



# THE DIGEST

WELCOME TO THE NEW YEAR



# AUSTRALIAN WAR WIDOWS

NSW LIMITED

ABN 24 083 075 914

[www.warwidowsnsw.com.au](http://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  
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*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

**Technology Drop In Sessions**  
6 March - 3 April - 1 May 2024

**Int. Women's Day Webinar**  
7 March 2024

**International Women's Day**  
8 March 2024

**DMFS Family Day Sydney Zoo**  
9 March 2024

**Narrandera Regional Visit**  
13 March 2024

**Our Space Guided Peer Support  
Event - Cronulla**  
22 March 2024

**ANZAC Field of Remembrance**  
19 April 2024

**ANZAC Day**  
25 April 2024

**Forster Regional Visit**  
14 May 2024

**Newcastle Regional Visit**  
23 May 2024

**Our Space Guided Peer Support  
Event - Canberra**  
24 May 2024

### Key Commemorative Dates

**Commonwealth Naval Forces and  
Australian Army formed (1901)**  
1 March 2024

**Commencement of the Iraq War  
(2003)**  
20 March 2024

**Formation of the Royal Australian Air  
Force (1921)**  
31 March 2024

**RAN Sea King crash, Nias  
Island Indonesia (2005)**  
2 April 2024

**Siege of Tobruk commences, North  
Africa (1941)**  
10 April 2024

**Battle of Kapyong commences,  
Korea (1951)**  
22 April 2024

**Formation of Women's Royal  
Australian Naval Service (1941)**  
28 April 2024

**Battle of the Coral Sea (1942)**  
4-8 May 2024

**Victory in Europe Day (1945)**  
8 May 2024

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## OUR COVERS

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Board Director Lynne Boyd  
laying a cross with her grand-  
children at the 2022 ANZAC  
Field of Remembrance



### Back

Registrations open







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

**W**elcome to 2024 and our summer Digest.

Since the passing of my husband Adam in 2017, I approach the start of each new year with a bittersweet feeling of positivity and a little bit of sadness. I am reminded that it is a new year filled with excitement and a fresh new start, but it also signals a reminder that the time between today and when I last saw my husband is growing – and will only continue to do so.

As many of you know, I was the wife of an Army veteran. He was medically discharged from service, battling post-traumatic stress disorder. After being an 'Army wife' for 17 years, moving around the country from post to post, we were suddenly on our own. I felt abandoned. I wasn't a war widow, but I needed support. I had a sick husband and two little children, but I did not have an organisation there to support me and help me connect with others in my situation. I'm looking forward to supporting many others who, like me back then, need a voice, friendship, support and an organisation to turn to.

I share this with you because I'm sure some of you also feel that way too. I want you to know you're not alone. There are other people who feel the same way you do, who look forward to a new beginning while looking back at a now-closed chapter in their lives. It is so comforting to know that in this community – our community – we understand each other, and that feeling of being both happy and sad when thinking of our loved ones. Throughout

my journey, and I would guess yours as well, I've found the best support comes from other widows. As we like to say, you all give each other the gift of friendship – and what a beautiful gift it is.

A big focus for us this year is to continue welcoming more people and new members to our amazing organisation. After consulting with you over the last 12 months, 2024 will see the biggest and most significant update to our organisation's name since we started more than 70 years ago. As you know, we are updating it to reflect contemporary community standards and embrace who we are and what we do. This is an important step for us and the community we serve. It gives us the opportunity to be more inclusive, and to be able to reach and support more of you and your families before tragedy strikes.

We will continue our advocacy to make War Widows Day national this year. At the end of last year, our e-petition closed with 483 signatures. Upon the petition closing, we sent a letter to the Federal Minister, along with all of the hard copy letters we received. Together, we collected the signatures and support of more than 590 people, which is incredible in just four weeks! To read more about this campaign please refer to page 10.

Preparations are also well underway for the annual ANZAC Field of Remembrance, which will be held on Friday 19 April 2024 at St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney. Every year, the service is beautiful, solemn and incredibly touching. So mark it in your calendars and register to attend. I look forward to seeing you there.

I also look forward to seeing many of you at club and regional events this year, with plans already underway to visit many of you across the state. I absolutely love meeting you in person – it is the best part of my role. You inspire me with your strength, resilience and generosity. It is in serving you and sacrificing for our common good that I am finding my true life.

I look forward to the year ahead and continuing to serve you as State President.

**MS QUEEN DUNBAR**  
State President



**W**elcome to the first 2024 edition of *The Digest*. 2023 was a very productive year and a turning point for our organisation. We are now looking forward to 2024, a year of further growth and inclusion, built on the foundation of your legacy and of those before you.

In December, you would have received the 2022/23 Annual Report, along with our letter highlighting the board's decision on the branding. The Board has been working hard over the last few years to find the right brand and name to represent the organisation – a name and brand that both honours and acknowledges our history, while also bringing the vision of our future to life. To be as inclusive as possible, we took the options we were considering and asked you to share your views. 438 of you shared your thoughts and feedback with us, I would like to thank everyone who took the time to contribute to this process.

One of the most important roles for a board is to look ahead, be future-focused and guide the organisation along its strategic pathway. With our next big change upon us, I want to assure members, war widows and the veteran community that although the public name of our organisation will change, and we are confident the timing of this is right, our commitment and service to war widows does not change – it stays the same. In fact, ensuring Australia never forgets its war widows or the families of veterans is the reason behind our evolution.

March 2023 marked the two-year anniversary of our 2021–2025 Strategic Plan. Implementing the strategic plan is an ongoing activity. While the focus of our first year was on providing stability within the organisation, the second was about trying new initiatives and ideas to see what worked within the organisation. This year we have been focused on improving, evolving and growing the organisation. This theme will continue into our next year as we embrace the changes to our brand name.

During this coming year, the Board is focused on developing a funding plan and securing sustainable sources of funding over the medium to long term. The Board is also focused on growing the organisation and ensuring that the value it provides to the community and members increases. We will be reviewing and updating the strategic plan this year to ensure that it reflects the progress already made and remains fit for purpose. With 58% of the activities in the plan implemented and 27% in progress, it is time to ensure that new and essential work, like sustainable funding, is properly reflected in the organisation's guiding document.

2023 was a big year for us and 2024 will be again. Together with the Board, I am looking forward to continuing to be of service to you in leading this organisation into its next exciting stage.

Happy New Year.

**MS TRICIA HOBSON**  
Chair of the Board







**A**s 2024 kicks off, we have the opportunity to both reflect on the progress we have made, and to look ahead to how we will continue to support veterans and families this year and beyond. I know the important role that families play in supporting our veterans, and acknowledge the challenges many families can face in doing so. And of course, there are the challenges that confront families who have lost their service member. This is why the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is there to help families as well.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide is a pivotal moment in our nation's history that our Government is taking very seriously. We have now taken action on all 13 recommendations of the Royal Commission's Interim Report. We've significantly bolstered resources in DVA to ensure veterans and families receive the best possible service, placing the Department in a position where it's better funded now than it has been in three decades. We've recruited over 500 additional staff to tackle the veteran compensation claims backlog and we're working to harmonise more than a century's worth of veteran compensation legislation, to make things simpler for all. We look forward to receiving the Royal Commission's final report and recommendations in September.

Without a doubt, our biggest achievement last year was the great progress made to process record numbers of claims. DVA is now deciding more claims than those lodged – bringing what's known as the "backlog" right down. I am pleased to say that Initial Liability claims are now being allocated to a claims officer within two weeks of being submitted to DVA – providing a more responsive service to our veterans and families.

As we work through those claims and move more veterans and families out of the queue, we make sure veterans and families are getting the support they need and deserve. That includes a range of services tailored to meet the needs of veterans and their families, from financial assistance and healthcare, to household services, transport to attend medical appointments, and supporting the education needs of children.

