone when I was trying to come to terms with such a great loss.'

'It was important to me that I found an advocate I could connect with and trust. It took me a couple of goes before I found someone who understood my case and understood Belinda's journey.'

'I've become aware that women make up an increasing proportion of the ADF, working across many different roles. However, their experiences can be unique from their male colleagues. Women who serve and who have served often feel united by their service. Understanding this helped me to connect with my advocate as she, like my Belinda, served for many years in the ADF.'

Some advocates might even go a step further. For instance, Bruce continues to work alongside his advocate in the hope of enacting legislative change so that women, who make up about 20% of the ADF, have a better chance of achieving improved health outcomes.

'It's my chance to make a difference to women who serve,' he says. 'They are our mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, partners and friends.'

Bruce doesn't hesitate in recommending ESO advocate services to others – especially those who are not veterans themselves.

'It might feel foreign at first, but the connection to people who just 'get it' is a game-changer,' he says. 'I didn't just get help managing my claims and understanding what welfare support I could access; I've been introduced to a whole new community and support network.'

'If you need assistance to lodge a compensation claim with DVA or to enhance your wellbeing journey, and don't know where to start, engaging an advocate might be the answer you're looking for.'

DVA trains ESO advocates through our Advocacy Training and Development Program to meet national training standards.

It's important to remember that DVA does not give any third-party organisations, providers or advocates special access or treatment. Using either a free advocate or a provider who charges for their services does not guarantee a successful claim or faster processing.



Bruce and Belinda McGowan

ESO advocates can be found on the Advocacy Register (www.advocateregister.org.au), which is a national database that provides contact details for free advocacy services across Australia.

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

Veterans and families also have the option to engage directly with DVA online by using MyService. Through MyService, you can lodge claims and track their progress, request a callback, download important documents and statements, apply for a Veteran Card, book transport and more. You can also contact us through our Veteran Access Network shopfronts or by visiting a Services Australia shopfront.

Knowing all too well the warmth and value a hug can offer, after the death of his wife, Bruce founded the Belinda McGowan Foundation. The Belinda McGowan Foundation provides cuddle beds in rural, remote, and regional hospitals. Cuddle beds enable patients and their loved ones to stay physically close while undergoing medical care. Visit thebelindamcgowanfoundation.org.au for more information.

Free ESO assistance can be offered in person, online or over the phone. ESO advocates can help by:

- offering independent advice on making a service pension or compensation claim with DVA, and informing you about the legislation that covers your service pension or compensation claim
- helping you complete your service pension or compensation claim by making sure you have all the correct documentation
- supporting you to lodge your service pension or compensation claim
- keeping in touch with you throughout the process to provide updates and reassurance
- requesting a review of a decision or assisting with requests for reviews
- providing information and referrals for services to improve general health and wellbeing.

No one is coming to save us

A call for personal responsibility in healing, transition and connection

COMMISSIONER GWEN CHERNE

Veteran Family Advocate

 Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner  Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner  vfausgov



Over the course of the last 8 years doing this work, I have seen first-hand the immense sacrifices our veterans and their families have made. My involvement both as a lived experience witness and in my professional capacity in the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide showed me the critical importance of a framework for improved mental health services, responsive community support, and real systemic change to better address the challenges faced by our veteran families.



With Team Australia's co-captains Dr Kaz Gladysz and Doug Griffiths, and RSL Australia CEO Phillip Winter, at the Invictus Games.

While the recommendations from the Royal Commission set an important foundation for support, it remains true that the journey to healing is deeply personal. The recommendations guide and empower us to create a system with continuity of care, support and education, but still the healing must come from within – through our own commitment, recovery, and the daily work of transformation.

The myth of the external saviour

Amidst the challenges faced during and after service, there's a prevailing hope that a counsellor, specialist, or government program will swoop in and miraculously heal our deepest wounds. The truth is more demanding – and ultimately more empowering: no one is coming to save us. Real healing comes from owning our struggles, doing the hard work every day, educating ourselves and learning to connect with one another along the way.

Counsellors are guides, not miracles. Therapists play a critical role in our journey by offering safe spaces for reflection and growth. They serve as mirrors to reveal blind spots, provide practical tools, and set the guard rails necessary for progress. However, expecting them to “fix” us is a misconception. Their true purpose is to empower us – to remind us that the answers lie within and that the work must be done by us. In this way, they act as co-pilots on our path rather than the sole drivers of our recovery.

It's all too easy to believe that someone else will fix our pain or trauma. However, for veteran families who have weathered significant hardships, relying too heavily on external help sets us up for disappointment.

While guidance and professional support are invaluable, and a key to our healing, the bulk of our healing – around 90% – must be accomplished from within. They may have the answers to help us heal, but we are the ones who have to do the tough daily work to make healing a reality.

Transition: Personal responsibility when embracing the unknown

Transitioning from military to civilian life is a time filled with uncertainty and change, yet it is also a period rich with opportunity. The skills honed by veteran families during postings – resettling, networking, and reconnecting – are not lost but refined with every move.

Families learn to re-establish themselves and navigate new systems in each posting, turning these experiences into their superpower. Veteran families already possess the answers needed to navigate this journey; what is required is the courage to apply them and embrace the unknown, again and again.

Healing and transition demand a deep sense of personal accountability. It is not about shouldering every burden in isolation but about recognising that the responsibility for change ultimately lies with us. By taking ownership of our healing, we build the skills to face our challenges head-on, confront self-limiting beliefs, and commit to continuous personal growth. It is our daily work, our willingness to fail, learn, and try again, that drives true transformation.

Building inner resilience: The veteran spirit

Veterans and families have already demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. This same strength must now be harnessed for the ongoing process of healing. Consider these key elements and try to test the waters outside of the veteran community.

- **Active self-reflection:** Regularly evaluate your thoughts, emotions and behaviours through journaling, meditation, audiobooks, podcasts or open discussions with trusted peers. Why not retrain your brain with a gratitude journal?
- **Set healthy boundaries:** Create a good relationship with sleep and then establish clear limits in relationships, work and even internal dialogue to create a secure environment for growth.

- **Continuous learning:** Engage with diverse resources – books, workshops, experts or community groups. Join your local surf club, pick up a hobby, take a course on neurocognitive skills or get out into nature. Do something completely new to challenge yourself!
- **Fail and then celebrate small victories:** Don't be afraid to fail – a lot – along the way. Recognise and celebrate every step forward, however small, as proof of your ongoing strength and progress.

Connection: The power of community and vulnerability

No healing journey is undertaken in isolation. Connection is the key to breaking free from our own mental confines.

We are all responsible for reaching out, getting outside our heads, and learning to fail as a pathway to growth. Whether through shared experiences, open conversations, or collective support, building meaningful connections is the key to all of this. By embracing our own vulnerability and acknowledging our shared struggles, we not only support our own healing but also uplift those around us.

Healing is not a destination: it is an ongoing, daily commitment to personal growth. Don't I know this all too well. By accepting that no external saviour will arrive, we empower ourselves to take proactive steps toward lasting improvement. The journey might be challenging, and setbacks are inevitable, but every step taken in education, self-reflection, connection and personal accountability reaffirms our strength.

While it's not easy, the struggle is worth it. The growth, empowerment and personal development will be with you forever and will benefit yourself, and everyone in your family and community.

Healing through sport: the Invictus Games legacy

A message from Invictus Australia

The world has witnessed the indomitable spirit of Team Australia at the Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025. From 8 to 16 February, 33 current and former serving ADF personnel, alongside more than 100 of their family and friends, embarked on their Invictus journey.

With more than 500 competitors from 23 nations, it was a showcase of physical and mental strength, grit and determination, and a global display of solidarity. These competitors demonstrated the transformative power of sport in recovery, resilience and rehabilitation.

Triumph through sport: Alex Hale's journey

For Team Australia competitor and Navy veteran Alex Hale, the games represented hope and healing, made possible by the unwavering support of his family.

A car accident changed Alex's life forever, leaving him paralysed and facing an uncertain future. Yet, when a friend remarked, 'We'll turn him into an athlete!', it ignited a spark of hope. Determined to overcome his challenges, Alex embraced the adaptive sports of wheelchair basketball and archery. Sport became a lifeline, as he rediscovered the depths of his capabilities.

