



THE DIGEST

WAR WIDOWS DAY 2023



AUSTRALIAN WAR WIDOWS

NSW LIMITED

ABN 24 083 075 914

www.warwidowsnsw.com.au

*"We all belong to each other.
We all need each other. It is in serving each
other and in sacrificing for our common good
that we are finding our true life."*

– King George VI, 1941

Under the patronage of
**The Honourable Margaret Beazley
AC KC**, Governor of New South Wales

STATE PRESIDENT

Ms Queen Dunbar

BOARD CHAIR

Ms Tricia Hobson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

J Collins AM, S Clark AM,
MAJGEN S Coyle AM CSC DSM,
Q Dunbar, B Till, T Hobson,
L Sullivan, L Boyd and Dr R Martin

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Ms Renee Wilson

THE DIGEST

ISSN 2652-8606

PUBLISHER

Australian War Widows NSW Ltd

HEAD OFFICE

Suite 1.01, Level 1, 9 Help Street
Chatswood NSW 2067

PO Box 146, Chatswood NSW 2057

CONTACT

guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au

Phone: (02) 9267 6577, 1800 451 615

OFFICE HOURS

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

\$30 due 1 April each year

Donations to Australian War Widows NSW
Ltd are tax deductible.

DISCLAIMER: The material in this
The Digest has been checked thoroughly
and to the best knowledge is correct.
However, errors may occur which are
beyond our control. If this should
happen, we apologise most sincerely.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Events & Key Dates

Our Space Online Webinar
4 December 2023

Technology Drop In Session
6 December 2023

Wollongon Regional Visit
7 December 2023

Annual Office Closure
22 December 23 – 2 January 24

Christmas Day
25 December 2023

Boxing Day
26 December 2023

Australia Day
26 January 2024

Technology Drop In Session
7 February 2024

Key Commemorative Dates

**Last Australian Soldiers Evacuate
Gallipoli, 1915**
20 December 2023

**Conclusion of Operation SLIPPER,
Afghanistan (2014)**
31 December 2023

World Day of War Orphans
6 January 2024

Battle of Rafa (1917)
9 January 2024

**Official cessation of hostilities in
Vietnam by Australian forces (1973)**
11 January 2024

**Anniversary of ambush at
Gemench Bridge (1942)**
14 January 2024

**International Holocaust
Remembrance Day**
27 January 2024

CONTENT

- 03 President's Message
- 05 Chair Update
- 06 CEO Update
- 08 Remembering Them
- 10 War Widows Day 2023
- 14 War Widows' Stories
- 16 Remembrance Day 2023
- 18 Club News
- 20 AGM Wrap-up
- 23 Entitlement Updates
- 24 Advocacy Update
- 26 Building Your Skills
- 28 Self-Care Feature Articles
- 30 FAQs
- 31 Recipe & Thanks
- 32 Member News
- 34 Noticeboard

OUR COVERS

Front

Our State President,
Queen Dunbar, laying a
piece of wattle with Life-
Member Heather Gillam.



Back

Pictures of War
Widows Day 2023.





State President Queen Dunbar (left) laying a piece of wattle with Life-Member Heather Gillam on War Widows Day

Welcome to the spring edition of *The Digest*, where we mark War Widows Day 2023 and share with you the many pictures and inspiring stories of how you and our other members across our beautiful state of NSW observed this, your second War Widows Day.

As a war widow myself, I know how much this day means to our community. Our State Government and the people of New South Wales now acknowledge the more than 70 years of grief, pain and love felt by war widows. As well as the strength and support we provide to our veterans, we have also lived and endured the sacrifices and heartaches experienced by many because of our loved ones' service.

This day is filled with many and mixed emotions: love and loss, strength and pride, connection to each other and to the commitment to keep advocating for better outcomes for war widows and their families.

This year, we partnered with Legacy to mark this uplifting occasion. I know many of you were especially pleased about this partnership, given the special place Legacy holds in your hearts, alongside our organisation.

Following a morning tea at Admiralty House, where war widows from both organisations marked

the occasion with His Excellency General the Honourable David John Hurley AC DSC (Retd) and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley, we held a service honouring you in Martin Place, Sydney.

It was so poignant and symbolic to gather at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, a place so meaningful to many of us. I was moved to watch the war widows – some young but many older – unite and support each other throughout the day.

Friendship is the foundation on which this special organisation is built. It is friendship that has lifted us up on our darkest days, and the special bond war widows share was so evident on this day that I was humbled to witness and be a part of it.

With more than 50% of our members living regionally, it was also great to hear how so many of you came together to mark this War Widows Day with morning teas and catchups across the state. We have included as many photos as we could from War Widows Day in this edition. I am so proud to share this day with you all.

I was also pleased this year, along with Queensland and NSW, that Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory observed War Widows Day for the first time — acknowledging war widows and their sacrifices to their communities and to the nation.

...Continued on next page



State President Queen Dunbar providing her remarks at the Admiralty House on War Widows Day this year.

We are working hard to make War Widows Day a national day across Australia. In the lead up to the day, our organisation was very active across different Legacy and social media platforms, with TV, newspaper articles and radio interviews advocating for a national War Widows Day.

With more than 15,000 war widows in NSW and 40,000 across the nation, it is time to support and acknowledge the sacrifices of war widows. One of our initiatives is to gather signatures from our wider communities and stakeholders, and submit a petition to call on the Australian Government to make 19 October War Widows Day nationally. If you wish to sign this petition and support us in our efforts and advocacy, please scan the QR code on this page.

In other news, August marked my first 12 months in the role of State President. Serving you as State President is a great honour and privilege for me, and I look forward to continuing doing so over the next 12 months.

This first year has been incredibly busy. When I took on this role, I wasn't sure what to expect. Looking back, I can honestly say it was busier than I anticipated. On the other hand, the rewards have been well worth it.

During the last 12 months, I have attended more than 12 club events, including nine regional clubs



State President Queen Dunbar with Port Macquarie Social Club members during regional visit earlier this year.



Queen Dunbar reciting the War Widows Motto alongside Immediate Past President Sydney Legacy, Nikki Hollis, at the War Widows Day Service in Martin Place.

across the state. I have also represented war widows at more than 18 official events, building relationships and working with stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes for you and your communities.

Meeting many of you in person throughout the year and having the opportunity to hear first-hand the issues impacting you, is the best part of my role. I look forward to continuing serving you, representing you and meeting more of you in person next year. Stay safe and well this holiday season and thank you for all you do for one other.

MS QUEEN DUNBAR
State President

Scan the QR code to sign
our petition





Welcome to this edition of *The Digest*. It was an honour for me to be the Master of Ceremonies at the recent War Widows Day Service at the Cenotaph in Sydney. It was a moving service and a very special day for all, a day when we can honour our war widows and acknowledge their sacrifices. I was proud to stand with you on this very special day.

Since our last edition of *The Digest*, the board has met twice, still focused on progressing our four priorities for the year:

- the update of our organisation's name
- diversification of our funding lines
- strategy review and update
- board training.

It was an honour and privilege to chair my first AGM in August, and spend time with many of you on the day. It was wonderful also to meet many of our regional members and coordinators the night before and hear firsthand how we can better connect and support the more than 50% of you who live outside of a metro area. You can read more about the AGM on page 20. You can also read about our achievements and activities over the course of the 2022–23 financial year in our Annual Report.

Thank you to all of you who participated in the branding consultation. We received and heard the views of more than 370 of you. This is a significant number, and will really assist the Board in

understanding your views about the options that we tested and what you think about the changes to our brand in general. The Board's role is to be focused on the strategic direction and needs of the organisation, but we must also ensure that our views and thinking align with the majority of you. That is why exercises like the branding consultation are so important, and we are grateful to all of you who participated. The results of the consultation have been presented to the Board and we will write to you all shortly with the decision.

Another area occupying a lot of our time at the Board is our funding model. With the organisation's funding mix currently limited to three main streams, the need to diversify is well appreciated by the Board and its committees. To achieve sustainability in the organisation, we need to significantly grow revenue streams in value and volume. We also need to ensure that our operations are optimised and that our programming and fund expenditure are strategically aligned and disciplined. To this end, we are currently developing a funding plan that will set out the key principles driving the raising and expenditure of funds. The plan, including key metrics and step-downs in reserve expenditure, is currently being developed as a priority.

Before closing, I want to formally acknowledge here the loss of four soldiers in the Talisman Sabre exercise a couple of months ago. This tragic loss of life reminds us all of the inherent dangers our Defence personnel face daily, and the risks their families bare on our behalf. Our team has connected with the 6th Aviation Regiment and is in contact with some of the bereaved families. Our thoughts are with these families always, but particularly as we go into this holiday period.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank you all for your ongoing support and commitment to one another and our organisation. It is a privilege to be part of this inspiring group, and we wish you a very happy and safe festive season.

MS TRICIA HOBSON
Chair of the Board



CEO Renee Wilson (middle) with Rachel Martin (right) and Debra Banks (left) at the Our Space Sydney launch event.