DVA is also there for you at some of the hardest times. That includes bereavement counselling and social support groups that are available through Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling, as well as tailored support to those in crisis through the Acute Family Support Package. If you're in need of assistance, I encourage you to get in touch with the Department to learn more about what services are available.

Since becoming Minister, I have seen many positive changes come about. In large part that is thanks to the advocacy by organisations such as War Widows. Your voices are part of the driving force behind our efforts to create a better, more supportive system for all veterans and families. As we enter 2024, we will again be looking to work with you to build better supports for everyone in our veteran community. Thank you for all your work supporting each other and advocating to governments.

**THE HON. MATT KEOGH MP**  
Minister for Veterans Affairs  
Minister for Defence Personnel



Minister Harris (middle) with our State President Queen Dunbar and Ian Thompson, President Sydney Legacy (left).

**T**hank you for the opportunity to connect with the NSW War Widows community and provide an update on recently delivered and upcoming activities.

I would like to begin by wishing you all a happy new year and I hope you all had a safe festive season.

It was a busy end to 2023. In early November, I attended the Defence & Veteran Community Forum on the Central Coast, hosted by the NSW Office for Veterans Affairs. This was delivered in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs, RSL NSW and RSL LifeCare.

It was an honour to also attend a number of Remembrance Day services on 11 November, which commenced with a sunrise service at Circular Quay followed by the NSW Remembrance Day Service at the Cenotaph in Martin Place. I was pleased to see a number of war widows in attendance on both of these occasions.

In December, the NSW Office for Veterans Affairs hosted a consultation at the Anzac Memorial to share the results of the recent survey and discuss ideas to understand how contemporary veterans want to be acknowledged and commemorated. Subscribe to the Office for Veterans Affairs newsletter for updates on the outcomes of the consultations:

[www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/about-us/subscribe](http://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/about-us/subscribe)

2024 has commenced with some exciting projects and initiatives from the NSW Office for Veterans Affairs and the Anzac Memorial.

In January, applications opened for the 2024 Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship. The Scholarship gives NSW Year 10 and Year 11 History students the opportunity to travel on a funded two-week study tour to Japan to discover the history of Australians at war. For further information and to apply, visit [www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/pams](http://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/pams)

Earlier this month, the Anzac Memorial launched a photographic exhibition and digital stories acknowledging women's service. The exhibition features 24 women veterans from NSW and is open until 31 March. If you can't visit the exhibition in-person, you can experience the veteran's stories on the Anzac Memorial website – [www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/event/her-stories-honouring-womens-service](http://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/event/her-stories-honouring-womens-service)

On International Women's Day, Friday 8 March, the Anzac Memorial is hosting a number of free events to acknowledge the military service of Australian women in conflict and peacekeeping, as well as those that enable service as part of military families. Visit the Anzac Memorial's website for the full details and to reserve your spot at these events [www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au](http://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au)

Lastly, this year the Anzac Memorial is celebrating the 90th anniversary of its opening. Special events, exhibitions, and lectures will be held throughout the year to celebrate this occasion. Visit the Anzac Memorial's website to view what's on and keep an eye on their Instagram and Facebook for upcoming events.

I look forward to continuing to support the defence community and their families and working closely with the war widows of NSW.

## THE HON DAVID HARRIS MP

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty

Minister for Gaming and Racing

Minister for Veterans









Minister for Medical Research

Minister for the Central Coast



# Update from the CEO

**H**appy New Year! 2024 will be an exciting time for us as we take the next important steps in our journey. In December, we spent time together as a team reflecting on all that had been achieved and changed for the better since 2021. To give you a snapshot, here are some of the things we observed:

In March 2021	In February 2024
 Operations were delivered by a team of temporary staff.	 Operations are now being delivered by a high-performing team of core staff.
 There were limited activity and output from the organisation.	 There is a high level of activity and output from the organisation.
 There were limited activity and achievement in the areas of advocacy.	 We now have a clear advocacy plan which we are delivering on, with the biggest achievement so far being War Widows Day.
 We didn't have your trust and we were challenged in the areas of stakeholder engagement and networking.	 We have grown our stakeholder relationships, networks and collaboration opportunities and, most importantly, we have regained the trust of the vast majority of members.

The organisation of March 2021 looked and felt very different to what it does today, and I couldn't be prouder of that and all the hard work that a relatively small team of people have put into making all that happen. As I look to 2024, I am excited by the challenges that will face us and the work ahead, because I know we will rise to it and in the end this organisation will be stronger, prouder and a leader.

Our point of difference is what we do and how we do it. It is the value we add to the veteran system, it is the perspectives we provide, the practical assistance, the community we create and the leadership we exercise.

The year ahead will see us carry these points of difference forward, creating a place of belonging for veterans' families throughout their entire journey – both beside their veteran and beyond. We aim to help them navigate the complex life circumstances that they can find themselves in from time to time, connecting them with those who understand, and helping them manage the emotional and mental load.

## Team planning day

In December, our team came together to build cohesion and plan the year ahead.

Together, we set out a plan for our publications, regional visits, main events, our space events and all other organisational activities. With this plan, we are hoping to be more efficient and organised, and to ensure our planning aligns with the board's priorities, and that our communications get to you and our stakeholders efficiently. We spent time building strong relationships with each other and gaining deeper knowledge and awareness of values, drivers and strengths. We discussed the work we need to undertake under key priority areas such as funding, branding, memberships, resourcing and measurement this coming year. It was a busy couple of days but we achieved a lot and have a great blueprint for the 2024/25 financial year.

## ANZAC Field of Remembrance 2024

You will find joined to this edition of *The Digest* information on our upcoming Field of Remembrance as well as our very special handmade cross for you to lay your tribute on the day at home, at the event in Sydney or at your local club. You will find enclosed, information on how to register and/or watch the service online if you are unable to attend in person.

We are finalising the finer details and we are looking forward to another moving service at St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney. This service is part of the legacy we wish to pass onto the future generation and we are hoping to see many families, children and grand children, joining to pay their tributes this year. It is a significant event for our organisation and we encourage all to attend, or watch online, along with your family.



## Representing war widows

*During Remembrance Month, many of our directors, staff and members took great pride in representing our organisation and community at various commemorations and events across the state. We thank all who proudly represented us at these events.*

### **MAJGEN Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM – AWWNSW Board Director**



On 3 November, we marked Kokoda Day, a day of remembrance and reflection on the sacrifices made during the Kokoda Track Campaign.

MAJGEN Susan Coyle AM-CSC-DSM had the privilege of representing us at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Service and met with other AWWNSW Board directors, staff and members. This solemn ceremony was graced by the address of His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

*Left: from left to right: former Board Directors Meg Green and Dianne Vogt, and Board Directors MAJGEN Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, Lynne Boyd and Jennifer Collins AM.*

### **Di Green – AWWNSW Member**

On 5 November 2023, despite the winds and rain, HMAS Sydney Association Inc held a Memorial at HMAS Sydney Memorial Amphitheatre at Bradley's Head Reserve to mark 109 years since the historic sinking of SMS Emden by HMAS Sydney I.

This marked the first naval victory for the Royal Australian Navy, forging its traditions, camaraderie, and sense of duty. We remember those aboard HMAS Sydney I and the lives lost in the engagement. We also acknowledge and remember their families.

*Right: Councillor Pip Friedrich, Deputy Mayor of Mosman (left) with AWWNSW Members Diane Green (middle) and Rear Admiral Christopher Smith AM CSM RAN, Fleet Commander.*



### **The Entrance & Long Jetty – AWWNSW Guild Club**

The ladies from The Entrance & Long Jetty Guild Club attended the Remembrance Day service held at The Cenotaph in Memorial Park, The Entrance. The service was hosted and organised by the Entrance Long Jetty Sub Branch.

They enjoyed getting together for the occasion, remembering the sacrifice of their loved ones, of their families and their own, on the day our nation stops to remember them too.