'Sport allows me to explore and test my physical limitations, build strength and stamina as a wheelchair user, and overcome the physical and mental obstacles my injury brings,' says Alex.

For Alex, the Games were about more than just competition, they were about reclaiming identity, building resilience, and connecting with others facing similar challenges. Through sport, he found purpose and community, proving that the human spirit can triumph in the face of adversity.

'Winning for me is continuing to get stronger and more capable,' says Alex. 'The Invictus Games gave me the courage to push my limits and the confidence to believe in myself again.'

Alex's journey was fuelled by an unconquerable spirit plus the support of his wife, Erin, who became his full-time carer, and his son Max, who inspired him daily: 'Erin and Max were leading my cheer squad, supported by the rest of my family!'



The 'Alex Hale Support Crew' at the Invictus Games

The healing power of sport

Research from the Beyond the Finish Line study by the Invictus Games Foundation shows that adaptive sport enhances psychological health, increases confidence, and reduces anxiety and depression.

According to Behavioural Scientist Celina Shirazipour, who spearheaded the research, the findings, which are the culmination of 5-years of research across Invictus Games nations, demonstrate the power of sport for recovery. 'Notably, it showed us that a quality military adaptive sport experience doesn't just improve health but can act as a catalyst for personal growth outside of sport, helping competitors to develop life skills,' Celina said.

Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner Gwen Cherne, who attended the Invictus Games, echoed this sentiment, saying that sport is more than physical activity – it's a vehicle for connection and recovery.

'Sport helps veterans and their families build resilience and find a sense of belonging,' Gwen said. 'Behind every serving member or veteran is a family that serves alongside them. Their support provides strength, hope and motivation during the toughest times, and is critical in rehabilitation.'

Led by Co-Captains Doug Griffiths and Kaz Gladysz, Team Australia celebrated resilience and recovery. Although medals were won, the true inspiration lay in the unconquerable spirit of the competitors. Their achievements, from first-time experiences on snow to personal bests, were made possible by the unwavering support networks standing behind them.

A legacy of recovery and hope

Beyond the games, Invictus Australia continues to foster community spirit and highlight the power of sport in recovery and connection.

While 33 competitors represented Australia on the global stage, Invictus Australia's Local Veteran Engagement Managers connected with almost 500 veterans and family members in February. This is in addition to the almost 7,000 veterans and families who attended sporting activities with Invictus Australia last year alone, with the impact only likely to increase.



Alex Hale likes his time in the Indoor Rowing.



Alex Hale with his biggest fans.

The Invictus Games celebrated courage, recovery, and the power of sport to transform lives. They reminded us that recovery is a team effort. Behind every competitor is a family, a community and a nation that stands with them.

For Alex Hale, staying connected with his community was essential to his recovery and will remain a priority beyond the games. Alex says the experience was about personal triumph and powerful moments of connection as he competed alongside others who understood his journey. He found strength and motivation, and remains determined to inspire others.

'The Games showed me that my story isn't over. It's just the beginning of a new chapter.'

Invictus Australia remains committed to supporting veterans and their families beyond the Games, ensuring they have the connections and opportunities they need to thrive. In the words of William Ernest Henley (Invictus: 1875): 'I AM the master of my fate, I AM the captain of my soul'.

Telehealth provides fast access to mental health services

A message from Mates4Mates

Australian veterans' charity Mates4Mates is making it easier for veterans and families to connect with mental health clinicians, offering access to telehealth services with no current wait times.

In 2023, an estimated 4.67 million Australians accessed telehealth services, with 4.23 million people based in major cities.

Current and ex-serving military personnel and family members can access telehealth appointments with military-informed psychologists who understand the challenges of Defence without joining the end of long waitlists.

Mates4Mates Clinical Lead of Psychological Services Jonathan Moscrop said telehealth plays a critical role in connecting Australians with the health services they need, and the organisation is making sure veterans and families receive fast access to the clinicians they need.

'Clients are often waiting 3 months to see a psychologist, but

we currently have no wait times for veterans looking to book telehealth appointments with our team of mental health clinicians including psychologists, social workers and counsellors,' Mr Moscrop said.

'Our dedicated team are experienced in working with those who have been impacted by service and understand the challenges of transitioning from the Defence Force. Many of our staff are from all areas of the Defence community and are experienced in helping veterans with common mental health concerns associated with military service including anxiety, PTSD, and depression.

'With telehealth services on the rise, we are making sure veterans and families have every opportunity to access Mates4Mates clinicians.'

Mr Moscrop notes, however, that there are many misconceptions about telehealth that may be holding people back from accessing support available to them.



'A common concern when it comes to telehealth services is that it isn't as effective as face-to-face appointments, but this isn't the case,' he explains. 'Telehealth appointments have been found to be as effective as in-person appointments across various medical fields, including mental health, chronic disease management, and postoperative care,' he said.

Mr Moscrop said that another misconception is that you must live rurally to access telehealth services.

'At Mates4Mates we offer telehealth appointments to all veterans and family members, whether it is because you live rurally or prefer to attend

appointments from the comfort of your home,' he said.

Mates4Mates offers veterans and families access to mental health and physical rehabilitation services in-person and via telehealth appointments. We use a secure telehealth platform called doxy.me which utilises the latest in video-conferencing software and upholds the highest standard of privacy and security.

To find out more about referrals and booking a telehealth appointment with Mates4Mates clinicians, reach out on 1300 4 MATES (62 837) or visit www.mates4mates.org.

WEARING MEDALS ON COMMEMORATIVE OCCASIONS

A guide by RSL Australia

The Returned and Services League (RSL), established in 1916, has been at the forefront of commemorating the service and sacrifice of Australian servicemen and women for over a century.

The RSL leads the nation in commemorative services, working within communities to share the stories and history of those who have served, ensuring their legacy lives on. Commemoration reflects our commitment to educating Australians about the vital role the ADF has played, and continues to play, both domestically and internationally in shaping Australia.

This article serves as a general guide, offering suggestions for standardising the wearing of medals on commemorative occasions. It is intended to be a helpful resource, not a strict set of rules.

Placement of medals and badges

- Medals awarded to the wearer: These are worn on the *left* side of the chest or jacket. This includes campaign medals, bravery medals, and service medals.
- Ancestor's medals: Medals that were not awarded directly to the wearer, such as family medals, are worn on the *right* side of the chest or jacket. This indicates that the wearer is not the original recipient.
- State-issued medals: Medals for service and bravery issued by a state (e.g., for emergency service personnel) are worn on the right side of the chest or jacket.
- Association Badge (e.g., RSL): This badge is usually worn on the left side of the chest or jacket, typically above the medals.
- Combat Badge: This badge is also worn on the left side of the chest or jacket.

- Medals Level: Medals should be worn in a horizontal line, with the top of the medals positioned at a consistent level. Your coat should be buttoned up to maintain a smart and respectful appearance.

Unit Citations

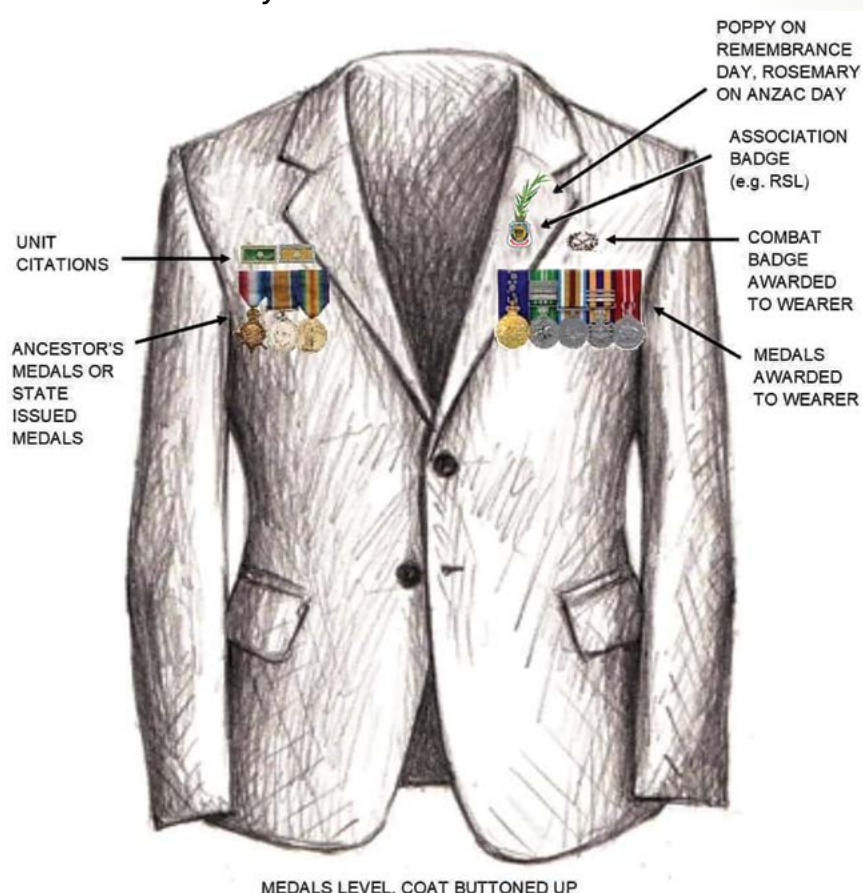
- Army and Air Force: Unit citations are worn on the *right side*.
- Navy: Navy citations are worn on the *left*, below the medals.