This time of year is very important for our organisation and our members, with War Widows Day, Remembrance Day and the upcoming holidays. It's a time of meaning, reflection and remembrance, and a time when social connections are much needed. This is a time when our best work can take place, and a meaningful one for our team.

War Widows Day 2023

Seeing so many of you at War Widows Day was our honour and privilege. This year we expanded the day by collaborating with Sydney Legacy, with this partnership resulting in 4,500 letters about the day going out to war widows all over the state. Our phones became incredibly busy, consistently averaging more than 40 calls a day for just under 10 days. We had more than 200 war widows register their interest in attending the events on the day. It was an honour to recognise you all at the service in Martin Place, where we saw more than 150 guests in attendance, including 100 war widows. The introduction of the wattle tribute and the inclusion of our war widows in the service was meaningful and moving. Passers-by stopped to watch the service and learned a little more about Australia's unsung heroes and the sacrifices made by our war widows and families. It was a beautiful day and planning for 2024 is already underway.

You can read more about War Widows Day on page 10 and also review the frequently asked questions about the day on page 30.

Advocacy

Ongoing work on the design of a peak body for the veteran sector is progressing within the community. The work has been positive, and the establishment of a peak body offers opportunities for us to increase the value of our work, exposure and profile in the veteran community. We have been actively involved in all design workshops. The latest workshop on 10 October 2023 resulted in consensus on the key elements of the design of the body, and delivering a sector submission to be made to the Royal Commission on the design of a peak body.

On 12 October, we provided our second submission to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The content of this submission built on our first written submission in October 2021. In this document, we acknowledged the progress that has been made by the Royal Commission and highlighted the issues faced by veterans' families, and how crucial it is for them to be included in the Royal Commission's agenda. The submission highlights the importance of families and the role they play in veterans' lives and wellbeing. It also focuses on their need to be recognised and adequately supported.

Please scan the QR code on this page to view our submission. You can read more about our advocacy work on page 24.

Scan the QR code to view
our submission



Social and guild clubs

So far this year, we supported the delivery of monthly meetings for 53 clubs, and our staff visited 20+ metro clubs and 22 regional clubs. On War Widows Day, we assisted regional clubs organise special events to mark the day. Regional tours continue to be a highlight of the work undertaken by Jo, her team and the Board Directors. Most recently, we worked with Legacy in the Lismore area to bring together more than 50 local war widows for lunch. This event once again shows what can happen when we band together with other organisations to support a shared community. At the Lismore event we met widows we didn't know, shared the word about War Widows Day, and were able to find more than enough war widows to reopen a social club in the region. You can read more about club gatherings and the regional visits on page 18.

Our Space

Through Our Space, we are extending our social connection and support programs to new locations and demographics, responding to unmet community needs and filling a fundamental gap in the veteran support system. The aim is to build a scalable model of social connection and support for veterans' families that unites a community of peers around their common experiences.

This year, we have launched the program – still in its very early stages – in both the ACT and Sydney. At each event we had more than 50 people in attendance. The next Our Space ACT session will be delivered at the Veteran and Families Expo on 25 November 2023 and will feature a panel discussion on the importance of social connection.

We are putting the final touches on our plan to grow and engage the online Our Space program as well. Our Space Online has grown to 104 people, up 20 since the start of the year. Our very first Our Space Online event will occur on 4 December 2023 with a webinar on 'Grief, Loss and the Holidays'.

You can register for this event here:



Space for all

You might recall, earlier this year, we updated you on work we were undertaking in the Chatswood office to open it up so that members and staff could get more use out of the space. With the majority of the works completed, it has been pleasing to see it being used for volunteer gatherings, meetings with members and special projects. We are currently updating the video conferencing capability, and while we have some final touches to place on it, you are welcome to use it as well. Please just give us a call to see if it is free at your preferred time.

The Programs team has also recently introduced drop-in sessions for members to come in with questions about technology, entitlements or government support. Just today (8 November) Jo was able to assist a member by helping her complete forms and paperwork to get registered for My Aged Care services. If this sounds like something that would interest you, please give us a call or stay tuned to our newsletters for the next drop-in session date.

On behalf of all of us at head office, I would like to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

RENEE WILSON

Chief Executive Officer

Representing war widows

Directors and members take great pride in representing our organisation during commemorations and events across the state. Here is a snapshot of the last few months. We thank all who proudly represented us at these events.

Lynne Boyd – AWWNSW Board Director

On Monday 28 August, Board Director Lynne Boyd attended the Legacy Week Launch hosted by Sydney Legacy at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney.

This year marked an important milestone for Legacy as it is their centenary year. It was an honour to attend this event to kick off Legacy Week.

Lynne laid a wreath on behalf of AWWNSW alongside RSL NSW President Ray James OAM. It was a beautiful service to mark the start of a very meaningful week for all war widows.

Right: Board Director Lynne Boyd next to RSL NSW President Ray James OAM.



Queen Dunbar – AWWNSW State President



On Sunday 27 August, a significant event took place at Government House. The Korean and Vietnam Veterans Reception was a notable event, as it was the first joint commemoration for veterans of both wars.

In the presence of esteemed guests, including The Governor of New South Wales Her Excellency Margaret Beazley AC KC, Premier Chris Minns, Minister for Veterans David Harris, and seven Korean War veterans, the reception paid tribute to the dedication and sacrifice of these brave individuals.

Our State President, Queen Dunbar, was proud to be part of this historic event, highlighting the importance of recognising the service and valour of our veterans and their families.

Above: State President Queen Dunbar with The Hon. David Harris MP, NSW Minister for Veterans (left) and one of the Korean Veteran in attendance.

Dallas Alderson – AWWNSW Member

In a solemn gathering on Sunday 13 August, the Blue Mountains community came together to commemorate the Vietnam Veterans' Day in Springwood.

With heartfelt respect, attendees paid tribute to the sacrifices of those who served in the Vietnam War. Terry Ryan, a veteran of the Battle of Long Tan, laid 18 poppies at the cenotaph, each representing an Australian life lost in that battle.

Guest of honour Brigadier Nerolie McDonald shared insights from her connection with Vietnam and expressed gratitude for the enduring Anzac spirit, resilience, and mateship that veterans embody. She reminded us of the importance of commemorations in honoring those who defended our nation and way of life.

Right: AWWNSW Members Dallas Alderson (left) and Merrilyn Barnicoat.



Lynne Sullivan – AWWNSW Board Director

On 25 August, Board Director Lynne Sullivan represented AWWNSW at a Flag Raising Ceremony at Sydney Town Hall to celebrate Australian South Sea Islander Recognition Day.

You might ask, what does this have to do with war widows? Lynne's answer is that invitations such as this are an acknowledgement by organisers that we, as a group, have something to contribute. It becomes a means for us to learn more about the varied groups within our community, and let their members know what our objectives are and whether we can assist them in any way.

Since 1994, Australian South Sea Islanders have been recognised as a distinct cultural group descended from Australia's involvement in slave trade in the South Pacific, known as blackbirding. Descendants who know of and/or acknowledge their descent now number approximately 320,000, and continue to be active in Australia's cultural, economic, social and political life.

Right: Group photo taken by Nick Langley - City of Sydney



Lynne Boyd – AWWNSW Board Director

On Tuesday 15 August, Board Director Lynne Boyd and AWWNSW staff member Cherie Perceval had the privilege of attending the Victory in the Pacific commemoration held at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, Sydney. It was an honour to be part of this significant event that pays tribute to the courage and sacrifices of our heroes.

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway stands as a powerful reminder of the spirit and resilience of those who served. We are grateful for the opportunity to join in honouring their memory.

Left: Lynne Boyd and her grandsons at the service.

Renee Wilson – AWWNSW CEO

It was an honour for many of our Vietnam War Widows to be a part of the Vietnam Veterans Day Memorial Service at the Cenotaph in Martin Place on Friday 18 August.

When the first Vietnam War Widow stood up to lay a rose, our Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales, simply stood up, followed by dignitaries and attendees. They remained standing until all war widows had laid their roses. It was a very moving and impromptu moment, showing upmost respect to our war widows on such an important day.

Veterans of the Vietnam War came home without receiving the honours they deserved, as they returned from a war that was controversial at the time. On this day, we honoured them, their widows and their families in the best way we know.



Marking an important day



Michelle Carr (left) enjoying morning tea with other war widows at Admiralty House on War Widows Day.

October 19 was the second annual War Widows Day. To mark the occasion, we held a number of events, including a morning tea at Admiralty House, hosted by the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Sir David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) and Her Excellency, Mrs Linda Hurley, followed by lunch at the Fullerton Hotel and a ceremony at the Cenotaph in Martin Place.

This year we partnered with Legacy Sydney to mark the occasion. The partnership was more than symbolic – it was a commitment to war widows and the families of veterans that our organisations will stand together, supporting our shared community in NSW. Together, AWWNSW and Sydney Legacy were able to reach 4,500 war widows across the state to invite them to the event in Sydney.

As attendee numbers at Admiralty House were limited, war widows were selected by ballot to attend the morning tea at Admiralty House and lunch at the Fullerton Hotel. You can read more about how this occurred and why on page 30.