*Left: the ladies of the Entrance & Long Jetty Guild Club together at The Entrance.*

### **Jennifer Collins, AM – AWWNSW Board Director**

War widows and several AWWNSW directors attended the Holsworthy High School Remembrance Day service on Friday 10 November, with several veterans, including 100-year-old Reg Chard.

*Right: members and Directors amongst honoured guests at the high school service.*





## **Lynne Boyd and Jennifer Collins AM – AWWNSW Board Directors**

Board Directors Lynne Boyd and Jennifer Collins AM were honoured to attend the RSL Remembrance Sunday Commemorative Service at The War Graves Cemetery on 5 November 2023.

This solemn occasion was held in the War Graves Cemetery within the Rookwood Cemetery, one of the most serene spaces in the city.

It was a privilege to be part of this ceremony, which carries all the meaning of remembering and paying tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

*Right: Board Directors Jennifer Collins AM (left) and Lynne Boyd (right) at the War Graves Cemetery.*



## **Renee Wilson – AWWNSW CEO**

On 3 November 2023, Renee was privileged to attend and represent our organisation at the Sydney Legacy Annual Remembrance Luncheon. She was delighted to catch up with some of our members, including Michelle Carr.

It was Legacy's first Remembrance Luncheon in their centennial year, and we were honoured to show our support for all the great work Legacy Australia does looking after "the missus and the kids".

*Left: CEO Renee Wilson (right) with AWWNSW Member Michelle Carr.*

## **Wendy Thompson – AWWNSW Former State President Queen Dunbar – AWWNSW State President**

On Remembrance Day, we came together to remember and honour the brave souls who have served our nation. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Former State President, Wendy Thompson, and current State President, Queen Dunbar, represented us at the service at the Cenotaph, in Martin Place, Sydney.

We also remember this day is not just about our heroes in uniform; it is also about the families who stood by them. This last Remembrance Day, we remembered their sacrifices and resilience, and we will continue to do so, every day.

*Right: Former State President Wendy Thompson (left) with current State President Queen Dunbar (right).*



## **Michelle Carr – AWWNSW Member**

In Chatswood, on Remembrance Day, member Michelle Carr and her son attended the RSL service together.

It was moving to see Michelle and her young son laying a wreath on behalf of our organisation side by side, as they remember their hero, our heroes, and all their sacrifices.

*Left: Michelle Carr at the Garden of Remembrance in Chatswood.*



## Why is a National War Widows Day important?



*AWWNSW Member Nola Hill and her family at the 2023 ANZAC Field of Remembrance.*

**S**ybil Dale was living in Canberra and just 18 years old when her husband was killed at Gallipoli in August 1915. The couple had a daughter, Valda, who was only four months old, born mere days before her father set sail for war.

When Jessie Reid's husband was killed on the Western Front in June 1917, she was also left a war widow and single mother to three young children, all aged under four. She dedicated the next 20 years of her life to raising her children on her own, while living in Victoria.

Glenda Love was another woman whose husband, Alfred, died during the First World War. Their daughter, Esther, was eight years old at the time. Alfred wrote in the back of his war diary, 'In the event of my death I wish this book to be sent to my Dear Wife to let her know that my last thoughts were of her and of Essie my darling daughter.'

These are the stories of some of Australia's first war widows. While the exact number of Australian war widows over the past 100-plus years has never been tallied, a good estimate would be in

the hundreds of thousands.

Yet despite this significant number, little is known about you, Australia's war widows. There have been few books written about you, there have been no documentaries or television series created to tell your stories, and only a handful of monuments have been erected to honour your support, grief and sacrifice.

For more than 100 years, your stories have remained largely unseen and untold, and your sacrifice has stayed unrecognised. Until now.

In 2022, War Widows Day – 19 October – was declared an observed day in NSW and QLD, followed shortly by declaration in the ACT, SA and WA.

The purpose of War Widows Day is to recognise war widows and widowers in our communities, honouring your contributions and sacrifices in defence of Australia. War Widows Day is the only



*Celebrating the contributions of war widows and veterans families at the War Widows Day commemoration in 2023 at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney.*

*Left (from left to right) Rhondda Vanzella OAM, Tricia Hobson, Queen Dunbar, Bree Till and Gwen Cherne.*



*Right: Bree Till, Michelle Carr and Queen Dunbar laying their tribute during the wattle ceremony.*





*AWWNSW Member Shen Zappia laying a piece of wattle representing the resilience and sacrifice of war widows past and present, and their families.*

day on some state commemorative calendars that specifically recognises the role of veterans' families in your lifelong service and commitment to your loved ones and our nation. This makes it unique and significant.

The feedback we hear from members is that War Widows Day is incredibly special to them. AWWNSW members Di Vogt and Fran Brock recently spoke about last year's War Widows Day. Di described the service at the cenotaph at Martin Place as "beautiful and emotional" while Fran Brock said, "It was a very touching and moving day."

With more than 40,000 war widows around Australia, and most states and territories now recognising your contributions, we believe it is time for War Widows Day to be a national day. As you know, we've been busy advocating to the Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Keogh MP.

Late last year, we collected more than 480 signatures on our e-petition, as well as some 70 signatures on letters and a further 37 responses. We wrote to Minister Keogh to pass on these signatures, showing him that more than 590 people support a national day, and calling on him

to declare a National War Widows Day.

In a big win for our advocacy on this issue, NSW Minister for Veterans, the Hon David Harris MP, also wrote to Minister Keogh offering his support for a National War Widows Day.

In his letter to the Federal Minister, Minister Harris wrote, "Every veteran has a family, and we must not forget the important role family plays in the lives of veterans, and the sacrifices that family also make that allow veterans to serve their country. Families of our veterans are their primary support network, and families too can be affected by the service of their loved ones."

We encourage you to also write to Minister Keogh, requesting that he establish a National War Widows Day on 19 October annually.

To write to the Minister, please scan the QR code below to download our template letter and send it to the Minister or to our office. We continue to compile letters and forward them regularly to the minister.

For more than 75 years, we have stood together and used our collective voice to champion change and recognition for war widows and the families of veterans – and we will continue to do so until we heard.

**Scan the QR code**  
to download the  
letter template





## Mrs Elizabeth Wright, support and sacrifice.



Elizabeth Wright (right) with her friend Margaret Waterman (left)

**W**hen AWWNSW celebrated Christmas in July at Kirribilli RSL in 2023, Elizabeth Wright was handed the microphone to say a few words as the coordinator of the Chatswood social club.

Just prior to the event, we sat down with Elizabeth at her home to learn more about how she became involved in AWWNSW and to hear her life stories.

It was after the passing of her beloved husband, Reg, in 2005 that Elizabeth joined AWWNSW. Even though it is now almost 20 years since Reg passed away, Elizabeth is overcome with emotion when she speaks of him.

“He was a wonderful man,” says Elizabeth, adding how everyone loved him. “He did not talk about anyone. He didn’t criticise people. He’d seen a different life, and he was really lovely.”

She shares the story of how Reg once helped a young girl from across the street with her schoolwork so she could complete the leaving school certificate. Elizabeth says the young girl’s mother worked odd hours and she didn’t have a father, so Reg stepped in to help her.

Elizabeth says Reg would sit on those tiny little stools at the school, after working a long day, to help this

teenage girl with her studies – Shakespeare, maths, and so on. The study paid off and the young girl successfully completed her leaving certificate.

“He was such a nice man,” Elizabeth tells us once more.

When Elizabeth says Reg had seen a different life, she is referring to his war service. Reg served in the Royal Australian Air Force, and served in Europe in the Royal Air Force as a Spitfire pilot throughout the Second World War.

“Imagine his nerves for five-and-a-half years. He could have been shot down any minute, any mission, and he would have been watching others not come back,” Elizabeth says to us. “He went away at 19 [years old] a young boy, and came back a grey-haired man.”