Anzac Day and Remembrance Day symbols

- Rosemary on Anzac Day: Rosemary is the traditional symbol of remembrance worn on Anzac Day in Australia. This is because rosemary grows wild on the Gallipoli peninsula, giving it special significance.
- Poppy on Remembrance Day: The poppy was formally adopted as the international memorial flower to be worn on 11 November by the Australian Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League (the forerunner to the RSL). RSL Australia continues to uphold this tradition, encouraging the nation to wear a poppy on Remembrance Day.

The RSL is often asked about the correct protocols for wearing medals and we hope this guide will support those who have earned medals, and those who are wearing them in memory, to wear their medals proudly to honour our veterans and remember those who have served.

Lest we forget



BOOKSHELF

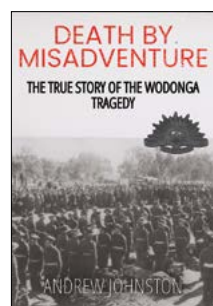
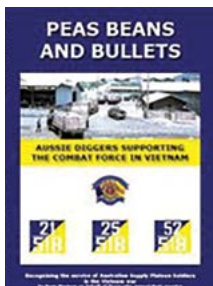
The following books, often self-published, have been written by, for and with veterans. The books and their descriptions are submitted by readers. DVA takes no responsibility for the accuracy of their content or the opinions expressed in them.

Peas, Beans and Bullets – Aussie Diggers Supporting the Combat Force

By Russ Morison

This book tells the story of the efforts of Supply Platoon soldiers to feed our soldiers in Vung Tau, Nui Dat and other places. It is written by those who served with the Australian Army during the Vietnam conflict. Three meals a day, piece of cake (pun intended). Not when you live in a foreign land. Someone has to provide, and our diggers did just that. Filled with stories, amusing anecdotes, glossy photos, 3 platoon nominal rolls remembering those no longer with us and more.

- **Pages:** 119
- **Cost:** \$30 + postage
- **To buy:** dabblers3@gmail.com or 0408 947 935



Death By Misadventure: The True Story of the Wodonga Tragedy

By Andrew Johnston

On a dark foggy evening in May 1943, a timber bus packed with jubilant servicemen and women on well-deserved leave collided with a massive railway engine travelling in reverse with lights blacked out due to wartime regulations. In an instant, 25 lives were lost, and countless others shattered. This gripping true story unravels the chain of events leading to the collision, the harrowing aftermath, the extraordinary heroics of those who fought to save lives, and the grieving families' fight for justice against a wall of bureaucratic indifference. The book brings to life a forgotten chapter of Australian history, honouring the victims and survivors.

- **Cost:** \$39.99
- **To Buy:** Contact Andrew: wodongatragedy1943@outlook.com



Jack's Promises

By Grahame Elliott

Frieda and her 4 children leave the city to follow her husband Jack to Cloncurry, a small town in western Queensland, unaware of the tragedy and sorrow that lies ahead. Jack is obsessed with finding a copper motherlode in the abandoned mines and will sacrifice everything to find it. When they are forced to return to the city, Frieda discovers Jack's secret, causing her frustrated love to turn into bitterness and a desire for revenge. *Jack's Promises* is based on a true story of the author's mother, a war widow, her love for her children and her struggle to survive in the Australian outback from 1937 to 1944, during the Great Depression and Second World War.

- **Pages:** 309
- **Cost:** Kindle \$5.99; Paperback \$18.16
- **To buy:** Amazon

Her Great Adventure – Dorothy 'Puss' Campbell WW2 Army Nursing Sister

By Janet Scarfe

This is a fresh, factual and engaging account of Australian Army nursing in the Second World War. Dorothy 'Puss' Campbell was one of 3,600 members of the Australian Army Nursing Service. She served in England, Egypt, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Queensland and Adelaide from 1940 to 1946. Professional historian Dr Janet Scarfe shows Puss and her colleagues nursing in many challenging circumstances. The sisters' lives away from the wards also come to light – their travels, sightseeing, friendships and romances. Puss's personal diaries and photographs have been woven together with the official records of the hospitals where she served.

- **Pages:** 320
- **Cost:** \$39.99 plus postage
- **To buy:** www.openbookhowden.com.au/bookshop, or via the author at janet.scarfe@internode.on.net

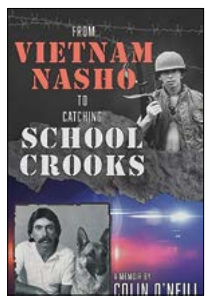


From Vietnam Nasho to Catching School Crooks

By Colin O'Neill

Colin O'Neill, a National Service conscript in the Australian Army during 1967–69, provides his honest reflection of service in Vietnam. It is an eye-opening account that varies from the harsh realities of war to the inside of a career as an unsworn member of the Victorian Police Department and fulfilling the role of Head of School Security for the Victorian Education Department. A life given to serving, protecting, and preventing crime, Colin's story is filled with humour, notorious and unbelievable truths, and an unmatched glimpse into this time from the 60s through to the 90s.

- **Pages:** 456
- **Cost:** \$38
- **To buy:** Amazon and other well-known bookstores



Operation Hurricane

By Paul Grace

On 3 October 1952, Britain's first atomic bomb was detonated in the hold of a surplus frigate, HMS *Plym*, off the north-west coast of Western Australia. The blast produced a mushroom cloud 2 miles high and covered the islands and parts of the Australian mainland with fallout. Operation Hurricane tells the story of the test from the point of view of the men on the ground: soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilians. It delves into the historical context of the Cold War and examines the controversial legacy of the atomic tests, including the impact of fallout on servicemen, Aboriginal peoples and the environment, as well as Australia's relationship with the United Kingdom.

- **Pages:** 435
- **Cost:** \$26.95
- **To buy:** Amazon

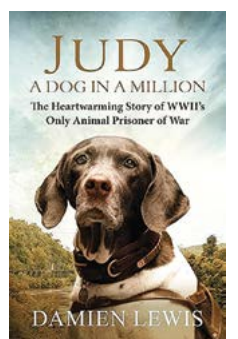


Judy, A Dog in a Million

By Damien Lewis

Judy, a beautiful English pointer and the only animal prisoner of war of the Second World War, was cherished and adored by the British, Australian, American and other Allied servicemen who fought to survive alongside her. Judy's uncanny ability to sense danger, matched with her quick-thinking and impossible daring saved countless lives. She was a close companion to men who became like a family to her, sharing in both the tragedies and joys they faced. It was in recognition of the extraordinary friendship and protection she offered amidst the unforgiving and savage environment of a Japanese prison camp in Indonesia that she gained her formal status as a POW.

- **Pages:** 351
- **Cost:** from \$11.99
- **To buy:** Amazon



1st Australian Logistic Support Company

By Russ Morison

In May 1965, 1 Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) deployed to South Vietnam. A newly created company of many disparate support elements was cobbled together with 3 weeks' notice to accompany and support 1 RAR. This is the first known book dealing exclusively with the activities of 1ALSC. While this book is about "ordinary soldiers" going about their professional business, it is also about healing, as some have returned to Vietnam post conflict to help rebuild the country.