War widow Michelle Carr was one of the lucky ones to attend both events. She said she enjoyed the hospitality of Their Excellencies at Admiralty House. “Her Excellency sang with us and had gone to the trouble to make us all song books and even writing a song for us,” explains Michelle. “It was special

because it brought some lightness to the day.”

Following the lunch, war widows gathered at the Cenotaph in Martin Place for the War Widows Day ceremony.

Chair of our Board, Tricia Hobson, along with the President of Legacy Sydney, Ian Thompson, delivered a joint welcome address, before Pru Bennett, great-niece of Jessie Vasey CBE OBE, spoke on behalf of her family.

Afghanistan war widow and Board Director Bree Till delivered the War Widows Address. In a touching and heartfelt speech, Bree spoke of the harsh reality of being left behind to raise a family on her own following the passing of her husband, as well as her heartbreak of sitting with a friend on her first wedding anniversary following his death.

Official guests and representatives laid wreaths, before war widows held a floral tribute of their own. One by one they stood at the Cenotaph to lay a sprig of wattle to acknowledge their and each other’s sacrifices for our nation.

Some war widows spoke of mixed emotions laying the wattle. Sandra Catlett said she got a little bit emotional as she placed her sprig of wattle on the Cenotaph. It made her think not only of her own sacrifices and that of other war widows, but also the sacrifice of her late husband, a national serviceman in the Vietnam War.



Board Director Bree Till providing the War Widows Address at the War Widows Day Service at the Cenotaph.



Member Shirley McLaren reciting the Ode next to Ray James OAM at the War Widows Day Service at the Cenotaph.

It is a powerful reminder that the sacrifices of war widows and of veterans are two sides of the same coin, with their sacrifices intertwined.

After the laying of the wattle, war widow and RAAF veteran Shirley McLaren OAM recited The Ode, which was followed by the national anthem.

At the close of the ceremony, war widow Di Vogt read a poem called 'The Silent Ranks'. Leaving the final word of the day to war widows, the poem ends with these words:

"I love the man I married, the military is his life. But I stand among the silent ranks, known as the military wife."



Above: Vice-President of The Entrance & Long Jetty Guild Club, Fran Brock, laughing with the Governor General at Admiralty House.

Right: Past Board Director Di Vogt reciting 'The Silent Ranks' at the War Widows Day Service in Martin Place.

After the ceremony ended, Di walked around the Cenotaph to view the wreaths and wattle. She said it was a poignant moment.

"Seeing the sprigs of wattle among the wreaths on the Cenotaph in Martin Place, which is such a sacred place for me, symbolised how the widows and families of our past and serving members of Australia's Defence Force are finally being recognised for the unwavering support they provide to those who have and continue to serve," says Di.

Di went on to say that she doesn't know if there are words that can do the ceremony justice. "It was so beautiful and emotional."

War widow Fran Brock agrees, "It was a very touching and moving day."

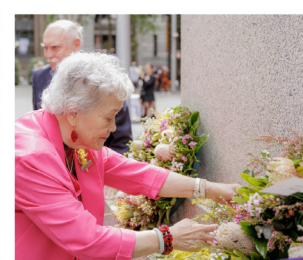
Fran says holding the service at the Cenotaph in Martin Place made the ceremony even more touching this year. "The Cenotaph carries a lot of meaning," says Fran. "It was very special."

Last year New South Wales and Queensland were the first states to observe War Widows Day, and this year the ACT, Western Australia and South Australia also marked the occasion. Di hopes Australia does even better next year. She says, "It's time for a national War Widows Day."



WAR WIDOWS DAY 2023





War Widows' Stories

My meeting with Margaret Tanner, by Caroline Kirche

There is a cruel irony to life, as it often does not allow us to speak with our grandparents when we are old enough to listen and wise enough to ask the right questions – or vice versa. As we go through life, most of us come to wish our grandparents were still with us to answer important questions about life and help us get the perspective we need when everything seems to be falling apart.

When going through challenging times, we shall find comfort in the stories of others: reminders that things will get better, in time. The most inspiring stories I have heard are those of older generations. They went through hardship I don't believe I could handle; yet, they probably thought the same about themselves. Like Eleanor Roosevelt supposedly once said, "A woman is like a tea bag, you never know how strong she is until you put her in hot water".

Margaret Tanner does not claim to know the secret to a long life, but she might hold the secret to living your best life. A secret she might share with those wise enough to ask the right questions or wise enough to listen. A secret veterans' spouses,



Margaret Tanner (left) with her niece, Wendy Lerutte, at the War Widows Day lunch this year, at the Fullerton Hotel.

"Although I have never been through what Margaret has gone through, I found comfort then, sitting in her dining room, that somehow, I belong to this community."

like me, might need to hear at some point in their journey.

When I interviewed Margaret, she was about to turn 103 and I had just moved to Sydney with my partner who serves in the Navy. I was in awe listening to anecdotes and stories about her life and the people Margaret has come to know during her long life. Her stories about other war widows, neighbours and friends were as loving as if she were talking about her family. I truly understood then what the War Widows motto means: 'We all belong to each other, we all need each other'. Although I have never been through what Margaret has gone through, I found comfort then, sitting in her dining room, that somehow I belong to this community.

Margaret seems to approach life's difficulties, problems and traumas with a "nothing you can do about it" attitude, adding the right dose of "giving everything a go". With this recipe, she holds the secret to living her best life – and to being a defence spouse.

Inspiration is found when you unweave the stories of her life so they reveal themselves one by one, like a veil drops. Margaret was widowed at age 29, with her son just two years old. She remembers the wars her family went through; all the men of her life served in a conflict.



Young Caroline having tea with her Mamet in 1991.

But her memory is kind, vivid and full of little tales. Her description of those years did not seem to be as harsh as one my age would expect them to be. Talking to Margaret, I suddenly felt like I was seating with my Mamet – “gran” in southern French – playing Scrabble and listening to her talking about the war she lived through.

I remember vivid snips of stories Mamet would tell us about them sneaking potatoes to feed the family. I remember the descriptions of the dresser my great-grandfather hand-carved and regrettably left behind when they had to leave Normandie.

Never did she describe the trauma, the pain, the worries, the changed men that returned, although those were always there. Listening to women of that generation could make you believe that time does heal all things, and if it doesn't, time will soften the horrors of our times.

Margaret spoke of the war the way my Mamet

used to: in small, tiny snips of memories. She would describe how the war did not stop her from taking her bicycle to the beach to read her book, despite the constant worry of a Japanese invasion, and another veil dropped to reveal Margaret as a young, strong and independent woman.

But never did her words carry anger, resentment, or regret. When asked how she managed to live through such difficult times, through the wars and loss of her partner, Margaret did not know what to say besides “There is nothing you can do about it”... so you just keep living.

Digging a little deeper, I discovered Margaret was a golf player up until she was 99. In fact, she kept trying new things through her life: ice skating, taking up yoga in her 70s, going to dances, and being asked on dates – which she politely declined. She described her youth and later years saying “I would give everything a go,” followed with true laughter. I can swear she was proud – a little cheeky and very proud.

When I met my partner and found out he would be sent away on a ship six months later, he kept saying how he valued my strong, independent nature. It took meeting Margaret to understand why that was important to him: he wanted a partner who was independent enough to keep things going at home, to keep on living and to get out there so he would not worry about ‘back home’.

Margaret is the ultimate defence spouse: she represents what it takes to be one, to love one and to remain one, despite the lonely years, sorrow and hard times. She is the wonder woman I always aspired to be.

There is beauty in contradiction, and comfort in believing you can find freedom within it. Margaret carried that contradicting freedom: she was independent enough to be alone, and social enough to find support where and when she needed most. But most of all, she is a spouse, a defence spouse, a mother, and a grandmother. She is independent because she had to be, and she found support because she had to be supported to carry on and to live her best possible life.

“Margaret is the ultimate defence spouse: she represents what it takes to be one, to love one and to remain one, despite the lonely years, sorrow and hard times.”

Remembrance Day 2023

Reflections of a war widow



This year for Remembrance Day, we gathered a story from one of our beloved member. In a personal and heartfelt account, Jenny discusses the meaning of Remembrance Day for her, and how she usually commemorates a day so dear to our hearts.

Remembrance Day holds different meaning for different people, depending on when and where you grew up, if your parents served, and if you lost loved ones at war.

For Jenny, Remembrance Day is one of the most sacred days of the year. Jenny grew up in the south of England. During World War II, her father served in the Royal Air Force and her mother drove ambulances in London.

Despite now being aged in her 70s, she remembers in vivid detail how, when she was growing up, the country paused at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

"I attended a service every year," Jenny explains. "Remembrance Day was sacred."

She says as the clock struck 11am, cars would pull over to the side of the road, men would take off their hats and bow their heads, and people in the shops would stop what they were doing and stand still for two minutes.



"For me, Remembrance Day is a day to respect, remember and be grateful for what we have. It's a day to feel proud of our military."