Elizabeth tells us she cared for Reg for the final 20 years of his life, but then concedes, in truth, she cared for him for much longer than that – really for their entire marriage.

After the chaos and catastrophe of war, Reg revelled in peace and quiet. Elizabeth explains how “everything had to be very smooth. He liked the children to be in bed before he came home. He just loved quietness.”

He studied a lot after the war and Elizabeth tells us how he used to go under the house to study alone in peace, even when the ground was saturated with rain.

Elizabeth also recalls how in his younger years, after the war, he would “scream and scream” in his sleep. But later on, as the years continued to pass, he stopped doing so.

When asked why Reg would scream in his sleep, Elizabeth said, “Probably the hate. He hated killing those children and women. You know, they had to [do it] because they were enemies.” She added Reg said to her once how dreadful it was.



Not that Elizabeth pretends to know much about Reg's war experiences. She tells us several times that Reg didn't speak much of the war. "Some men will tell you the whole thing. But he would never, ever say anything."

He also lived the rest of his life with what we recognise today as anxiety. Elizabeth explains how she never worked again after getting married. She says she would have loved to return to nursing, but Reg worried too much about her if she wasn't home, and if she had to go somewhere, he would worry constantly.

He had lost so much in the war that he couldn't contemplate the thought of anything happening to her. He also hated planes and flying. While he never piloted a plane again after returning from war, he put his fears of flying to the side so they could travel around the world together. "He just had to deal with it," Elizabeth says. "He didn't trust anyone else being a pilot."

Having loved, supported and cared for a war veteran almost her entire adult life, Elizabeth thinks of the younger war widows and partners of war veterans. She speaks of the women, men and families impacted by the modern conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan, and wonders how they are coping with the aftermath of war. "I don't think they're doing enough for the returned servicemen," Elizabeth says to us with great compassion.

She also says she did not speak to anyone about how Reg struggled after the war. She supported him silently and stoically. He was a beautiful man, her darling husband: "Everybody loved him, he was an extraordinary man" she tells us.

She is very proud of the family she built with Reg, and of their three daughters. "The girls said the other day they were so lucky to have such a wonderful father," she recalls. "We talk about him all the time. We were a very happy family, and we still are."

As she speaks, it's clear she is a woman of immense understanding, empathy and compassion. War is brutal and its impacts everlasting.

But she's grateful for the friendships she's made with other war widows, who share similar experiences and have walked a similar path.

She says she became the coordinator for the Chatswood social club when no one put their hand up to help. Elizabeth, at the age of 93, stood up and said she could help out.

"I said, well, look, I can sell some raffle tickets and that sort of thing. But I don't want to be on the committee. I just want to be a helper." Over 10 years later, at 103 years old, Elizabeth is still – to this day – the coordinator for the AWWNSW Chatswood social club. Simply incredible.

Which brings us back to the AWWNSW 2023 Christmas in July luncheon at Kirribilli RSL.

When Elizabeth was handed the microphone, she thanked members of the social club for sharing their grant funds with other war widows and the RSL for providing the grant to allow them to get together. She spoke about her time as a coordinator, sharing a few anecdotes and stories.

AWWNSW is built on the shoulders and with the efforts of members like Elizabeth, women who have cared for their war veterans and then cared for each other after the passing of their husbands.

It is on this foundation of friendship – supported by understanding, compassion and empathy – that AWWNSW forges into the future.



*Picture of Elizabeth Wright when she served in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).*



# Social & guild clubs end of year gatherings

*November and December were busy months for our guild and social clubs, meeting around Christmas Lunches or hosting their last gatherings of the year. These events symbolise more than just seasonal celebrations: they are opportunities to strengthen our bonds, share stories, and look forward to the future with optimism and unity.*

The **Laurieton Social Club** came together for their annual Christmas lunch funded by our meal program. The lunch ended with the group singing happy birthday to Hazel, who turns 100 this year. Happy Birthday Hazel!



At the **Penrith and Lower Blue Mountains Social Club** Christmas Lunch, AWWNSW staff members Cherie, Jo and Michelle were pleased to share the latest updates from the office, covering the 2024 Field of Remembrance, AGM, and exciting plans for War Widows Day this year.



The **Entrance and Long Jetty Guild Club** Christmas gathering was attended by our State President, Queen Dunbar, who was delighted to be invited and represent Australian War Widows NSW and share news from head office.



The **Macksville Social Club** hosted a delightful Christmas luncheon, organised with club coordinator Edna Stride. AWWNSW staff member Lisa had the pleasure of joining 11 war widows and their carers, along with a representative from Legacy Australia.



Lisa was also delighted to attend the **Coffs Harbour Social Club** Christmas Luncheon with nine local war widows. Members came together at CeX Coffs Harbour to enjoy a meal and each other's company ahead of Christmas.





Our **Orange Social Club** regional visit was an opportunity for Board Director Jennifer Collins AM to connect with regional members. She shared important updates and the immense value of AWWNSW membership. Your presence and engagement truly make our organisation stronger, and we're here to support you every step of the way.



Our **Parramatta Social Club** came together for a very special occasion. They celebrated the remarkable 100th birthday of Mrs Potter, a cherished member of our community. Lynne Boyd, AWWNSW Board Member, had the honour of presenting Mrs Potter with a Life Membership Certificate, Badge, and a beautiful bouquet of flowers from AWWNSW. Happy Birthday Mrs Potter!



The **Cronulla Social Club** also got together to celebrate Christmas and the end of the year with a special lunch. Members shared stories and a laugh, and enjoyed catching up around a lovely meal celebrating the end of the year.



The **North Ryde Social Club** held a lovely Christmas Lunch at the historic Como Hotel. It was a great opportunity to catch up before the end of the year.



During the last **Chatswood Social Club** gathering of the year, our State President, Queen Dunbar, was honoured to present Mrs Elizabeth Wright with her Commendation Award from the Board of Directors. This award is a testament to Mrs Wright's dedication, ongoing service and contribution to our organisation and all war widows in the area.



The **Northern Beaches Social Club** members were delighted to gather at Vacluse House. They thoroughly enjoyed a delicious high tea in the beautiful surroundings of the Vacluse House Estate.





# International Women's Day

## 'Inspire inclusion'

**F**riday 8 March marks International Women's Day. The theme for this year is 'Inspiring Inclusion'. In a world that thrives on diversity, the concept of inclusion has emerged as an important consideration, fostering a sense of belonging for everyone, regardless of differences. To inspire inclusion is to recognise the value of diversity and actively work towards creating environments that embrace it. Here at AWWNSW, we believe everyone deserves a place to belong. Beyond its societal implications, inclusion plays a crucial role in shaping our mental health, offering a profound impact on individual and collective wellbeing.

Inclusion goes beyond merely tolerating differences; it is about celebrating them. When individuals feel included, they experience a profound sense of belonging and acceptance, which has a direct positive impact on their mental health. Inclusion is not just a buzzword: it can help reshape the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us.

### Fostering a sense of belonging

Inclusion creates a space where everyone feels valued and accepted for who they are. This sense of belonging is a fundamental need for all of us. When individuals feel they belong, they are more likely to experience positive emotions and have a greater sense of purpose.

### Reducing stigma and isolation

Inclusive environments break down barriers and reduce the stigma associated with differences. This reduction in stigma, be it related to age, race, gender, sexuality or abilities, contributes to a more compassionate and understanding society. Individuals are less likely to feel isolated or marginalised, leading to improved mental health outcomes for many.

### Enhancing self-esteem and confidence

When individuals feel included and their unique contributions are celebrated, it bolsters their self-

esteem and confidence. This positive reinforcement has a cascading effect on mental wellbeing, empowering individuals to navigate life's challenges with resilience and a positive mindset.

### Promoting emotional resilience

Inclusive environments teach individuals to appreciate diverse perspectives and handle interpersonal differences with empathy. This exposure enhances emotional resilience, enabling individuals to adapt more effectively to stress and adversity.