- **Pages:** 270
- **Cost:** e-book \$4.99. Hardcover price on application.
- **To buy:** dabblers3@gmail.com or call 0408 947 935



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), price, how to buy it, and image of the front cover. Submitting a book does not guarantee publication.

COMMEMORATIONS

Victoria Cross for Private Richard Norden

On Remembrance Day last year, we gathered as a nation to acknowledge those who died or suffered during military service. As we collectively honoured service personnel, our highest military honour, The Victoria Cross for Australia, was bestowed on the late Private Richard Norden.

The Victoria Cross for Australia is the pre-eminent award for acts of bravery in wartime. It is awarded for the most conspicuous gallantry or daring or pre-eminent acts of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy.

The citation for Private Richard Leslie Norden reads in part:

For most conspicuous acts of gallantry in action in the presence of the enemy in the 'AO Surfers' Area of Operation in the Bien Hoa province, Vietnam, on 14 May 1968 during the Battle of Fire Support Base Coral.

After enlisting in the Australian Army in April 1966, Private Richard Norden deployed to Vietnam in late 1967. With several postings in his first year in Vietnam, he joined the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment on 10 April 1968.

On 14 May 1968, during Operation Toan Thang, 5th Platoon B Company was ambushed, coming under heavy automatic weapon fire from a squad of North Vietnamese Army regular soldiers in established positions. The initial contact left the forward scout and section commander wounded, cut off from the remainder of the leading section, which itself was cut off from the rest of the platoon by heavy and accurate enemy fire.

Of his own accord, Private Norden (a member of the leading section) called for covering fire and made his way forward to rescue his wounded brothers-in-arms. Under heavy fire and crossing ground with little to no cover, he managed to retrieve the section commander, killing one North Vietnamese Army soldier in the process.

Having expended his ammunition, Private Norden then used his enemy's automatic weapon against further North Vietnamese Army combatants. Under intense enemy fire he half-dragged, half-carried the severely wounded section commander to safety – saving his life.

Despite being seriously wounded in the initial skirmish, Private Norden continued his advance to retrieve the scout. He again came under fire from a North Vietnamese Army soldier who was using the scout as a human shield. He killed the soldier, and upon reaching the scout, saw he was dead.

Private Norden returned to the section to resupply and collect grenades before advancing for a third time to clear the area and recover the body of the scout. His 3 courageous solo attacks into the enemy's position secured the area.

Private Norden showed a complete disregard for his personal safety through his daring and selfless acts and commitment to duty, single-handedly retrieving and saving the life of a severely wounded fellow soldier. His continued bold actions, while wounded, allowed the recovery of the body of the forward scout, and, most likely, ensured his platoon members avoided any potential further deaths.

Richard Norden continued to serve his country upon returning to Australia as a police officer in the Australian Capital Territory. Tragically, he died at just 24 years of age following a traffic accident while on duty.

We salute his service and sacrifice.

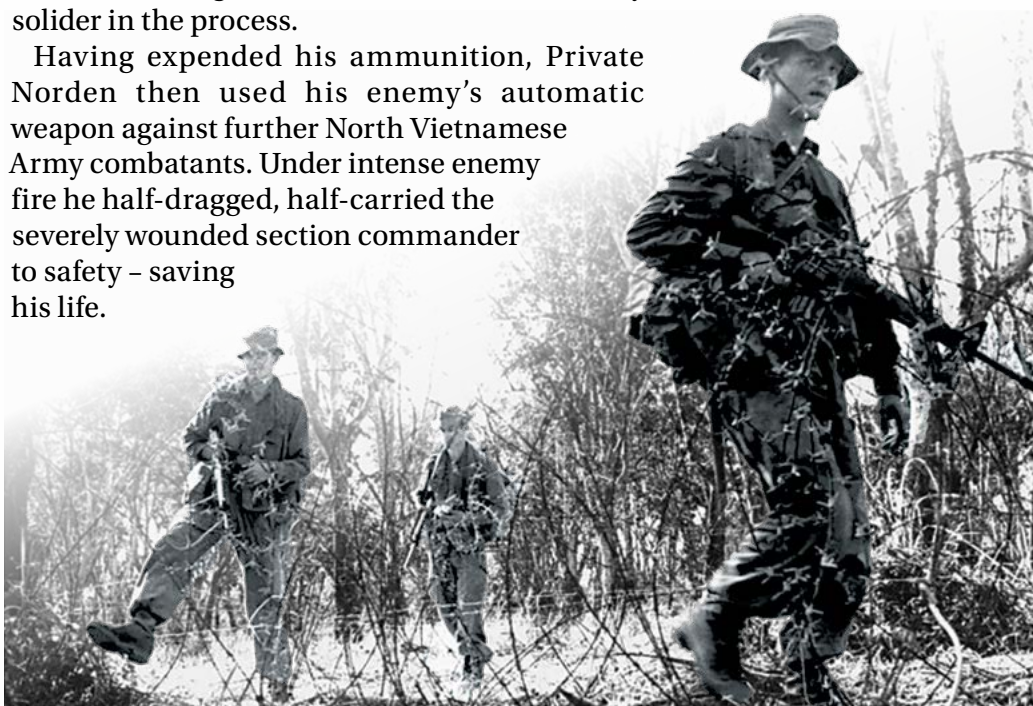
To learn more about Private Richard Leslie Norden VC, visit our Anzac Portal (anzacportal.gov.au).



The late Private Richard Norden VC



Governor of NSW, Sir Roden Cutler, congratulates 3 men after decorating them for bravery; Richard Norden is second from left. (Image courtesy of George Lipman.)



1st Battalion RAR patrol outside the perimeter of Fire Support Base Coral in 1968. (Image: Australian Army)

2025 ANZAC DAY SCHOOLS' AWARDS

ENTRIES CLOSE THURSDAY 29 MAY 2025



REMEMBERING GALLIPOLI: 110 YEARS

Use the Anzac Portal and other websites to research the Gallipoli campaign and the legend of the Anzacs to share their stories and experiences.

PRIZES

NATIONAL WINNER	\$5,000
STATE & TERRITORY WINNERS	\$3,000
SPECIAL CATEGORY WINNERS	\$2,000

FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT HOW TO ENTER AND THE SELECTION CRITERIA GO TO

anzacportal.dva.gov.au/adsa

SERBIAN POSTAGE STAMPS

honour Australian medical volunteers in the First World War

On 8 November 2024, at a ceremony in Belgrade, the Serbian Post Office officially issued stamps featuring 6 Australian medical personnel to represent all Australians who had served with the Serbs throughout the First World War. With Australia's Ambassador to Serbia Daniel Emmery in attendance, the stamps were launched by George Milicevic, Minister for the Serbian Diaspora.

A delegation from Australia travelled to Belgrade for the launch and Armistice (Remembrance) Day 2024 ceremonies. It included Ruth Stephens and Cathy Bromilow, grand-daughters of Nursing Sister Ethel Gillingham, who had served in Serbia during 1915–1916. Also present were Kathy Hancock and Ava Hancock, great-niece and great-great-niece of Dr Mary de Garis, who had served with a hospital set up by the Scottish Women's Hospitals in support of the Serbian Army in 1917–1918.

Joining the group were Dr Robert Webster OAM, Victorian State president of the RSL and Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Michael Buckridge RFD, President of Military History and Heritage Victoria.

The initiative was the culmination of efforts by Bojan Pajic, whose books on the 'the forgotten Serbian campaign' have attracted considerable attention to Australia's contribution to this theatre of the war (see *Vetaffairs* Vol. 40 No.1, April 2024).

'Australian and New Zealand participation on the Serbian Front in World War One was not mentioned in Australian, New Zealand and Serbian histories,' says Bojan. 'So when my book, *Australians with Serbs in World War One*, was translated into Serbian by the Australian Embassy to Serbia, it garnered significant local media interest as well,' says Bojan.

'After consultation with Serbian historians, I then proposed to the Australian Embassy that it request the Serbian Post Office to issue commemorative stamps about some of these Australians. To my delight, the Post Office agreed to issue several stamps on the 110th anniversary of the arrival of the first Australian medical volunteers in Serbia in November 1914.'