Those minutes of silence were a moment to remember the incomprehensible sacrifice of human life, as well as being a token from a grateful nation for the freedoms they enjoyed.

For Jenny, the red poppy symbolises Remembrance Day. "It's sacred to me," she says. "In England, there were poppies everywhere on Remembrance Day. Churches and cathedrals countrywide held services and wreaths were laid."

Jenny met a serving member of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in England while he was under training for Submarines. They married, and when his training was completed, he came home to Australia, bringing Jenny with him. She was only 20 at that time.

At this point, Remembrance Day took on new meaning.

Defence houses back in those days were situated in clusters, and most houses were home to either serving members of the RAN or war veterans. Service was a great source of pride in the community and sacrifice required recognition.





“For me, Remembrance Day is a day to respect, remember and be grateful for what we have,” Jenny says. “It’s a day to feel proud of our military.”

Her husband Colin, was a fifth generation Australian and fiercely proud of his homeland.

“His country meant everything to him,” Jenny says. “He epitomised what an Australian should be.”

Colin served in the RAN for 20 years, with 18 of those years in submarines.

Remembrance Day and honouring sacrifice were especially important to him. “We would attend the local RSL and, if someone didn’t stand up when they were supposed to, he would say to them, ‘You need to stand’.”

Even towards the end of his life, when Colin was too unwell to attend services and too unwell to stand, he would still honour the sacrifices of our fallen servicemen by wearing a poppy and medals on Remembrance Day.

This year, on Remembrance Day, Jenny joined with other war widows at their group’s usual monthly meeting venue, Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park.

They attended the service, followed by the Star Ceremony, where attendees write a name or message on a gold star and release it into the Well of Contemplation.

The Anzac Memorial’s website explains how the “Stars released into the Well are collected regularly.

She has since written messages to honour different groups who have sacrificed in the pursuit of peace and freedom. This year her message was for war widows past.



Jenny laying a tribute for her husband at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance in April 2023.

The collected stars are cremated and the ashes of the stars carried on pilgrimages undertaken by history students to the battlefields on which Australians have fallen.”

For the first few years after Colin passed away, Jenny wrote a message on the star for her late husband. But she soon felt that Remembrance Day was bigger than the one person in her heart.

She has since written messages to honour different groups who have sacrificed in the pursuit of peace and freedom. This year her message was for war widows past.

“Today, for me, Remembrance Day is about remembering the sacrifice of a generation – the loss of life, the women who kept the country running in factories and on the land, and the war widows who endured without their husbands.”

It’s about strength, stoicism and sacrifice. It tells the story of our history, and she hopes it is a story we continue to tell and honour for generations to come.

She encourages everyone to pause on Remembrance Day. “If you are at home alone, you can just stand up and remember,” Jenny says.



Social and Guild Club News

It has been a very busy few months for our Guild and Social clubs, meeting each other, hosting AGMs, regional visits and special functions. Here is what they have been up to.

ACT Floriade Luncheon



We had a fantastic morning at Floriade with our war widows from Cooma, Goulburn, Yass, ACT, Queanbeyan and surrounds. The blooms were breathtaking, and the company was even better.

During our gathering, we had the privilege to listen to our regional members' thoughts and experiences. Your insights are incredibly important to us as we strive to support and engage our regional clubs more effectively.

The Museum Café provided the perfect backdrop for our post tour lunch, where stories were shared, laughter echoed, and connections deepened.

As we reflect on this wonderful day, we're reminded of the strength of our community and the lasting bonds we share. Your presence and contributions make our organisation truly special.

Central Coast

The ladies from the Central Coast had a lovely get together at the end of September in Gosford. Our ladies enjoyed a delightful lunch with our State President, Queen Dunbar, staff members Jo and Cherie and social work students, Georgie, Zoe and Livia.

It was wonderful for our President and team to hear wonderful stories and to witness old and new friends getting to know each other better.



Epping Social Club Meeting

During the last Epping Social Club gathering in October, our President, Queen Dunbar, presented Heather Gillam with her Life Membership awarded at the AGM in August.

Queen also shared some words regarding Heather's commitment to war widows and veterans, having supported so many people for so many years.

The members were very happy to see Heather being recognised for her dedication. It was also an opportunity for our staff and for Queen to talk with the members about their connection to war widows and to War Widows Day.



Lismore Regional Visit

It was a wonderful visit to Lismore in early November, where Board Director Lynne Sullivan, and Jo and Lisa from our Programs team were able to connect with over 50 war widows from the region. The luncheon was funded by a generous club grant from the Lismore Workers Sports Club.

Our partnership with the local Legacy club meant that we were able to reach out to more war widows, including some we had not yet connected with.

War widows in Lismore and surrounding regions have experienced social isolation in recent years, enduring a pandemic, major floods and fires. At the luncheon we witnessed a lot of laughter and a few tears as new connections were being formed, and as war widows found solace in connecting with women with whom they share this unspoken bond.

It is also wonderful for us to announce that 15 war widows expressed interest in joining the Ballina Social Club which will now be re-opened, thanks to this event!

Our special thanks to Legacy for assisting with transport for over 25 war widows regionally. We are looking forward to further our partnership through the state and enable more connections and social support for our regional war widows.



*Is there a club
near me? Scan
this QR code to
find out!*



South West Sydney

In a heart-warming display of unity, the war widows of South West Sydney came together in September for a memorable event, embodying the spirit of community and support. It was a day filled with connections, gratitude, and shared experiences, highlighting the importance of these gatherings in the lives of those who have experienced grief and loss.

One of the remarkable aspects of the gathering was the opportunity for new members to connect with other war widows. For many, this event provided an opportunity to foster a sense of belonging and understanding. It was a beautiful reminder that no one is alone.

As they continue to support one another, the members of South West Sydney serve as an inspiring example of resilience and togetherness.

These events are the perfect display of social connection and peer support, and a demonstration of why they are so important and needed in our community.



2023 AGM Wrap-up



The first recipient of the Board Commendation was Mrs Anne Carroll, who makes more than 500 calls a year to other war widows across NSW as a long-standing volunteer on the Friendship Line.

The second was awarded to Mrs Elizabeth Wright in recognition of her extraordinary devotion and leadership as coordinator of the Chatswood War Widows Social Club, even at age 102.

The members recognised at the AGM, as well as many other members across the state, embody the War Widows motto of serving each other, and are some of the incredible women who shape our organisation.

Our special guest

This year, we were privileged to have the great nieces of Jessie Vasey at our AGM. Ms Pru Bennett, who is a partner at the Brunswick Group and independent advisor, provided the AGM with insight about who her great-aunt was and what she meant to their family.

Ms Bennett reflected on the passion her great-aunt and uncle had for social justice issues and equity. She noted how Jessie stood up for what was right and, following the passing of her husband George, refused to be stereotyped as the poor, helpless war



On 29 August 2023, our Board Directors and team had the pleasure to host 69 members for our 24th Annual General Meeting. We also welcomed an additional 12 members, stakeholders and advisors online.

The meeting commenced with the acknowledgement of the passing of some of the leaders and women who shaped our organisation, including Mrs Audrey Blood OAM and Mrs Diana Bland. The room stood together and in reflective silence, and the passing of hundreds of members including Mrs Blood and Mrs Bland was observed.

The purpose of our AGM is to inform members of the progress made by the organisation, operationally and financially, over the preceding 12 months. It is an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the organisation and recognise members who have made significant contributions.

This year, it was an honour for us to award Life Memberships to Mrs Norma Arden and Mrs Heather Gillam, recognising their significant contributions and leadership within the organisation.

This year, the Board also introduced a new class of recognition in the form of Board Commendations.



widow, inspiring thousands of others like her to form this movement.

Ms Bennett spoke of how proud her aunt would be to see AWWNSW continuing to respond to the needs of the veteran community, and carrying forward the principles of equity and social justice.

It was a privilege to hear from the Vasey family first-hand.

AGM discussions

On the financial front, our Board of Directors explained that, despite economic volatility, the company continues to maintain a strong financial position.

The Chair reminded those in attendance of how our strategic plan and current organisational changes came about. She spoke of the dilemma the Board faced back in 2019, with dwindling membership numbers and a poor outlook in the projection of member numbers, given the small population of defence and war widows in Australia.

She spoke about how, with over a 90 per cent majority, members voted to expand the company's membership provision and the purpose of the organisation.

"In casting their votes in favour of these changes, members spoke of the need for the legacy of this organisation to continue. They spoke of wanting to extend the hand of friendship to others who find themselves under-supported," Tricia said.

"Importantly, they spoke of their will to see this organisation continue well into the future."

Tricia reported on the progress of the Strategic Plan, noting that almost 60 per cent of the activities in the Strategic Plan have been implemented, with a further 27 per cent of activities in progress. It's a significant achievement.

A common tenor of the AGM, woven throughout almost everyone's presentation, was the need to update our brand, which is our biggest project for the year ahead. The Chair noted, "We know that we are asking for a tough change, and the Board is trying to provide comfort by undertaking a slower transition to demonstrate our commitment to you."