### Encouraging open communication

Inclusion fosters open communication, breaking down communication barriers that can contribute to feelings of isolation. When individuals can express themselves freely without fear of judgment, it creates a supportive atmosphere that is conducive to positive mental health.

*As AWWNSW evolves through its branding journey, timing to inspire inclusion could not be more perfect.*

Almost 70 years ago, we recognised the changing landscape of veteran families' needs, and expanded our support beyond traditional war widows to include all widows whose loved ones died as a result of their service, encompassing a broader spectrum, ranging from operations to service-related injuries or illnesses.

And almost five years ago, acknowledging the challenges faced by defence families and the evolving nature of veterans' experiences, we recognised the need for support that is available to families every step of the way.

This year, we will continue to embrace inclusion as our brand evolves with a name that clearly welcomes all families who need to be supported in the veterans' community. For all of you to find a place to connect to each other, and a place where you can feel seen, heard and included.



# Transforming lives Through Education

On 29 June 2023, Rob Doust was officially presented with his 2023 AVCAT scholarship, sponsored by AWWNSW, in his home state of Queensland.

Unfortunately, representatives of AWWNSW were unable to attend the presentation but AVCAT organised an online meeting so members of our team could meet Rob. The meeting was a good opportunity for our team to offer support in addition to the scholarship, like providing mentorship.

It was clear from our meeting with Rob that he is an enthusiastic young man who is passionate about his university studies. He is studying a Bachelor of Engineering (Honours)/Bachelor of Information Technology (IT) at the Queensland University of Technology.

He spoke with us about his love for coding webpages and video games and told us how he enjoys creating his own projects. He proudly explained how he created a security camera system using a computer integrated keyboard. Some of us were amazed hearing someone this young speaking this confidently about Technology.

Rob was eligible to apply for the 2023 scholarship because his late grandfather served in the Army in Vietnam, Singapore and Papua New-Guinea. His great grandfather also served in Gallipoli.

When asked about his grandfather, he said he has little memories of him speaking about the war. He remembers quality time with him, saying that for him he was a grandfather before being a war veteran.

Rob says the money from the scholarship has helped him purchase textbooks and spend more time focusing on his studies. Rob works at a café but he says without the scholarship he would have to work more shifts.



"I'm very thankful for the scholarship," says Rob, "It allows me to put more focus on my academic studies and take part in more extra-curricular activities."

The extra time studying is paying off. In his first semester, Rob achieved impressive grades: two high distinctions and two distinctions.

Rob's advice to others who are considering applying for a AVCAT Scholarship is simple: just do it.

"You have that opportunity, why not take it."

Meeting Rob gave our team the opportunity to understand just how much a difference a scholarship like this makes to the family member of a veteran.

AVCAT is a national organisation that manages a range of tertiary education scholarships and bursaries for the children and grandchildren of Australian ex-serving men and women. Its mission is to transform lives through education. We have been supporting AVCAT scholarships for 12 years and have sponsored 8 scholars through this program.

AVCAT also manages the Long Tan Bursaries on behalf of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The scholarships are targeted at the children and grandchildren of veterans who are assessed as being in financial need, show academic potential for the course they wish to undertake and are in deserving circumstances.

For more information about when and how to apply, visit [www.avcat.org.au](http://www.avcat.org.au)



# The importance of our Social, Guild Clubs & Our Space

*We have long been told the ingredients for a healthy life. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables. Walk daily. Get enough sleep at night. Drink plenty of water. Go easy on the cakes and chocolates. But now we are hearing about another key ingredient: social connection.*

**W**e have always known that coffee with a friend or lunch with 'the girls' was good for our soul, but now science is telling us it is also good for our minds and overall wellbeing.

According to the Greater Good Magazine, social connection is "the feeling that you belong to a group and generally feel close to other people".

Renee Wilson, our CEO, explains how social connection is recognised as an important factor of health and wellbeing, with social connection having positive mental and physical influences on you.

"As human beings, we crave social connection, which is a good thing, because social connection has been shown to be a very strong protective factor, guarding against depression, poor mental health, burnout and elder abuse."

While social connection has become a hot topic as we better understand its benefits, it has been a pillar of our organisation from our earliest days.

"We were created to bring together the widows of war veterans, so they could support each other and strengthen their individual voices," Renee said.

"It's why our Social Connection programs are so important, and have been the foundation of our organisation for more than seven decades."

It is in the spirit of bringing peers together that our organisation has evolved through the years. Today we offer our programs and services to war widows and the families of former and current ADF personnel.

"We exist to create community and better outcomes for war widows and the families of veterans." Renee said.

## **War Widows Social and Guild Clubs**

Every month, more than 700 war widows across NSW meet at one of our 52 social and guild clubs. Our 52 clubs can be found both in the city and the regions, including as far north as Murwillumbah, as far south as Cooma and as far west as Narrandera.

While the activities of each social and guild club might differ depending on location, the main purpose of our clubs is to reduce social isolation and offer the opportunity to meet up and share stories and a laugh.

The North Ryde War Widows Social Club is a great example. They meet twice a month, on the second



*One of the North Ryde Social Club gatherings in March 2023.*



and fourth Monday. A little while back, we spoke to social club coordinator, Elsie Cuthbert, who told us how the members enjoy each other's company over coffee or lunch.

"We're good friends," Elsie said. "We've been friends for a long time, and the social club meetings are a great opportunity for us to catch up and have a chat."

The bond between members is hard to describe. Members have explained to us that the bond they share is deeper than friendship, more like sisterhood. We have also had members tell us that it was War Widow Social Club meetings, and the beautiful women who attended them, that carried them through their darkest days.

If you would like to attend your nearest social club, please email [guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au](mailto:guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au) or call 02 9267 6577. We also have a Transport Program to assist war widows with mobility limitations to attend monthly meetings.

### Our Space

Launched in early 2023, Our Space is a new and much-needed social connection program, and the equivalent of our social and guild clubs for defence and veterans families. For more than 70 years, we have witnessed our members give each other the gift of friendship, and the aim of Our Space is to extend that friendship to veteran families.



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

We know that the families of veterans and contemporary widows struggle to find community, connect to services and have their needs met, and are generally isolated within the veteran community.

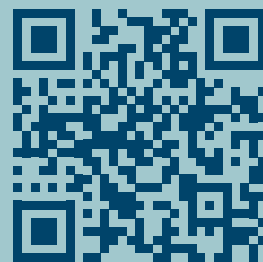
"The families of veterans and contemporary widows need a place to find each other and a reason to connect. That reason might be learning a new skill, receiving information or developing knowledge," Renee said. "And that's exactly what we're creating with Our Space – a safe place, and a reason for the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

The program is focused on building the community online so we can hear directly from the families of veterans about what they need, and when and how they would like to gather. We are also hosting regular face-to-face events in Canberra and Sydney, as well as regular online events.

The best way to be part of Our Space and to be informed of free events near you is to join the Our Space group online by scanning the QR code on this page.

This is a safe space and a free program for all family members of current and former defence personnel, no matter your relationship with, and the status of, your veteran.

Scan the QR code  
to join Our Space  
Online





# Update on Our advocacy work

*Advocacy, as always, remains a big part of what we do and what we are known for. Throughout the past year, there was growth in the advocacy work undertaken by AWWNSW, including public engagements.*

In 2024, we continue our advocacy for national recognition of War Widows Day and engagement with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

We also continue our advocacy for veterans' families on various fronts, and assisting members of our community in speaking up and seeking the support they need.

## National War Widows Day

As you know, we have been strongly focusing on advocating for War Widows Day to be recognised nationally by the Federal Government. We have received an overwhelming number of responses, including letters of support from the NSW Government and other key stakeholders.

Many of you joined the call to sign the e-petition on the Parliament of Australia's website. We collected over 480 signatures in just four weeks. We have also been collecting hard-copy signatures and have sent Minister Keogh the first batch of letters we have received, with more than 70 signatures.