Australian and New Zealand medical volunteers began arriving in Serbia in November 1914 and served with the Serbs throughout the war. Their letters and memoirs show that they joined the war effort to 'do their bit' and

were inspired to go to Serbia by the dogged resistance the Serbs were putting up against repeated invasions by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In late 1915 Serbia was again invaded and occupied by Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. French and British forces then joined the Serbian Army in the fight to liberate the country. Australian and New Zealand soldiers, Air Force personnel and 6 Australian River Class destroyers participated in that campaign, as well as the medical volunteers.

The Serbian Post Office has published 6 stamps featuring 6 individuals from Bojan's books who represent all Australians who served with the Serbs throughout the war. Accompanying the stamps were collectors' items: 2 First Day Cover envelopes (a special release) each with 3 franked stamps of the Australians marked with the official stamp of the Serbian Post Office. At the back of the envelopes were short biographies of each featured Australian.

'My wife Robyn and I were very proud to lead the Australian delegation in Serbia for this special occasion,' says Bojan. 'We visited memorials to the medical volunteers in 2 towns where Australians had served. I understand that this is the first time that another country has commemorated Australians who had served as allies in a war in this way.'

The Serbian commemorative stamps were presented to the Australian public at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne on 23 November 2024. The Serbian Ambassador to Australia presented a folder of the stamps and First Day Cover envelopes to a representative of each of the 6 families of the commemorated Australians.

You can find a video of the presentation of the stamps in Australia on YouTube. Search for 'Presentation of Serbian commemorative stamps and trailer of documentary in Melbourne'.



THE AUSTRALIANS COMMEMORATED WITH SERBIAN STAMPS

- **Dr Thomas Alexander Benbow, served in Serbia, 1914–1915**
- **Nursing Sister Ethel Gillingham, served in Serbia, 1915–1916**
- **Dr James Blair Donaldson, served in Serbia, 1915**
- **Dr Mary de Garis, Chief Medical Officer of field hospital supporting the Serbian Army, 1917–1918**
- **Ambulance driver Olive Kelso King, served on the Serbian Front, 1915–1918**
- **Author and Orderly Miles Franklin, served with hospital supporting the Serbian Army, 1917–1918**

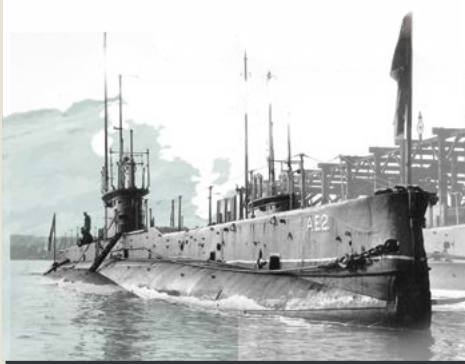
COMMEMORATIONS

Anzac Day 2025 services and resources

This year, on 25 April we mark the 110th anniversary of Australian and New Zealand forces landing at Gallipoli as part of the Allied invasion in 1915.

ANZAC DAY

110 years since the Gallipoli Campaign



With final preparations underway at commemorative sites in Australia, and all over the world, our nation stands poised to remember and reflect. On Anzac Day, we recognise more than 2 million Australian service men and women who have served our country in conflicts, wars and peacekeeping operations.

All Australians are encouraged to reflect on Anzac Day, whether as part of a commemorative service overseas, or in Australia.

If you're planning on hosting a commemorative service, choosing to commemorate Anzac Day at home, or looking to delve deeper in our wartime history, the DVA Anzac Day digital kitbag can help.

The kitbag features posters, a sample speech, Orders of Service, the National Anthem, the history of Anzac Day, reflections from veterans and commemorative music playlists. It also includes various activities like poppy and wreath crafting, an Anzac biscuit recipe and a wealth of printable digital materials. You can find and download these resources by visiting the Anzac Portal (www.anzacportal.dva.gov.au).

For those interested in our military history, our Anzac Day commemorative pack is stacked with educational materials. It has

4 commemorative posters and a wealth of teaching resources, including books, lessons, stories of those who served in their own words, and a range of online interactive activities.

Each year the pack is distributed to schools, ex-service organisations and community groups across the country. It's available online via our Anzac Portal, and hard copies are available on request by emailing education@dva.gov.au.

The National Dawn Service will be hosted by the Australian War Memorial, with the event broadcast live on ABC TV and streamed on ABC iview. Many ex-service organisations and state and territory governments conduct Anzac Day services around the country. These can be found by contacting your local RSL sub-branch or visiting the RSL Australia website (www.rsl.org.au).

Numerous Australian War Cemeteries and Gardens of Remembrance also hold Anzac Day services. Search for 'Anzac Day Services at War Cemeteries in Australia' on the DVA website for up-to-date information.

DVA delivers the official Anzac Day services in Türkiye and France and supports services at DVA-managed sites in Malaysia, Thailand and Papua New Guinea.

For those considering commemorating overseas, the Dawn Services held at Gallipoli in Türkiye, and Villers-Bretonneux in France, carry unique importance for Australians. The Anzac legend was forged and tempered at these places through the courage of the many who served, fought and died during the First World War. Access to either service is only permitted with a valid attendance pass. Registration is free and available at commemorations.teg.com.au.

Both international Dawn Services will also be broadcast live

on the ABC on Anzac Day and streamed on ABC iview.

Several significant sites where Australians fought and died in the Second World War are also home to safe, solemn and dignified Anzac Day services, such as the Bomana War Cemetery and Isurava Memorial in Papua New Guinea, Hellfire Pass in Thailand, and the Sandakan Memorial Park in Malaysia.

More details and requirements for these Anzac Day services can be found on the 'Anzac Day Commemorative Services' page of the DVA website.

75th anniversary of Australian service in the

Malayan Emergency



National COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE

31 August 2025

Rond Terrace, Lake Burley Griffin,
Canberra



dva.gov.au/malaya75

AWM DUN/55/0824/EC, AWM HOB/56/0495/MC, AWM FEAF1030, AWM 304874/02.

COMMEMORATIONS

SENDING SIGNALS FOR A CENTURY

Article courtesy of the Department of Defence

Past and present members of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals (RA Sigs) gathered at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance on 14 February 2025 to mark the Corps' centenary. The event, attended by signallers, their families, veterans and a host of distinguished guests, celebrated a century of service, innovation, and sacrifice.

Since the order was issued to form the Australian Corps of Signals on 14 February 1925, the Corps has played a crucial role in keeping the Australian Army connected, adapting to ever-evolving technology.

Brigadier Deane Limmer CSM, Head of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals, praised the Corps' adaptability and enduring commitment to Defence operations.

'For more than a century, the Corps has been developing and responding to emerging technology, giving the ADF a competitive edge,' Brigadier Limmer said. 'Army signallers have

been keeping the Australian Army and the ADF connected, leading the way in technology adoption and advancement at every turn.

'For a century, families have supported us and made sacrifices, making this year's celebrations a show of gratitude for their part in serving alongside us.'

The Governor of Victoria, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, reviewed the parade. She reinforced the importance of the signallers' role, carrying messages that can mean the difference between hope and despair.

'On behalf of the people of Victoria, I want to offer our deepest appreciation for your service, for all the new skills and capabilities you are developing that are important for our future security, and the vital role you play each and every day through your service across our country and abroad,' the Governor said.



Australian Army signallers during the 100th anniversary parade (Images: Defence)

The Governor was joined by many signallers who are now senior officers in the ADF, including Chief of Army Lieutenant General Simon Stuart AO DSC, and Chief of Joint Capabilities Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM.

Signallers have served in every major conflict since the First World War, from the Second World War to Korea, Vietnam, Western Sahara, Somalia, Cambodia and more recent deployments in the Middle East and the Pacific. Their expertise in skills such as electronic warfare, signals intelligence, telecommunications, information technology and cyberspace capabilities has been essential in warlike and humanitarian operations alike.

Beyond the battlefield, signallers have been instrumental in disaster relief, recently deploying to the Pacific to restore communications after natural disasters.

Mr Gavin Lee, President of the RA Sigs Association (Victoria) said he was immensely proud of the support and turnout by signals veterans from the Vietnam War, more recent conflicts and particularly members of the old 3rd Divisional Signals (CMF) and 108 Signal Squadron.

'We are looking forward to an even greater turn out on Anzac Day to commemorate and celebrate the centenary,' Mr Lee said.