State President Queen Dunbar and CEO Renee Wilson delivered passionate and personal stories of why the change is needed and why it is important to change, which can be summed up in the following sentiment: veterans should not have to pass away before their families are seen, heard, connected and supported.

Queen told those in attendance, "I'm excited to see where the brand update takes us, and to extend our friendship, our support and our open arms to all of those who, like me and many of you, could have used an organisation like AWWNSW well before our husbands passed, to be there for them when they need us, in whatever capacity that may be."





Renee spoke of the grief and trauma that followed the helicopter accident in Afghanistan that left her husband fighting for his life and with a lifelong traumatic brain injury. She also shared some powerful insight into the gaps the families of veterans face when crisis happens.

“I remember feeling alone in a room full of people, because no one really understood what I was going through ... I remember having to be strong for everyone else every day and crying myself to sleep at night.”

Since September 11, when our Defence Force was mobilised fast and in a way not seen since the Vietnam War, the demands on veterans and their families has increased.

“I want you to know that so many other [veteran] spouses like me need an organisation like this now more than ever before,” Renee said.

After a Q&A session, mainly focused on the branding project, the sense of the room was that members had their minds at ease about the changes to the brand and were confident that the best interests of the organisation and war widows were still at the forefront of the organisation goals and in the Board’s mind. They were also left with a better understanding of how much our community needs this change.

Our future

The year ahead will see big changes for the organisation, including changing our brand name. The time is right for the organisation and the community we serve but, as we made clear at the AGM, war widows will never be left behind.

As the Chair said, “Your rightful place as the cohort of women who founded and built this organisation will be retained and preserved.”

You can read more about our achievements over the 2022–23 financial year and our strategy for the future in our Annual Report which you will receive in the mail next month.



Entitlement Updates

Pensions and allowances increase

From 20 September 2023, some veterans and their families received an increase to their pension payments in line with increases to the cost of living. You do not have to do anything to receive the increase; it should have been automatically applied to your payment. The first full payment at the new rates of pension was payday 19 October 2023.

The pension paid to war widow(er)s increased by \$33.80 to \$1,116.30 per fortnight (including the energy supplement), while the ceiling rate of the income support supplement rose to \$331.40 per fortnight.

Certain benefits under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) also increased.

For more information on the new pension rates, visit

<https://www.dva.gov.au/news/latest-stories/pensions-and-allowances-rise-20-september>

Upcoming change of one of the Veteran's Home Care (VHC) services provider: Australian Unity

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has contracts with a range of Service Providers for the provision of VHC services across Australia. The current Service Provider contracts expire on 30 November 2023.

Under the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, Government Departments are required to engage the market via a competitive tender process at the end of a contract period. The Department released a Request for Tender for the provision of VHC services which closed on 20 December 2022 and a further Limited Tender which closed on 30 June 2023. The Department is currently finalising these new contracts which are due to commence on 1 December 2023.

While Australian Unity have provided VHC services to DVA clients for a number of years, they made an

internal business decision to cease their arrangement with DVA at the end of the current contracting period of 30 November 2023. However, the tender process has also presented the opportunity for the Department to enter into contracts with new Service Providers.

In early October 2023, the Department wrote to all DVA clients who had a current VHC care plan serviced by an exiting VHC Service Provider, advising they will need to change to a new VHC Service Provider. DVA clients were informed they do not need to do anything, and that their new Service Provider will be in contact with them prior to the commencement of services to discuss their needs.

A list of current VHC Service Providers is available on the DVA website (see below link or scan the below QR code) This list will be updated once new contracts are put into effect.

<https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/health-programs-and-services-our-clients/veterans-home-care/what-you-need-know-when-you-0/vhc-assessment-agencies>

Better access to GP for Gold Card holders

Changes made from 1 November 2023 will see the veteran community receive better access to services and support.

The Albanese Government is investing \$33.3 million to triple the Veteran Access Payment (VAP) for certain GP services. The VAP is an incentive payment GP's receive, in addition to the Medicare rebate, when treating veterans who hold a DVA Gold or White Card.

These changes will see payment for a GP consultation of up to 20 minutes (Level B) increase by more than \$16 in metropolitan areas and more than \$31 in the most remote areas of Australia.

Payments apply to general face-to-face and telehealth GP consultations, including home visits for people who are homebound, and consultations in residential aged-care facilities.

Update on Our advocacy work

Advocacy, as always, remains a big part of what we do. As you know, we have now published our Advocacy Plan, which outlines our advocacy priorities for the current year ahead. It also explains how the priorities are formed and why these areas have been identified. In this issue of The Digest, we'd like to give you an update on the work we have been up to under each priority area.

Mental health support needs of our veterans' families

So far this year we have worked with DVA to ensure that bereaved children of veterans who can no longer study full-time due to a health condition can retain access to their Gold Card until the age of 24. We are also now working to make sure this continues beyond the age of 24, as this group is likely to have mental health needs for the rest of their lives.

We have called on the Government through our Veterans Legislation Reform submission and our Royal Commission submission for appropriate mechanisms to provide and extend mental health treatment options for veterans' families, particularly those who are bereaved.

Equity in war widows and veteran family entitlements and concessions

Through the above submissions, we have called for equitable application of entitlements. We have asked that the application of support programs available under the veteran system be based on need as opposed to predetermined timeframes.

We have asked the Government to consider a non-liability provision for war widows' entitlements when a veteran passes away because of service.

We have been advocating for concession equity among war widows and between states. It has been pleasing to see there has been progress between state governments and discussions moving towards consistency in state-based concessions for DVA card holders. We have also been working with the NSW Government (as have many of you over many years) to remove the barriers for MRCA widows that prevent access to their registration concessions. As of July 2023, the barriers were finally removed.

Meaningful recognition and engagement of veterans' families

So far this year we have sought the implementation of the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal inquiry recommendations – seeking formal recognition for war widows and the families of veterans wounded, injured and killed on operations. This report was significant and long overdue, as it expressly included recognition for widows and families in their own right. Pleasingly, organisations such as the Commando Welfare Trust, Defence Families Australia and the Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association have already joined our calls to the Minister on this issue.

We have also been calling on the federal government to recognise War Widows Day nationally. Thank you to those who provided their views to us during October on this matter. We are currently in the process of writing to our stakeholders and are preparing a campaign to bring multiple voices to this issue. We are feeding our thoughts to War Widows National as well, to assist them in making similar calls to the Federal government.

Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

During October, written submissions to the Royal Commission closed. The Commission has now been running for just over two years, collecting evidence from thousands of sources. Private hearings are still underway, and the next round of public hearings will take place in Sydney from 13 March 2024.

In our submission we talk about what a future veteran system that draws on the lessons of today might look like. We ask the Commission to consider how families of veterans can be better served by the veteran support system and make several practical recommendations for the short to medium term. You can read a copy of our submission by scanning the QR code on this page.

Our consultation with the Commission continues, notwithstanding the closing of the written submissions. As a member of the Stakeholder Reference Group for the Royal Commission, we meet regularly with the Commissioners and other stakeholders. At the group's next meeting in December, Renee will present to the reference group learnings from her trip to the US earlier this year.



From left to right: The Hon James Douglas KC, Dr Peggy Brown AO, our CEO Renee Wilson and Nick Kaldas APM

Peak body for veteran sector

We have also continued to participate in the development of a peak body for the veteran sector. We are strongly advocating for the role of veterans' families and family-based organisations like ours to be part of the solution, to ensure the voices of families remain heard, consulted and included within such a body.



"ENSURING NO FAMILY MEMBER IS LEFT BEHIND"

In our veteran support system, families **are not visible until there is crisis**. The support is reactive and therefore often missed. A family need not be in crisis and a veteran shouldn't have to pass away before their families are **seen, heard, connected, and supported**.

Scan the QR code to view our submission



ONLINE SAFETY – LESSON 101

Some information provided in the following pages is thanks to the Australian Government's e-safety resources and is available on the Be Connected website

Over the last few editions of The Digest, we covered different ways to remain connected by improving your digital literacy and confidence. We took a deep dive into different types of devices, internet, social media and zoom. In this edition, we start our Online Safety series, which will continue over our next editions.

The internet is a great source of information, but as with anything, there are some risks. It's good to remember that as long as you take some basic safety measures, your time online can be a safe and fun experience.



Online risks

The best way to protect your computer is to know what you're up against.

The three main risks are:

1. Viruses
2. Trojans
3. Spyware.

Let's look at what these terms actually mean.

Viruses

Viruses are programs that spread from one computer to another by email attachments, links or through malicious websites. Viruses can display unwanted pop-up messages, slow your computer down and even delete files.

Trojans

Trojans are programs that pretend to be innocent but are in fact harmful to your PC. They are designed to trick you into installing them, for example by offering to scan your computer for viruses

Spyware

Spyware is software that is designed to steal personal information. For example, it can monitor what you do online and then steal passwords or bank account details.

Protecting your computer

Knowing how to protect your computer from online risks is the key to enjoying the internet. Let's find out what you can do to keep your computer safe.