Although the petition has closed, you can still have your say and write directly to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, The Hon Matt Keogh, requesting to establish a National War Widows Day on 19 October annually. To write to the Minister, download our template by scanning the QR code on page 11. If you wish to receive our template letter by post, contact us on 02 9267 6577.

We are hoping 2024 will be the year that War Widows Day is recognised nationally by the Australian Government.

## Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

In March, the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide will conduct its final public hearings. On 12 October 2023, we provided our second submission to the Royal Commission, and in December, we also submitted feedback on the Royal Commission's consultation paper on a proposed new entity to support the wellbeing of defence members and veterans.

Before making such a recommendation, the Royal Commission sought feedback from key stakeholders about what the entity could be and what it could achieve. In response to this, we wrote to the commission and reinforced our views that:

- Government and the sector need to be held accountable. There have been too many inquiries and not enough action. This simply cannot continue. The sector lacks appropriate oversight and is very insular. A new entity like this could assist in bridging the gap from the sector to the broader Australian community, increase general understanding of the challenges within the sector, and help to build understanding within the public about the relevance of military service and its importance.
- The principles of design must represent and include the families of veterans. With the volume of evidence collected by the commission to date from families, including regarding the impacts of service and illness on them, they must be included in the remit of the new entity. The new entity also ought to oversee the development of veteran family support services and responses to the Commission's findings and recommendations for the reasons noted earlier.



The final public hearings for the Royal Commission will take place from 4 to 28 March 2023 in Sydney and will be broadcasted online. The final report of the Royal Commission is due to the Governor General in September 2024. In between the close of the public hearings and the final report, the Commission will also publish two reports in June: one about the entity that ought to replace it (discussed above) and the other a report on the lived experience evidence collected throughout the course of the commission. This report will be tough for many in the community to read but its content is imperative. We commend the commission for taking this bold step to enable better understanding among our community and the general public. It is important to know that the eventual closing of the Commission this year doesn't signify the end of reform efforts. In many ways it is the beginning of significant work to be undertaken at all levels of the system to achieve better outcomes for veterans and their families.

### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Military and Veteran Populations report

Late last year, a report commissioned by the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) was released, the 'Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Military and Veteran Populations'. The report estimated the prevalence of IPV in the Australian military context. This report has now been released. The data is a hard, important read.

The study found that 46% of 300 intimate partners of transitioned ADF personnel reported exposure to any form of intimate partner violence (IPV).

- 43% experienced emotional IPV
- 9% experienced physical IPV
- 1.4% experienced sexual IPV

Further, it found 24% of 662 intimate partners of current serving ADF personnel reported exposure to any form of IPV.

- 23% experienced emotional IPV

- 2.4% experienced physical IPV
- 0.9% experienced sexual IPV

Within both of these groups, more than 90% are women.

This is half of the data reported in research published by DVA & Phoenix Australia. The other half is just as difficult to read, with 29% of 2,881 transitioned ADF personnel and 23% of 6246 current service members exposed to IPV.

On Thursday 30 November, Defence released the 'Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence 2023-2028'. The strategy aims to build a culture of safety and support for those experiencing family and domestic violence and contribute to a safe and supported Defence community, but it also has critical gaps.

After reviewing the report and strategy, we did not think that the Defence strategy went far enough to protect the interests of civilian intimate partners by failing to address the military/ civilian divide and how civilian partners can access help and support. For us this was further evidence for the need for a meaningful and representative voice to Government for the families of our Defence members and veterans. Without it, short sighted policy that fails to address need will continue to be made.

You can read more about our views on this in our opinion piece published in The Mandarin in December 2023. Scan the QR code below to read the article.

Scan the QR  
code to read our  
comments





## PHONE SAFETY – LESSON 101

*Over the last year, 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, zoom and online safety. With the goal to improve our members' safety and confidence online and on other devices, this lesson covers how to stay safe and identify phone calls and text messages that are scams.*



### Risks of text and call scams

Text and call scams pose significant risks, especially for our older community members. Scammers often target seniors, taking advantage of their trust and kindness. These scams can result in financial loss, identity theft and emotional distress.

Common scams include fake lottery wins, urgent requests for money, and fraudulent calls claiming to be from government agencies. Understanding these risks is the first step in protecting yourself from falling victim to these schemes.



### How to spot text and call scams

Recognising text and call scams is crucial for your safety. Be wary of unexpected messages or calls asking for personal information, money or access to your computer.

Scammers often use urgency or fear tactics to manipulate victims.

Watch out for unusual numbers, generic greetings and messages with spelling errors.

Legitimate organisations won't ask for sensitive details via text or phone without prior arrangement.

They will also never call you from a mobile or overseas number. If something feels off, trust your instincts and end the call. Prior to taking any action, check with friends or family. If you wish to contact the organisation the caller said they were calling from, ensure you use their phone number displayed on bills or letters. Do not call back the number they have called or texted you from.



### What to do when receiving text or call scams

If you receive a suspicious text or call, stay calm and never share personal information, such as your bank details or government-issued numbers, over the phone.

Do not let them rush you – legitimate organisations do not rush people and they will offer to call you back at a suitable time, not rush you to speak right away.

Avoid clicking on any links or opening attachments in text messages from unknown sources.

Hang up on unexpected calls that make alarming claims or requests.

Report the incident to your phone carrier and relevant authorities, such as the Australian Cyber Security Centre [www.cyber.gov.au](http://www.cyber.gov.au). Do not hesitate to ask for help from friends or family.

Keeping a record of the incident details, including the caller's number and the content of the message, can aid in investigations.



### How to protect ourselves from text and call scams

Protecting yourself from text and call scams involves adopting proactive measures. Start by registering your phone number on the "Do Not Call" register in Australia: go to [www.donotcall.gov.au](http://www.donotcall.gov.au) and click on "register your numbers".

Be cautious about sharing personal information

on the phone, via text or on website links they provide. Educate yourself about common scams and stay informed about the latest tactics: the ACCC manages the Scamwatch website, which provides detailed information about various scams, alerts about new scams, and tips on how to protect yourself from scams. You can visit the Scamwatch website at: <https://www.scamwatch.gov.au/>

Regularly review your bank statements for any unusual activity, and if you have concerns, contact your bank immediately.

Remember, staying informed and vigilant is your best defence against text and call scams.

By being aware of the risks, learning how to identify scams, knowing what to do when confronted, and implementing preventive measures, you can be empowered against text and call scams. To help you identify potential scams, we have some examples below.



## Examples of common texts scams

### 1. Phishing Texts:

Example: “Your bank account has been compromised. Click on the link to verify your details immediately.”

### 2. Fake Prize or Lottery Wins:

Example: “Congratulations! You’ve won \$1,000 in our prize draw. To claim your prize, reply with your credit card details.”

### 3. Government Impersonation:

Example: “URGENT: Your information in Medicare needs to be updated via <https://servicesaustralia-updates.online> due to yearly KYC policy”

### 4. Fake Delivery Notices:

Example: “Your package delivery is pending. Click the link to track and reschedule.”

### 5. Support Scams:

Example: “Virus detected on your phone! Call this number now for assistance.”

### 6. Romance Scams:

Example: “Hi, I’m overseas and in trouble. Can you send me money urgently? I’ll pay you back.”

### 7. Charity Scams:

Example: “Help us support disaster victims. Donate now by clicking on the link.”

### 8. Subscription Renewal Scams:

Example: “Your subscription will be automatically renewed today. Click to cancel if you don’t want to be charged.”

Remember, legitimate organisations usually do not request sensitive information or payments via text messages.

If you receive a suspicious message, do not click on any links or provide personal information.

Verify the message with the supposed sender through official channels: call them on their official phone number to make sure everything is in order or visit your accounts online.

Report scams on [www.cyber.gov.au](http://www.cyber.gov.au) to help protect others.