For veterans and their families, the parade was more than a ceremony – it was a powerful reminder of their contributions and sacrifices. It also provided a chance to reconnect and reflect on their service.



Victorian Governor Margaret Gardner AC is escorted by Brigadier Deane Limmer CSM, Head of Corps of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals.



Signaller Corporal Ryan McIntosh uses semaphore flags to call soldiers on to the parade.

75th anniversary of
Australian service in the

Korean War



National COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE



dva.gov.au/korea75

25 June 2025

Australian National Korean War Memorial
Anzac Parade, Canberra

AWM JK0891, AWM P02044.004, AWM P01813.866, AWM 044240.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

NEW MAIN ENTRANCE

opens Memorial's heart to Australians

The Main Entrance of the Australian War Memorial has officially been opened.

Sitting underneath the existing Commemorative Entrance of the 84-year-old building, the new space allows for weatherproof and safe access to the Memorial for all visitors. It is also a key stage in enabling the Memorial to be more accessible to more visitors in the decades ahead.

At the centre of the Main Entrance is the striking glass and steel Oculus, which floods the space with daylight, and through which visitors can glimpse the copper dome above the Hall of Memory. A mathematical inversion of the Memorial's dome, the Oculus – which is Latin for “eye” – complements the heritage values of the original building.

Cast into the floor beneath the Oculus are the 15 qualities displayed in the stained glass windows in the Hall of Memory, at the heart of the Memorial.

The display installed in the Main Entrance is dedicated to Captain Reginald Saunders, the first Australian Aboriginal commissioned officer in the Australian Army. Born a member of the Gunditjmarra people, Captain

Saunders served in the Second World War and the Korean War.

Suspended above the new spiral stairs on the eastern and western sides of the concourse is a pair of shimmering glass installations created by internationally renowned artist Annette Blair at Canberra Glassworks. Blair's artworks, *Quiet skies, as the sun rises* and *Quiet skies, as the sun sets* comprise 2 sculptures, each made of about 900 glass eucalypt leaves in colours redolent of sunrise and sunset.

‘Inspired by the familiar words from the acclaimed Ode of Remembrance – “At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them” – this special glass work is an ode to the personal and collective sacrifices the Memorial commemorates,’ said the Memorial's Director, Matt Anderson.

The Main Entrance also provides access to the Memorial gift shop, a 245-seat theatre, and dedicated space for public and private functions.

Within the foyer is a multimedia large-scale display of the film, *Places of Pride*, featuring 42 war memorials from across the country that reflect

the diversity of commemoration in Australia. The display also allows visitors to search for memorials in their home towns as a means of connecting a visit to the national War Memorial with their local places of pride.

Visitors can approach the Main Entrance from the east directly from the Poppy's Café underground car-park, a glass lift or stairs, and from

the west via a wide gently sloping path from the Sculpture Gardens.

One of the Memorial's most beloved sculptures, *Simpson and his donkey*, 1915, was relocated to the eastern courtyard of the Main Entrance on 13 December 2024, ahead of the east entrance opening to the public later that month. The west entrance opened to the public in January.

ITEMS FOR SALE AT THE MEMORIAL SHOP

New store now open

The Memorial Shop is excited to announce that our new store is open.

Explore our new range of red poppy apparel – scarves, ties, lapel pins and more – designed exclusively for the Memorial Shop.

Shop online or visit us in store.

“Poppies” scarves
\$49.99 available in black or white

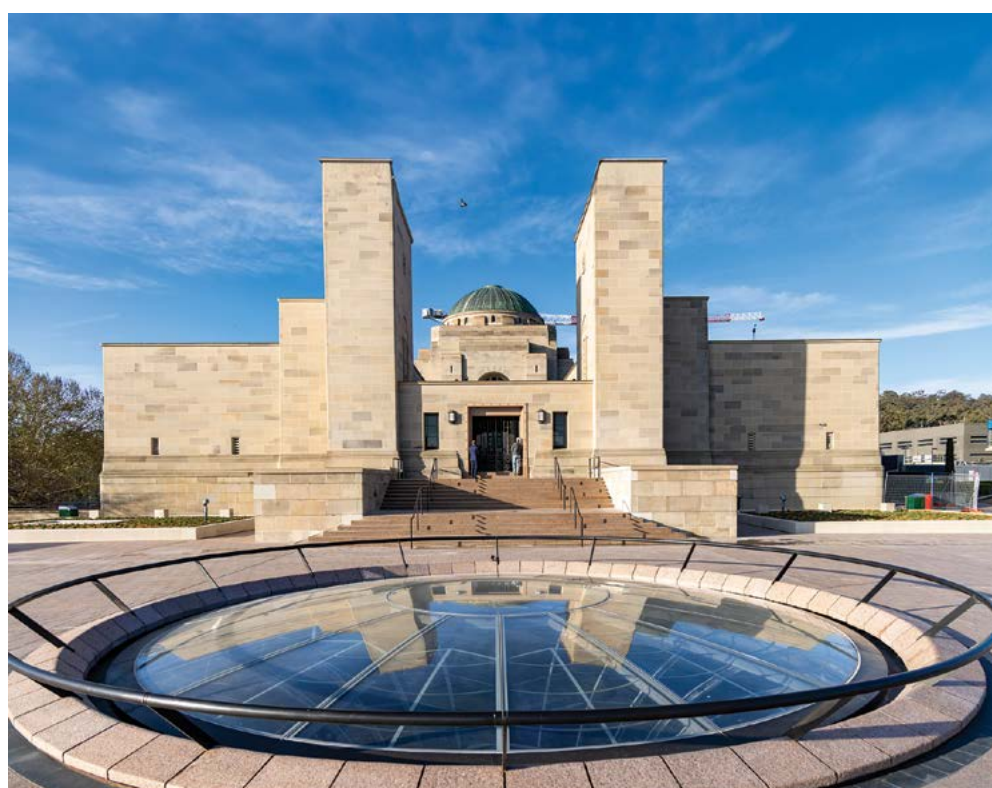


Poppy brooches
\$24.99 large
\$14.99 small

“Poppies” tie
\$45.00



Visit shop.awm.gov.au
or call the Memorial Shop team
on (02) 6243 4555 to place an order.



NOTICEBOARD

REUNIONS

30th Anniversary Rwanda Reunion

23–26 April 2025, Townsville, QLD

For all members of ASC 1 and ASC 2 ‘Back to Townsville’ (supported by Townsville RSL). 22nd – meet & greet; 23rd – reunion dinner; 24th – free; 25th – all Rwanda veterans march under a specific banner as the lead veteran group for Townsville Anzac Day March; 26th – recovery drinks and farewells. Email for your registration/package. Partners are welcome at all events.

Contact: Kevin ‘Irish’ O’Halloran

☎ 0439 514 995

✉ 2RAR.Reunions@gmail.com

Army Fire Service, 1962/2025

9 May 2025, Coffs Harbor C.ex Club, NSW

Friday – meet and greet; Saturday night – dinner, so bring your play lunch money.

Contact: Peter Cairnes / Bill Donovan

☎ 0427 558 685 / 0410 103 339

✉ billandleed@gmail.com

2SQN Association

25 May 2025, Pig and Whistle Pub, 123 Eagle St Brisbane, QLD
All former and serving members of 2SQN are invited to march with the Association in the Brisbane Anzac Day March and attend the Anzac Day reunion after the march.

Contact: Arthur Rennick, Secretary

☎ 0494 151 872

✉ 2sqn.association.raaf@gmail.com

🌐 <https://sites.google.com/site/2squadronassociationinc/>

Centenary of Artillery Locating 1925–2025

13 Jun 2025, Brisbane, QLD

We welcome all 130, 131, 132, & 133 Bty Locators to the event. Visit the website for program details and updates.

Contact: Terry Erbs

☎ 0403 500 642

✉ terry.erbs@gmail.com

🌐 <https://www.locatingartillery.org/noticeboard>

Collins/Walton 52nd

23 July 2025, Twin Towns Services Club, NSW

50th reunion.

Contact: Wayne Rye

☎ Whiskey312@gmail.com

RAAF Surface Finisher (SURFIN) Reunion

12–14 September 2025, Ipswich, QLD

We are excited to extend a warm invitation to all ex-SURFIN members and their partners to join us in celebrating the history and background of the mustering. Laughter and a good time guaranteed.