Antivirus software & Anti-spyware software

You can protect your computer from virus infections by installing antivirus software. This protects your computer by scanning all parts of your computer regularly for anything suspicious and it monitors the files and programs you use, as you use them.

Anti-spyware software helps protect your computer against pop-ups, slow performance and security threats caused by spyware and other unwanted software.

Firewalls

A firewall is software that protects your computer against unauthorised access as well as some viruses and spyware.

It can also stop your computer being used to spread viruses or send spam emails. It works alongside antivirus and anti-spyware software.

Updating antivirus software

It is important to update your antivirus protection regularly to ensure you are protected against the latest viruses.

Most common ways

What are the most common ways viruses can make it on to your computer?

Emails. Emails are a critical vulnerability for anyone with an email address. But how can you tell what a suspicious email looks like? Some of them look very credible these days and it can be difficult to tell. Here are some of the tips we use in the office for assessing unsolicited emails:

- Ask yourself am I expecting this email? Do I know the sender?
- Is the sender's email address correct or are there mistakes in it?
- Does the email address match where the person says they are from?
- Is the language in the email reflective of previous emails that you normally receive from a person you know or does it seem different?
- Does the subject line make sense?
- Is the email encouraging you to click on a link or open an attachment without explanation or context?

Example One:

From: Renee Wilson <ozaurri.hutchinson@irwinhigh.org>

Sent: Tuesday, 11 April 2023 2:29 AM

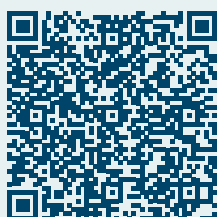
To:

Subject: *To you - from Renee Wilson*

I'm presuming you still remember them - those 5 pics: [\[link\]](#)

1. notice this email address doesn't match who it says the email is from.
2. notice the time of this email being sent
3. notice the subject matter of the email it isn't logical
4. notice the body of the email, this isn't how emails are typically written. The reference to looking at photos of you is a common tactic used by scammers and hackers.

**Scan this QR code
to learn more about
online safety**



How to stay safe

Our most important tips to stay safe:

1. Never click on links in unsolicited or suspicious emails.
2. Never click on attachments in unsolicited or suspicious emails.
3. No one on the internet wants to give you money out of the blue.
4. If you are not sure if an email is legitimate, ask someone you know to have a look at it with you.
5. If it is suspicious, delete the email, block the sender and or mark as spam.
6. Check if the company emails have an email address with web-based mail (i.e. @gmail.com) instead of the real company website (i.e. @telstra.com.au)

Below are some examples of emails we have received lately which we have marked as spam and dangerous. We have highlighted the areas where our suspicions were raised to help you see how we assess the validity of emails.

Example Two:

From: Telstra <telstra1248556@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, 11 April 2023 2:29 AM

To:

Subject: *Account suspended*

*Your account has been suspended as payment is overdue.
To settle your account click here: [\[link\]](#)*

1. notice this email address is not from the company it says it is from: no company uses gmail.com or hotmail.com or any other mailing system. They should use their website address (i.e. @telstra.com.au)
2. notice the time of this email being sent
3. notice the subject matter of the email it is very forceful
4. notice the body of the email, this isn't how emails are typically written. There is no reference to your name or your account. Links to request credit cards details or banking details are common tactics used by scammers.

Navigating grief Through art

AWWNSW member and artist Michelle Carr recently exhibited her ceramics graduation works at the Incinerator Art Gallery, Willoughby, from 20 September to 8 October 2023. Her exhibition, Reshaped, told the story of grief, hope and the different directions life spins us in.

“ showcased beautiful delicate porcelain slip cast works,” explains Michelle. “This included geometric sculptural wall installations stained in symbolic colours; genie bottles that represent our hopes and wishes; spinning tops because life continues to spin us in different directions; and some dreamy functional cups and bowls.”

Michelle’s art is informed by her lived experience, the elements of grief, energy and life. In 2015, Michelle’s life took an unexpected turn, when her husband, Major Matthew Carr, a veteran in the Australian Army, passed away from service-related disease and injuries. At the time their son was aged two and their daughter just three months old.

Michelle explains how last year, as she was looking for inspiration for her graduate artwork, she couldn’t ignore the number seven.

“In 2022, it was seven years since my husband Matt had passed away. The number seven kept presenting itself in my research and ceramic works, and it began to inform my work for this graduation exhibition,” says Michelle.

“The delicate porcelain shape I used for my wall installations was originally inspired by a small ivy leaf in nature. This small ivy leaf had seven points. Ivy is a climbing evergreen plant that represents eternity and fidelity – faithfulness to a person, cause or belief, demonstrated by continuous loyalty and support.

“The climbing nature of ivy makes it a symbol of love

and friendship, strength and determination. It was also viewed as a symbol of the eternal life of the soul after the death of a body in medieval Christian symbolism.”

Michelle says the number seven was also used to represent the seven stages of grief and the body’s seven chakras or energy systems.

Her graduation artwork and exhibition were the culmination of five years of study at NSW Tafe in the Northern Beaches. She started with a basic ceramics course in 2018 and will soon graduate from the Advanced Diploma in Fine Arts (Ceramics).

“I found solace in ceramics,” says Michelle. “I used it as a therapeutic canvas to express my journey of love, loss and resilience.”

As part of her exhibition, she found herself talking to people about her art and how it is informed by her life experience.

“I have physically and mentally changed,” explains Michelle. “I now have the ability to talk about grief.”

She has also changed how she sees herself. Even though others saw it in her all along, she now sees herself as strong and resilient, and is excited for this next chapter of her life as an artist.

“I am excited and energised to explore what opportunities are next for my professional practice. I would really love to see my ceramic artworks featured at the War Memorial in Canberra and the Art Gallery of NSW.”



Michelle Carr describing the integration of Grief through her artwork. Michelle generously donated the future sale of this piece to AWWNSW.

Coping with Grief & loss

How to cope with grief and loss during the Holiday season – Article by Lisa Stephenson, AWWNSW Social Work Programs Manager.

There are many reasons you may be experiencing grief and loss this year. You may have lost a loved one recently, or perhaps some years ago. You might be physically separated from your loved one this year for reasons outside of your control. Did you know that significant changes to the health and wellbeing of yourself or your loved one can lead to feelings of grief and loss too? Whatever the reason, we are here to support you.

While grief is a universally shared response to loss that many of your peers will understand, the experience is unique to you. There is no time limit, schedule or linear pattern to grief. No two people will grieve in the exact same way. It is important to honour your own process for grieving, holding space for your feelings to unfold, and understanding that the way you grieve is just as your body and mind intend.

The holiday season can be especially challenging for those experiencing grief and loss. It is a time of heightened emotions, connection and activity. It is important to have good support this holiday season so that you can take care of yourself.

We have put together our top five tips for coping with grief and loss during the holiday season.

1. Build your village of support. Who is in your village, how do you connect with them and where are the gaps? Do you have family and friends around you during the holiday season to support you on your journey? Do you connect with other women experiencing grief and loss? If not, there could be an AWWNSW social club near you. Contact us to find out more.

2. Practice regular self-care. Self-care is crucial on your grief and loss journey. It doesn't have to be

elaborate or lengthy, which may put more pressure on you. Self-care can be as simple as a 5-minute guided meditation, a bath with your favourite essential oils, 10 minutes of gratitude journaling, a walk around the block, doing some gardening or being in nature. Setting realistic goals for self-care makes it more achievable. Set yourself a goal for 5 minutes of self-care each day in the lead-up to Christmas.

3. Be honest about your feelings. You might like to let your family or friends know when you are feeling little down or overwhelmed this holiday season. Give them the opportunity to wrap you in love and remind you just how special you are to them. Share stories of your loved one or the life you had planned. It can be challenging to share our deepest feelings, however it is through vulnerability that connection thrives. Who can you call today to share your feelings?

4. Rituals matter. Family rituals are special events you practice regularly. They are mindful and intentional, and support you to stay connected. Rituals during the holiday season might be decorating the Christmas tree, hosting a family gathering or the exchanging of gifts. Rituals can be challenging to maintain after the loss of a loved one. Continuing these rituals can help support you through changing and challenging times, so perhaps you can plan ways to continue your family rituals. Who can you invite into your sacred space to share rituals with?

5. Ask for help. Be specific in the support you require. Ask for help early and often. You might be surprised by the amount of help you receive when you ask for it. You may have people in your life who are waiting for you to ask for help, and are perhaps unsure of your needs. You may need help with meal preparation, housework or garden maintenance now that your loved one is no longer able to share the load. Tell those in your village of the support you need, and ask if they can meet your needs today, tomorrow or in the future.

If you find that your experience of grief and loss affects your capacity to perform daily routine functions, you may want to consider seeking professional support via your GP or from the below services.

Services available during the holiday season:

Open Arms: 1800 011 046

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

Lifeline: 13 11 14

FAQs

We have received many questions from our members about War Widows Day and about how it was all organised. This FAQ is dedicated to answering those questions.

Why was there a ballot to attend some of the War Widows Day Events?