**Scan this QR code to learn more about identifying and avoiding scams**





# How can telling your story help you and others

*“Storytelling is the commonality of all human beings, in all places, in all times.” – Rives Collins.*

Storytelling is amongst our oldest forms of communication. We do it to pass on traditions, knowledge, education and values from one generation to the next.

In our modern world, we have new ways to tell stories, but the principle remains the same. Some tell stories with images or videos on social media, while others journal, write books or blogs. The impact is also still the same: by passing on our knowledge, lessons and stories, we can help others dealing with what we have already gone through, and we can share wisdom and what we know from the experiences we have lived.

“One day you will tell your story of how you’ve overcome what you’re going through now, and it will become part of someone else’s survival guide” – Brené Brown.

But storytelling does not only impact the lives of those who listen, it also impacts the life of the storyteller – positively.

Have you ever chatted with a close friend about a problem you were having, only to find the once-impossible solution yourself, whilst talking? This is common: when telling our story, we process information about what we have achieved, what we have learned and what we have gone through. When telling our story, we also share our thoughts, and by doing so, they become clearer, we understand them and we learn about ourselves.

It is through storytelling that we process and untangle the knots in our minds, we look at events from different perspectives and we look back with the eyes of someone looking at it for the first time.

Telling stories removes judgement – it can be factual, but it can also create space for emotions and help us alleviate the pressure we can sometimes feel holding that in.

How many of us have told parts of our story to someone who responded how gutsy, strong and persistent we were? This is the response we would hardly give ourselves, but it is nevertheless true. When looking inwards, we often lack perspective and are often our worst critic, and we often lack confidence in ourselves. Storytelling places a mirror in front of us and helps us gain confidence, process our thoughts and go through challenges.

And now, we would like to invite you to share part of your story with us, if you have not already! We are seeking stories for *The Digest*, and we would like to share your story and your knowledge, so it can too, become part of someone else’s survival guide. Many current serving spouses could benefit from reading your story, so they can find the solutions and inspiration they might need.

We encourage you to write to us about your life as a defence spouse, a carer and a war widow. As an inspiration, we have provided some ideas for you below:

- Please tell us about a friendship you have developed with another member of our community.
- Please give us your views on the role of families in enabling their loved one’s service.
- Please share your story as the spouse of a serving member, how you helped and supported your veteran during and after your service.
- Please tell us if you think you would have needed support before the loss of your husband and what kind of support you would have needed.

**Please send your responses to:**

**AWWNSW – Storytelling**  
**PO Box 146**  
**Chatswood NSW 2057**

# Entitlements Updates

## **Veterans and families' hub for Queanbeyan region**

RSL LifeCare Veteran Services will receive a \$5.4 million grant to develop a new Veterans' and Families' Hub in Queanbeyan.

The Hub will be established by RSL LifeCare, working in partnership with RSL NSW and other local ex-service organisations, to develop the dedicated space to support veterans and their families.

Last year, we worked with RSL Lifecare to ensure the interests of local war widows and veterans families were factored into their proposal and design concepts. We supported the RSL's application for this hub as well as others around NSW. This will open opportunities for us to deliver services and events in more locations and regional hubs around NSW.

For more information about Veterans' and Families' Hubs, visit: [www.dva.gov.au/vfhubs](http://www.dva.gov.au/vfhubs)

## **Compensation & claims advocacy**

Compensation advocates play an important role in ensuring veterans and families can access their entitlements under the Veterans' legislation. While veterans can access advocates through various RSL networks, for widows, the main port of call for claims or compensation advocacy services is Legacy.

If you need assistance with lodging a compensation claim with DVA and don't know where to start, give us a call, we will work through your needs and link you with the most appropriate service provider.

Alternatively you can find a register of compensation advocates in your region, here:

[www.advocateregister.org.au](http://www.advocateregister.org.au)

## **DVA's aged care guide**

DVA has specially designed a guide to help you and your family through the transition to aged care

services and where necessary from living at home to moving into an aged care home. This guide explains how DVA can assist you with the process and the support services you may be able to access once you move in.

*Scan this QR Code to download the guide or call us on (02) 9267 6577 to receive a hard copy*



## **Veteran's Home Care (VHC) services**

The Veterans' Home Care (VHC) Program provides practical help to veterans and widows with a gold card at home so they can continue to live independently.

The program is not designed to meet complex or high-level care needs.

Through the program you might be able to access domestic help, personal care, respite care and home and garden maintenance.

How you access:

Call a VHC Assessment Agency directly on 1300 550 450 to have an assessment for services. The assessment is usually done over the phone. The Assessor will talk to you about your situation at home and identify services you may need.

The services you need will be detailed in a VHC care plan, which will be sent to you and your VHC service provider.

## **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 and meet the income test.



*Scan this QR Code to apply*



# FAQs

Over the last couple of months, we have been keeping track of your questions. Here is a snapshot of the questions you frequently asked us this summer.

## *When will the new brand come out?*

We are planning to launch the new brand name in May 2024. In between now and then you might see some minor changes to colour, style and in some of our digital communications as we prepare everything, but the new name will not take effect until May 2024.

## *I have received a membership renewal form with the last Digest, does it mean my membership is due?*

No, due to limitation of our current program, the membership renewal form was sent to every member, regardless of their membership end date.

If you are unsure if your membership needs to be renewed this year, please contact us prior to filling in your membership form on (02) 9267 6577.

## *My cleaner told me that DVA has not paid their bill for 2 months, what do I do?*

First and foremost, stay calm and do not feel like you need to pay the bill. Ask the service provider to follow up directly with DVA, the relationship is between the service provider and DVA and it is their responsibility to follow up on their own accounts not yours.

However, it can be hard to know that you might

lose a good provider because of late payment by DVA so please do let us know and we can follow up with DVA. We have been tracking several members having issues with DVA payment of invoices from service providers on and off over the last 2 years and will continue to raise these issues at a high level.

## *What is elder abuse?*

Any act which causes harm to an older person carried out by someone they know or trust. Normally this is an intentional act and can include:

- Emotional/psychological threats, humiliation or harassment
- Neglect
- Financial: i.e. using money property or assets illegally or improperly including forcing someone to sign documents or change a will.
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Social: such as forcing someone to become isolated by restricting their access to other people or services.

It can be carried out by a child, grandchild, partner, family, member, friend, neighbour or carer. Information and advice on elder abuse is provided through the National Elder Abuse Hotline 1800 353 374. Many states and territories also have specific services to help people navigation these distressing situations and we are happy to refer into those services.

Elder Abuse is a serious and important issue. If we don't talk about it, learn about it and act on it we cannot prevent it.

***Scan this QR code to find more information on elder abuse***



# Thank you to our donors

In December 2023, we were fortunate to be selected as the charitable beneficiary for the CIB Accountant Christmas Party.

The event was a wonderful opportunity for our CEO Renee Wilson to share some valuable insight about the work we do and who we support, and on the impact of service in the families of our current and past serving members. The amount of guests who were not aware and amazed by Renee's story was overwhelming. It goes to show how much our work is needed and how little the general public know about the sacrifice of our war widows and of the families of the ADF.

"For the last 13 years I, personally, have been living with the aftermath of the Afghanistan War. My husband, Gary, and our two children live in the shadow of that war. Our children will never know their father absent a brain injury or chronic pain. While that breaks my heart at times, I remind myself of my gratitude that they exist at all, because Gary shouldn't have survived the injuries he sustained." Said Renee at the Event.

Together, staff and clients donated to our cause. One client donated \$2,000 and together with donations received in cash and electronically, we collected \$5,000 for the night. Thanks to all for their generosity, it was a wonderful way to end the year!