Contact: Garth Steinhardt

☎ 0487 195 418

✉ ghstein@tpg.com.au

RAN Destroyer Escort Personnel

15–16 October 2025, Frankston Arts Centre, VIC

The reunion is for all personnel who served in any of the 6 Destroyer Escorts. An informal meet & greet will be held on the evening of the 15th, with a more formal dinner on the 16th. Costs are yet to be determined. Plentiful accommodation is available in and near Frankston. You can indicate your interest on the All De Reunion Facebook page.

Contact: Rory Munn

☎ 0414 897 484

✉ alldereunion@gmail.com

Tamworth Aircrew Reunion

17–19 October 2025, Tamworth, NSW

Annual North by Northwest Aircrew Reunion. Current and retired military aircrew – all nationalities and all aircrew specialisations – welcome. 17th – meet & greet at the Tamworth Hotel; 18th – clay target shoot and BBQ; 18th – Reunion Dinner (formal); 19th at 10:00 – Remembrance Ceremony and wreath laying; 19th from 12:00 – AGM and recovery session.

Contact: Dennis ‘Rhino’ Hume

✉ humanhovell@icloud.com

🌐 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NNWAircrewReunion/>

RAAF Ground Equipment Maintenance Association (GEMA)

17–19 October 2025, Perth, WA

An open invitation is extended to ALL ex-RAAF members, regardless of mustering, who have served/currently serving at a GEMS or a MEOMS unit. Laughter and a good time guaranteed.

Contact: Ralph Feige

☎ 0422 355 682

✉ ralphfeige@gmail.com

8th RAN Electronic Warfare Branch Reunion

24 October 2025, Wrest Point Casino, TAS

The reunion for Branch personnel (Gollies) of all ranks will start at the casino for a meet & greet on the 24th, dinner on the 25th and a farewell venue TBA on the 26th. Accommodation at the casino is available for ex-EW personnel at a discounted rate. A registration form will be promulgated. Please visit the Facebook page for details and updates.

Contact: Richard Waldie

☎ 0418 693 288

✉ rgwaldie@tpg.com.au

🌐 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gollies/>

Headquarters & Headquarters Company 1st Australian Logistic Support Group

24–28 October, Busselton, WA
Reunion for 1 ALSG ex Vietnam. Please make contact for more details.

Contact: Tony Brown / Trevor Sargent

☎ 0428 852 736 / 0400 803 554

✉ tonyl1raye13@gmail.com / t.sarge47@gmail.com

HQ1ATF Association

17–21 November 2025, Painters Island Holiday Park, Wangaratta, VIC

Welcome dinner on the 17th. The following days will include free time, a full day tour to Glenrowan and the King Valley, and a commemorative dinner on the 20th at the Gateway Motel restaurant. Dinner will be preceded by a 5pm public Dedication Service at the RSL Memorial.

Contact: John Verhelst

☎ 0437 212 121

✉ john@jhconsult.com.au

🌐 www.hq1atf.org

Officer Cadet School Portsea – Graduating Class December 1975

7–9 December 2025, Canberra ACT

If you wish to attend the December 75 Class 50th Reunion and are not already receiving reunion emails, please make contact.

Contact: Bruce Scott

☎ 0481 055 953

✉ brucescott@tmrc.com.au

Navy HMAS Cerberus General entry 20/1985

21 February 2026, Perth, WA
40 years RAN basic training graduation.

Contact: Mark Shuttleworth

☎ 0418 906 489

✉ shuttm@outlook.com

MEDALS LOST AND FOUND

LOST

Linden H Humphrey

Seeking First World War service medals.

Contact: Tony

☎ 0416 262 738

✉ im4u2see@yahoo.com

Alexander Beaumont CPL 18523

I am hoping to locate a First World War British War Medal awarded to my grandfather (Medal No 30964) and Silver War Badge No 40010 awarded in 1919. He resided in the Rockhampton QLD area.

Contact: Darrin Howe

☎ 0448 180 663

✉ granpendazzle@gmail.com

Robert Barr Windlow, Service No. 1263

Thank you to members of the public for the return of Robert’s British War Medal and a Memorial Plaque. We are now just seeking his 1914–1915 Star (no 22305) and his Victory Medal (no 24291). He served with the 14th Australian Field Artillery Brigade and was killed in action in France in 1917.

Contact: Neroli Ferguson (nee Windlow)

☎ 0427 140 451

✉ anferg@bigpond.net.au

Gordon Graham Paul, QX 15256

Gordon was from Cairns, QLD, and his Second World War medals are believed to be in a large frame with his slouch hat and a photo. The immediate family would like them returned to their rightful owner. Last known location is in the Cairns region.

Contact: Carolyn Paul (daughter)

✉ carolyn_paul@iinet.net.au

FOUND

6423 T/Sgt William Henry Strong

Two First World War medals – a British War Medal and a Victory Medal – belonging to William of the 20th Infantry Battalion AIF. I believe he may have come from Haberfield NSW and the medals were found in Northern Sydney.

Contact: John Lundy

☎ 0417 200 153

✉ johnlundy72@gmail.com

T I Dwyer and J T Pascoe

Medals found in Belmont WA: Australian Service Medal for F554648 T I Dwyer, small and large medal, small bar clip missing; Australian Service Medal for 852742 J T Pascoe, full set of Service Medals, Australian sun (slouch hat badge), RA PMF medal (silver horse on world, gold crown).

Contact: Anais Devenish, Treasurer, Belmont RSL Sub-Branch (City of)

✉ belmont.treasurer@sb.rslwa.org.au

J F DOYLE NX 53881

I have a Pacific Star medal and I’m keen to return it to his/her family.

Contact: Robert Brian Squires

☎ 0412 991 226

✉ robsquires1@hotmail.com

37199 Leading Aircraftman Francis Courteney Branagan

I have a war medal that I would like to give to the family. Please contact me for further details.

Contact: Jen

✉ jenhoar06@gmail.com

William E Whipple R30316

Australian Service Medal 1945–75 with Clasp Japan for service in Royal Australian Navy. Awarded in May 1999, when William was residing in Springwood NSW. Clasp has been found in Gunnedah NSW.

Contact: Gunnedah RSL Sub-Branch

☎ 02 6742 1603

✉ gunnedahrsl@bigpond.com

Pte T A Hibbottson

British War Medal for 1130 T Hibbottson, AIF Bn, Died 28 April 1915, aged 33.

Contact: D M Omond

☎ 0448 471 703

✉ don.omond@gmail.com

Sargeant William Aubrey Crisp

I have a Second World War medal belonging to William – service number NX25204. Hoping to find family to return it to.

Contact: Rae Andrews

☎ 0477 556 729

✉ rae.andrews307@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

Naval Warfare Officers' Association (NWOA)

The NWOA is comprised of retired and serving naval officers who have either commanded or served on Australian warships. The association provides a social network for RAN officers who primarily have a surface warfare focus, however, it includes officers of all specialisations who have served at sea since the Second World War. NWOA is seeking to expand membership.

Contact: Stephen Duffy

☎ 0432 262 535

✉ steve_bmss@y7mail.com

🌐 <http://warfareofficers.org.au>

Looking for Naval Nashos

Seeking writers and stewards from Dorm 5+, 1954 Intake Flinders 12/7/1954.

Contact: Ray Cooling

☎ 02 6621 3980

✉ helray.10@bigpond.com

Seeking PO (LECO) Dennis Mills R63490

He was on HMAS *Sydney* in the early 1970s. He had 2 brothers in the Navy as well: one was Dick. Dennis came to our wedding 52 years ago. I would like to catch up.

Contact: Noel Beattie

☎ 0409 551 948

✉ nrbeattie@bigpond.com.au

ARMY

B Coy, 9th Platoon

National Service 1969–71, B Company, 9th Platoon, Singleton. Seeking members for a get-together.

Contact: Graham Pitts/
Bruce Barnell

☎ 0409 322 058 / 0417 750 256

Sapper Donald Harry Freeman 19029635 – Royal Engineers

I have some documents and photographs that belong to Donald. He served in the British Army on the Rhine, 1946–1948, and later migrated to Australia.

Contact: Bruce Henderson, Port Augusta West, South Australia

☎ 0400 103 898

✉ bruce_henderson@bigpond.com

Service in PNG

Did you serve in PNG from 1951 to 1975? The PIB-PIR Association is recruiting new members.