This year we were offered an incredible opportunity to observe War Widows Day with the Governor General in addition to our service for all war widows. There was very limited space available at Admiralty House and we negotiated the maximum number of places with the Governor General's staff. We had to run a ballot because only 80 people could attend the function at Admiralty House and many more had registered interest to attend. We apologise to those who missed out this year. We appreciate the need to include as many as possible and have factored that into our planning for 2024.

How was the ballot conducted?

The ballot was drawn following the closing of registrations. The list of registrations was sorted into alphabetical order and a number assigned to each person. An online random number generator selected the successful ballot entries. The ballot draw was recorded and has been saved to the company records.

How many non-war widows were at Admiralty House?

Of the 80 people who could attend the Admiralty House function only six were non-war widows. These people represented the leadership at Sydney Legacy and AWWNSW who funded the events for the day. Therefore 93 percent of those in attendance at Admiralty House were war widows.

I have been a war widow for 20 years, why wasn't I chosen in the ballot?

Firstly, we are sorry that your number was not drawn in the ballot. The ballot was drawn using a random number generator. There was no selection of people to attend the Admiralty House function based on any criteria. Our aim for War Widows Day is to ensure as many of you can participate as possible, and this has been factored into our planning for 2024.

What are the plans for War Widows Day 2024?

In 2024 we will deliver War Widows Day for the third time. We learned many lessons this year, including what locations are best, how wide the interest is, what timing works well and importantly what doesn't work for our community. All of this is factoring into 2024 planning. The War Widows Day service will return, as well as a more inclusive luncheon nearby – one that will be able to cater for at least 200 war widows. We are also looking forward to continuing to work with Sydney Legacy in delivering the day.

What about in the regional areas?

War Widows Day isn't just for those based in Sydney. In 2024 we plan on focusing more effort in supporting clubs to host their own War Widows Day activities, including by providing special funding. We are also keen to build more regional partnerships with Legacy and RSLs to support War Widows Day. There is a lot more to come on this, and please do let us know if you are in a regional area and have some ideas about what you would like to see.

Will War Widows Day become a national day?

We are certainly doing all we can to make this happen! Thank you to the 37 of you who shared your thoughts during October on why it ought to become a national day. Your views have been featured in a letter that is currently going out to stakeholders encouraging them to join the calls for a national day. We have also created an online petition that people can sign to show their support. The more data and information we can present to the government on this issue, the more likely we are to be successful. We must keep the momentum going, and we have encouraged War Widows National and the other states to do so as well.

Thank you to our members

With the end of our financial year in 31 March 2024 just around the corner, our memberships renewal season has begun. We have attached to this edition of *The Digest* membership renewal forms for you to fill in and return. We still have time, forms need to be forwarded to us prior to end of March 2024.

We would also like to thank members for their membership and the valuable contribution it brings to our organisation.

By becoming a financial member to our organisation, not only do you provide valuable financial contribution to our programs and services, but you also become a fundamental thread of the fabric of our organisation.

The strength of our nation is found in its strong sense of community. Your membership represents this tight community we are part and proud of.

On behalf of all of us and from the bottom of our heart, thank you.



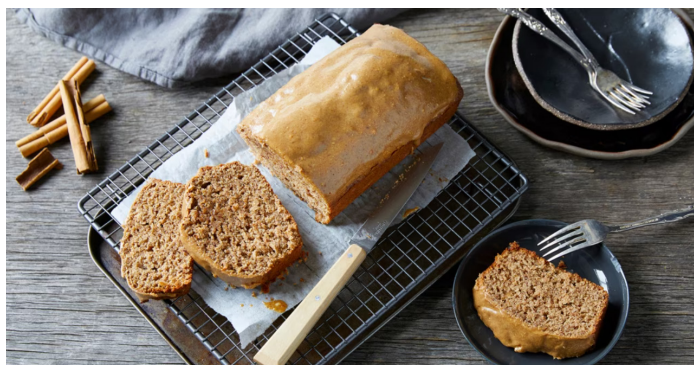
CHRISTMAS RECIPE

Gingerbread Loaf with Spiced Almond Drizzle

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 35 minutes

Picture & recipe – Centr.com



INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup (135g) spelt flour (or all-purpose flour)
- 1 cup (100g) almond meal
- 4 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/3 cup (80ml) milk, reduced fat (or dairy-free alternative)
- 1/3 cup (80ml) maple syrup (honey or rice malt syrup)
- 1/4 cup (60ml) olive oil
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract

Almond Drizzle

- 1 tbs almond butter (or other nut butter)
- 1 tbs coconut oil melted
- 1 tsp maple syrup (honey or rice malt syrup)
- 1 tsp ground ginger

METHOD

- 1 Preheat oven to 180°C and line a 21 x 10cm loaf tin with baking paper.
- 2 In a large mixing bowl combine flour, almond meal, spices, baking powder and salt and mix well.
- 3 In a separate bowl whisk eggs, milk, maple syrup, oil and vanilla together. Add to dry ingredients and mix thoroughly.
- 4 Transfer batter to loaf tin and bake for 35 minutes or until golden and cooked through. Allow to cool in tin for 5 minutes before removing and transferring to a wire rack to cool.
- 5 Combine drizzle ingredients in a small bowl, drizzle over cake, slice and serve.

VALE

✿ Anne Crewdson FIGTREE
✿ Anne Wilkinson EPPING
✿ Barbara McKenzie STH TAMWORTH
✿ Betty Jackson MACKSVILLE
✿ Betty Lemon GEURIE
✿ Beverley Hayes ROSEMEADOW
✿ Carmel Dowse LAURIETON
✿ Carmel Chandler CONCORD
✿ Christina Mackie NEW LAMBTON
✿ Deirdre Martin TENNYSON POINT
✿ Della Laurence NEUTRAL BAY
✿ Diana Thompson HURSTVILLE
✿ Dorothy Emond CARDIFF SOUTH
✿ Dorothy Isaksen WARRIEWOOD
✿ Dorothy Wells Buttaba
✿ Dulcie Ritchie CROOKWELL
✿ Edna Reynolds GRASMERE
✿ Edna Bavea GOONELLABAH
✿ Edna Fowler UMINA BEACH
✿ Eleanor Audet PEAKHURST
✿ Ellen Woodward KARABAR
✿ Elsie Bradshaw WALLSEND
✿ Elspeth Dransfield KOGARAH
✿ Ena McMillan CAMPBELLTOWN
✿ Esma Cochrane PORT MACQUARIE
✿ Esma Cook YASS
✿ Esther Redgrave Nowra
✿ Ethel Magee LISMORE
✿ Evelyn Mahony BOWRAL
✿ Fay McNamara RHODES
✿ Frances Towers CARDIFF HEIGHTS
✿ Freda Denny KINGSGROVE
✿ Gladys Willis NARRABEEN
✿ Gloria Donnelly GUNNEDAH
✿ Grace Park NEWPORT
✿ Grace Muir CASTLE HILL

✿ Gwen Swadling KOGARAH BAY
✿ Helena Holden WALLSEND
✿ Hilda Boyce BROKEN HILL
✿ Irene Motbey CASTLE HILL
✿ Irene Graham BERRIGAN
✿ Irene Hodge TURRAMURRA
✿ Isobel McArthur WARABROOK
✿ Janet Samson DUNGOG
✿ Janet Saba EASTLAKES
✿ Jean Mackie CROMER
✿ Jean O'Brien BOLWARRA
✿ Jean Cuthbert BAULKHAM HILLS
✿ Jean Dorothy Curran W. WYALONG
✿ Jessie Watson ETTALONG BEACH
✿ Joan Volk REVESBY HEIGHTS
✿ Joan McKenzie YASS
✿ Joan Mills BALLINA
✿ Joan Carr NARRAWEENA
✿ Joyce Leach WYOMING
✿ June Cody CONCORD
✿ Kathleen Thomas KEIRAVILLE
✿ Lillian Cameron COWRA
✿ Linley Betts YASS
✿ Lola Case NORTH CURL CURL
✿ Lola Welch PORT MACQUARIE
✿ Lona Bower GOONELLABAH
✿ Lorna Ellis BOOMERANGE BEACH
✿ Lorraine Handel CHERRYBROOK
✿ Lorraine Cook TAMWORTH
✿ Margaret McCrae BENDEMEER
✿ Margaret Woodford FAIRLIGHT
✿ Margaret Nancy Dunn WINMALEE
✿ Marie Linegar WOOLLOOWARE
✿ Marie Collins OATLEY
✿ Marie Dunn BOWRAL
✿ Mary McFadzean KYOGLE

✿ Mary McDonald PEAKHURST
✿ Myra McLauchlan HELENSBURG
✿ Nada Delandro WAHROONGA
✿ Nancy Hammond ORANGE
✿ Nona Henderson CARINGBAH STH
✿ Olga Adamson NAMBUCCA HEADS
✿ Pamela Porteous LANE COVE
✿ Patricia Reeves CAWDOR
✿ Patricia Scanlon ORAN PARK
✿ Patricia Le Cornu GRASMERE
✿ Pauline Woodward MOSMAN
✿ Peggy English MILLER
✿ Phyllis Wright BOTANY
✿ Phyllis McMahon BLACKTOWN
✿ Rita Packham CHARMHAVEN
✿ Roberta Hodda ALBURY
✿ Ruth Lee YAGOONA
✿ Sadie Mudge MULLUMBIMBY
✿ Sheila Morgan FORSTER
✿ Sheila Affleck MERRYLANDS
✿ Shirley Gatliff CHATSWOOD
✿ Sylvia Dadd CONDOBOLIN
✿ Teresa Loder DRUMMOYNE
✿ Thelma Murray HEATHCOTE
✿ Valda Allen WINSTON HILLS
✿ Valerie Bourke BATLOW
✿ Valerie Barton WOOLGOOLGA
✿ Valerie Carson ST MARYS
✿ Valmai Baker EPPING
✿ Wilma Harris CAMPBELLTOWN
✿ Zena Tuck ALBION PARK

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of these members ❤️

Enter the draw to win this beautiful quilt

This queen size quilt has a lovely story we would love to share. It was recently finished by one of our members who has asked to stay anonymous.

She has made quilts for family and friends her whole life and just made her last quilt at 87. She has always loved making them but is no longer able to as they are too heavy for her now.

This one is the last one she has made and she wishes to donate it to the organisation to raise funds and so it can be won and owned by another war widow.

To enter the draw to win this quilt, simply make a donation with your membership renewal (attached to this digest) or make a donation over the phone with us between January and March.

The winner will be announced in the Autumn edition of The Digest and will have this beautiful warm quilt for winter!



Happy birthday to members who have recently celebrated 100 years!

- Alice Pitkin MATRAVILLE
- Betty Daniell MANLY
- Blanche Mason INVERELL
- Dorothy Lewis BLACKTOWN
- Dorothy Johnson NEW LAMBTON
- Evelyn Hammond ULMARA
- Frances Farmer BELCONNEN
- Jean Jansen OAM TAMWORTH
- Joan Bamford RAYMOND TERRACE
- Joyce O'Shannessy REVESBY
- Muriel Dickinson MT WARRIGAL
- Myrtle McGoldrick REDCLIFF
- Sheila Henderson CASTLE HILL
- Violet Palm DUBBO

Welcome to members who have recently joined

- ★ Bao Macdonald WOY WOY
- ★ Beverley Pasco Webb BEXLEY
- ★ Coral Ann Joiner MONA VALE
- ★ Doreen Owen WEST WODONGA
- ★ Dorothy Simpson UMINA BEACH
- ★ Evol Steley WODONGA
- ★ Jacqueline England SHOALHAVEN HEADS
- ★ Janette LLOYD BASIN VIEW
- ★ Johanna Dekaste NARRANDERA
- ★ Judith Burreket KENSINGTON
- ★ Judith Young RIVETT
- ★ Katherine Greatrex LAURIETON
- ★ Kay Murray BOTANY
- ★ Lynette Elliott WOODCROFT
- ★ Lynette Emmett LAVINGTON
- ★ Merle MATTHEWS CRANEBROOK
- ★ Merle Kelly WODONGA
- ★ Norrie Schulz ANNANGROVE
- ★ Patricia Curran WODONGA
- ★ Patricia Tucker CAMBELLTOWN
- ★ Rosslyn O'Donnell THURGOONA
- ★ Winifred O'Connell WODONGA

Wishing you a very special Happy birthday!

Coral Isaacs, one of the NSW war widows, celebrated her 105th Birthday in October!

Coral was born on 10 October 1918 in Goulburn NSW. This was one month before the end of WWI. Coral's husband Geoff was sent to Papua New Guinea and Bougainville during WWII and was lucky to be sent home at the end of the war. In 1989, Geoff passed away at 71. But like other adverse things that had happened in Coral's life, she just kept going, moving forward.

Coral now lives quite independently in Melbourne with the support of her family and DVA. She still enjoys her weekly visit to the hairdresser, a tradition that has been going on since the 1940s! Congratulations Coral on such a milestone birthday!



A very special 100th Birthday for Jean Jansens!

Jean Jansens enjoyed her 100th birthday at a special luncheon held in her honour on 16 September. Jean was blessed with the presence of 110 friends and family who celebrated with her this milestone birthday.

We wish you all the best and congratulations Jean on your 100th Birthday!

Nance Hammond turned 100 on 10 October 2023.

On this photo Nance pauses proudly with the special card she received from King Charles III. Greetings were also received from The Prime Minister, Members of Parliament and many local prominent people. Nance completed four years of service with the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) during WWII.

After the war, she joined Mortdale Womens' Auxiliary, then joined Mortdale RSL sub-branch in 1991 when the AWLA came under the banner of the RSL. She joined Legacy War Widows that same year and became an active member of St. George Rosemary Widows Club.

Nance looked radiant on the day and enjoyed her party to the end. The room was a picture of flowers, balloons, decorated tables, delicious food and loving friends.



Assistance with Community Transport

No longer driving and having trouble managing public transport?

Contact 'My Aged Care':

<https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/>

Phone: 1800 200 422

When you call, you will be asked a few questions then you will be able to complete an assessment over the phone or in person at your home.

My Aged Care is your portal to services to help you stay safely in your own home or call us for assistance on (02) 9267 6577 and ask for Jo.

Taxi Subsidy Scheme

The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) supports NSW residents who are unable to use public transport because of a severe and permanent disability.

If you're eligible, you could receive a subsidy of 50% of a taxi fare, up to a maximum subsidy of \$60, and only pay the remaining fare. This includes travel in wheelchair-accessible taxis.

To apply for the TTSS, you must:

- be a permanent resident of Australia
- normally reside in NSW
- not be a member of a similar scheme in another Australian state or territory
- be over school age (preschool-aged children, regardless of disability, are not eligible)
- have a severe and permanent disability of approved category.

Participation in TTSS is not means tested.

What you need:

- the PDF form - 'Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme Application Form'
- your doctor or specialist to complete the relevant sections in Parts B and C of the application form
- your photo in JPEG format if you are submitting online or two personal photos if you are posting your application.

Note: Call 131 500 to request a form by mail.

AWWNSW Technology drop-in sessions

Our Program & Services team is offering to our members monthly technology drop-in sessions.

Sessions will be held on the **first Wednesday of every month** from **10.30am to 12pm** at our office in Chatswood, NSW.

During those hours, you can come to see us and bring your device and/or your technology questions so the Programs & Services Team can sit with you and help you.

Sessions commenced on 6 September 2023 and continue on the first Wednesday of every month. There is no need to register, just come in between 10.30am and 12.00pm.

Any questions, please call (02) 9267 6577.

Our Space Webinar – Let's talk about grief and loss

Grief is a common life experience for those connected to Defence service. This webinar is designed to help you navigate the complex and confusing landscape of grief and loss.

Hosted online on 4 December 2023, 4.30–5.30pm, this webinar will give you a better understanding of grief and the various losses that lead veteran families to this shared experience. You'll learn how to support yourself and others through the inevitable experience of grief and loss.



[REGISTER HERE](#)

Gold Card Concessions on NSW Public Transport

Thank you to members who raised issues with contradicting information and difficulties in receiving concessions on public transport in the Transport for NSW network. We raised these issues with the NSW Government and have been able to clarify entitlements.

If you have a Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Veteran Gold Card or a DVA Gold Health Card, you are entitled to concession travel in NSW. You must carry your DVA Gold Card when travelling as proof of entitlement.

Applications must be submitted online (you can do so by scanning this QR code). If do not have access to technology to enable you to make this application, please come to our Chatswood Office during our technology drop-in sessions so we can assist you with your application. Drop-in sessions are held on the first Wednesday of every month from 10.30am to 12pm.



Would you like to write and share your own story with your community?

We are encouraging members to write their own story and share with us so we can publish in *The Digest* as part of our upcoming 'story telling' section. Selected stories will be publish with any photo you wish to share with us.

If you are interested, please email your story and photos to

guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au

Commonwealth Seniors Health Card

A concession card to get cheaper health care and some discounts if you've reached Age Pension age. This card is available to non Gold Card holders.

To get this card you need to meet all these conditions. You must:

- be Age Pension age or older
- meet residence rules
- not be getting an income support payment from Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs
- give us a Tax File Number or be exempt from doing so
- meet identity requirements
- meet the income test.



[APPLY HERE](#)

If you, or someone you know, is having a tough time and needs support, information, or guidance, please reach out to our office or one of these many phone services available.

- **Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling** – 1800 011 046
- **Defence Member and Family Support Helpline** – 1800 624 608
- **All-hours Support Line** – 1800 628 036 (*Australian Department of Defence*)
- **Lifeline Australia** – 13 11 14 (*24/7 crisis support line*)
- **Suicide Call Back Service** – 1300 659 467 (*24 hour counselling for suicide prevention and mental health support*)
- **1800 ELDERHelp** – 1800 353 374 (*national free call phone number that automatically redirects callers seeking information and advice on elder abuse with existing phone line service in their jurisdiction*)
- **1800RESPECT** - 1800 737 732 (*24 hour sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling service*)