Contact: Kevin Smith

☎ 0402 680 496

🌐 www.soldierspng.com

6 Platoon B Company 7 RAR

Looking to contact members who served in 1967–68, Vietnam.

Contact: Geoff Patterson

☎ 0477 435 844

✉ geoffaussieviet@hotmail.com

Stewart and/or Jan Sporn

Seeking to reconnect with Stewart who served with me, Linus and others on Bravo Radar, Det 131 Div Loc Bty at Nui Dat in 1967–68. Last contact was a year or so ago.

Contact: John Vickary (aka Vick)

☎ 0418 183 911

✉ attitudejv@bigpond.com

Seeking Craftsman Noel Maher

Seeking my good friend who was posted to RAEME Bulimba in 1966 and served in the Instrument Section until early February 1988. Noel was a former resident of Stockton, Newcastle.

Contact: Bob Henderson

☎ 0421717594

✉ diandbob44@optusnet.com.au

Seeking Robin Leigh Swincer 44845

Robin is a former medic in Vietnam – seeking contact for possible inclusion on our memorial.

Contact: John Wauchope, Echunga RSL

☎ 0417 893 465

✉ wauch01@gmail.com

AIR FORCE

Bomber Command Commemoration

On 31 May 2025, a Last Post Ceremony at the AWM will tell the story of an airman of Bomber Command. On 1 June 2025, at the AWM's Bomber Command Memorial a ceremony will be held to pay tribute to the 10,000 RAAF aircrew, ground staff and Women's Auxiliary Air Force members. There will be a dinner on Saturday evening at the ADFA Officer's Mess and lunch on Sunday at Poppy's Café at the AWM. If you are interested in attending any of the social functions, please contact the BCCDF Bomber Command Commemorative Day Foundation, details below.

Contact: Michael Bennett

☎ 0400 223 757

✉ events@bccdf.org.au

🌐 <https://bccdf.org.au/>

HQRIC Detachment 'S' participant search

The No 37 Squadron (RAAF) Association is endeavouring to contact former personnel who participated in HQRIC Detachment 'S', the Hercules and Dakota deployment to Saigon 29 March – 29 April 1975, for a commemorative event at the Australian War Memorial on 23 July.

Contact: Col Coyne

☎ 0402 815 015

✉ raaf37sqnassoc@outlook.com

🌐 www.37sqnassoc.org

WW2 El Alamein RAAF commemorative park

We are a community group trying to have 3 Second World War local RAAF airmen recognised with a plaque in a pocket park in Manly. We are trying to locate relatives of: Sgt 402114 David Ross Gale 250 Sqn RAAF, enlisted 27/01/1940, KIA 26/06/1941, aged 24; Sgt 402893 Frank Webster Tregear

260 Sqn RAAF, enlisted Army – Manly, 28/05/1940 – 19/09/1940 T/F RAAF 11/11/1940, KIA 24/04/1942, aged 20; F/O 403262 Alan Howard Durrell 459 Sqn RAAF, enlisted 05/01/1941, KIA 15/06/1942, 48 Rosedale Street Manly, aged 21.

Contact: Peter Barr

☎ 0400 997 711

✉ pb.barmarine@bigpond.com

RAAF Staff College Association

Members of the Association and their guests meet with a guest speaker for lunch at the National Press Club, Canberra, on the last Thursday of the month in March, July and November.

Contact: Ian Pearson, President

🌐 www.raafsca.org

Seeking information on Archerfield Air Tragedy

Seeking information from family, friends, and colleagues of the 23 victims of the crash of a RAAF C-47 Dakota on 27 March 1943 for a book. I'm seeking any eye-witness accounts, photographs, stories or reports which would assist in piecing the accident together.

Contact: Andrew Johnston

✉ wodongatragedy1945@hotmail.com

🌐 andrewjohnstonbooks.com

Seeking descendants of Reedy Creek (SA) air crash

Seeking descendants of the 5 airmen killed near Kingston SE, SA, in the crash of a RAAF Anson AW678 on 11 August 1942: 23964 Sgt William Nathaniel Higham Fleming, aged 20, of Alderny QLD; 405197 Sgt John Edward Moorehouse, aged 27, of Bundaberg QLD; 416804 Sgt Malcom Albert Thiele, aged 20, of Mount Torrens SA; 410473 LAC William Ross Bremner Fenton, aged 20, of Mitcham VIC; 410476 LAC Charles Thomas Fletcher, aged 28, of Warburton, VIC. Kingston SE RSL is reaching out to advise of a second commemoration to be held in 2025.

Contact: Phil Southam

☎ 0419 807 169

🌐 kingston@rslsa.org.au

MISCELLANEOUS

Free computers for veterans

Veterans who reside in the Queensland electorate of Lilley are invited to apply for a free desktop computer as part of the Diggers go Digital initiative. You will have to provide a current DVA card or other proof of service. Made possible by the Kedron-Wavell Services Club.

Contact: Computers 4 Learning Inc

✉ requests@computers4learning.org.au

🌐 <https://computers4learning.org.au/products/Diggers-go-Digital-c174626284>

Gulf War

The Dudley War Memorial is looking to add names to the new memorial for those who fought in the Gulf War and lived in Dudley, NSW.

Contact: Gary Clement

☎ 0414 472 013

✉ garyclement@bigpond.com

80th Anniversary ANZAC Charity Concert – 'Allies of War'

The concert marking 80 years since the end of the Second World War will include a tribute to the entertainers and radio legends who performed during both world wars, on 26 April 2025 at the Woolgoolga Sports Complex.

Contact: Greg Butcher

☎ 0409 046 390

✉ greg@accenthearing.com.au

🌐 <https://www.facebook.com/clarencevalleyorchestra>

Service of ADGs in Vietnam

I am researching the service of Air Defence Guards in Vietnam and would like to hear from any veterans who served in Base Support Flight or IOSU Vung Tau who have direct knowledge of ADGs being attached to Army Units in 1967 and 1968.

Contact: Dr Sean Carwardine

☎ 0400 703 565

✉ carbs99@bigpond.com

Plaque for James William Thomson

I have found an official memorial plaque for British Empire soldiers who died in the First World War. It bears the inscription *He died for freedom and honour* with the name of James William Thomson.

Contact: Joan Cameron

☎ 0414 257 389

UK Veterans Lapel Badge

I am a UK veteran and have recently been supplied with a lapel badge available to any UK

Army, Navy or Air Force veteran by applying via the website.

Contact: Bernie Coleman

✉ coleman.bernie@gmail.com

🌐 <https://www.gov.uk/apply-medal-or-veterans-badge>

ADF personnel who served during Cyclone Tracy

If you served in the ADF during Darwin Help and in any logistic way throughout Australia when the cyclone hit, then we want to hear from you. We are submitting a petition to Government and Awards for recognition for justified service.

Contact: Bill Furey

☎ 0422 107 400

✉ webmaster@adfcyclonetracyaward.com.au

🌐 <https://www.adfcyclonetracyaward.com.au>

Cairns British Ex-Serviceman's Group

Cairns RSL Sub-branch (in conjunction with British Ex-Serviceman's Association, QLD) has formed a group for ex-members of the British Armed Forces to promote social activities, welfare, commemoration events, military history and the memory of fallen friends.

Contact: Graeme Kelly or Sub-branch

☎ 0401 087 927 / 07 4249 3030

✉ graeme.kelly@cairns.rslqld.net.au

18th National Diggers 2025 Bowls Tournament

This is a 3-day event open to all current and former Defence Force personnel, to be held in Dubbo, Diggers Day, 7 September; Tournament, 9-11 September. Format: 3 Bowls Triples – teams or singles. Send nominations to National Diggers Bowls Carnival, PO Box 2686, NSW 2830.

Contact: Peter Lesueur

☎ 0447 892 333

✉ peterlesuerur@outlook.com

Seeking Victorian Ex-Service Women Over the Age of 90

I am travelling through Victoria in May and hope to photograph ex-service women aged 90 and older and feature them in an exhibition. The images honour the service and sacrifice of the individuals involved and create a lasting memory for the veterans and their families. I do not charge a fee for the portraits.

Contact: Carla Edwards

✉ Email: carlitaetpg.com.au

☎ Phone: 0407 102 695

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