## Zesty Chicken Salad with Blueberries

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Picture & recipe – Centr.com



### INGREDIENTS

- 350g skinless chicken breast sliced into strips
- 1 olive oil spray
- salt & pepper, to taste
- 4 cups (120g) rocket
- 1 cup (180g) quinoa cooked according to packet directions
- 1 lemon half zested & juiced and half cut in wedges
- 1/2 avocado (medium) diced
- 1 cup (160g) fresh blueberries

### METHOD

- 1 Heat a non-stick frypan over medium heat.
- 2 Spray chicken with oil and season with salt and pepper.
- 3 Add to frypan and sear for 5-6 minutes or until golden brown on one side, flip and sear for another 4-5 minutes or until cooked through. Set aside.
- 4 Toss rocket, quinoa, lemon zest and juice together in a bowl and season with salt and pepper.
- 5 Divide salad between serving bowls and top with chicken, avocado and blueberries.
- 6 Add lemon wedges to serve.



## VALE

✿ Barbara Moore BIDWILL	✿ Evelyn Bonning NARRABEEN	✿ Marjory Sharpe EMU PLAINS
✿ Barbara Murphy NORMANHURST	✿ Evon BRADFORD HEATHCOTE	✿ Marie Munro PEREGIAN SPRINGS
✿ Barbara Mason MULLAWAY	✿ Gisela Vodicka VILLAWOOD	✿ Marjorie Robson W. PENNANT HILLS
✿ Barbara Patten CESSNOCK	✿ Gladys Hogan WHITTINGHAM	✿ Mary Lewis CRONULLA
✿ Barbara Markovitch MARSFIELD	✿ Gladys Bastin ROZELLE	✿ Mavis Bond BARDWELL PARK
✿ Barbara Barton NOWRA	✿ Grace Graylin TOORMINA	✿ Mildred Bruce MAITLAND
✿ Beryl Slade LISMORE	✿ Gwenneth Baker LEONAY	✿ Moira Hempel NARWEE
✿ Beryl Suthers OLD BAR	✿ Hazel Swancott MARSFIELD	✿ Norma Earle WICKHAM
✿ Beryl Clarke GEORGES HALL	✿ Irene Hodge TURRAMURRA	✿ Norma Miller BARDEN RIDGE
✿ Betty Gregory SPRINGWOOD	✿ Jean McKenzie MT HAWTHORN	✿ Norma Heddles BERMAGUI
✿ Carmel Chandler CONCORD	✿ Jean Ewing OATLEY	✿ Olive Dowling YASS
✿ Caroline Shakeshaft BARGO	✿ Jill Drumgold LALOR PARK	✿ Patricia Edwards MENAI
✿ Clara Miller DOYALSON NORTH	✿ Jill Deer TAREE	✿ Patricia Donnelly BELMORE
✿ Clotilde Killah BAULKHAM HILLS	✿ Joan Carr NARRAWEENA	✿ Phyllis Connolly LITTLE BAY
✿ Cora Geer NARRABEEN	✿ Joan Madden DUBBO	✿ Queenie Gill CASINO
✿ Coral Whatmore CARRS PARK	✿ Joan Mason DOUBLE BAY	✿ Rae Lilly MIRANDA
✿ Coralie Noakes FORSTER	✿ Joan Paul GOROKAN	✿ Robin WEST STOCKTON
✿ Daphne Goldring DOUBLE BAY	✿ Joan Moore BELROSE	✿ Sheila Ginsberg SYDNEY
✿ Deirdre Martin TENNYSON POINT	✿ Joy Attwood LAKE CARGELLIGO	✿ Shirley Norris OYSTER BAY
✿ Doreen Weekes GILGAI	✿ Joyce Bulmer HAMILTON EAST	✿ Shirley Barklmore PARKES
✿ Doreen Gurnett MONTEREY	✿ Joyce Robinson PORT MACQUARIE	✿ Valerie Dennett MURWILLUMBAH
✿ Doris Luxford MORTDALE	✿ Joyce Sutton ELIZABETH BAY	✿ Valerie Lincoln MARDI
✿ Edna Leslie LAVINGTON	✿ Judith Macansh NEWCASTLE	✿ Violet Marshall MENAI
✿ Elaine Rose EAST BRANXTON	✿ June Littlefield OURIMBAH	✿ Vivienne Megaritty CHAMBERS FLAT
✿ Eleanor Goddard W. PENNANT HILLS	✿ Kathleen Philpot PORT MACQUARIE	
✿ Elizabeth Hall ALSTONVILLE	✿ Lillian Cameron COWRA	
✿ Elizabeth Gates VALENTINE	✿ Loretta McGoldrick MAWSON LAKE	
✿ Eugene Townsend INGLEBURN	✿ Lydia Freeman DUNDAS VALLEY	
✿ Eunice Ramsay HORNSBY	✿ Margaret Soutar SUTHERLAND	

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

## What is grief and how to support grief

Grief is a normal emotional response to the loss of someone or something important to us. Bereavement, grief and loss can cause many different behaviours and feelings, affecting people in various ways.

There is no 'one way' to grieve.

Grief is a common life experience for those connected to Defence service and is not always due to bereavement. This free guide is designed to help you navigate the complex and confusing landscape of grief and loss.

Feel free to share this guide with family and friends.

You can download our Grief and Loss Guide by scanning this QR code or call us on 02 9267 6577 to receive it by post.



This document was prepared with resources available at [www.healthdirect.gov.au/grief-loss](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/grief-loss)

AWWNSW

guild@warwidownsw.com.au  
www.warwidownsw.com.au  
@awwnsw

### What is Grief?

**Grief is a normal emotional response to the loss of someone or something important to us.**

**What does it feel like?**

Intense sadness, shock, numbness, anger, loneliness, guilt, pain, relief, confusion, overwhelm – it can feel like a mixture of all of these feelings, sometimes independent of each other, sometimes more than one at the same time. It can feel very draining, to the point where simple tasks feel very difficult, like showering, brushing your teeth or leaving the house.

**Who can help me?**

You, your friends, your GP or health professional and specialist services like Open Arms, Lifeline, Griefline and AWWNSW. Importantly, **you are not alone. You are never alone.**

**How long does it last?**

How long is a piece of string? The intensity of the grief related feelings may come and go over time depending on what is happening around you. Eventually the intensity will ease and the space and time between episodes of intense feelings will grow longer.

**What do children experience?**

Strong feelings. Feelings that are as strong and intense as what adults feel but without the skills to regulate or soothe.

Feelings that can be confusing and can be expressed in challenging behaviours.

The Kids Helpline has compiled some very good resources to help children through grief and they can be found at [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

**When should I seek help?**

It is important that you connect with a health professional, your GP, counsellor or psychologist, particularly after a significant loss so they can monitor you and help you manage how you are feeling and the intensity of the waves. It is particularly important to speak to your health professional if the grief you are experiencing is affecting your appetite, your sleep or you are having thoughts of harming yourself.

**Navigating Grief and Loss**

Please scan the code below to view a recent webinar we hosted on navigating grief and loss.

\*This document was prepared with resources available at [healthdirect.gov.au/grief-loss](http://healthdirect.gov.au/grief-loss)

## Wishing you a very special and happy birthday!



### **Happy 100th Birthday to Joan Woodward!**

On 21 December 2023, family and friends had the privilege of celebrating this milestone birthday for our dear member Joan Woodward.

Member of the Murwillumbah Social Guild, the birthday was celebrated with many flowers and a special birthday cake at the Murwillumbah Services Club.

Happy birthday Joan, thank you for sharing this special day with us!



### **A 100th Birthday to remember**

The Nepean War Widows Club Committee and the Legatees, spearheaded by Legatee Karen Lane, put together a lovely celebration for their member Norma Wilson's 100th Birthday.

Mrs Wilsons family, war widows, members of AWWNSW and Legacy celebrated this milestone birthday at the Penrith RSL.

Our President, Queen Dunbar presented Norma with flowers, life Membership Certificate and Badge. The family provided a history for Mrs Wilson and presented all the correspondence Mrs Wilson had received.

It was a lovely party, with Mrs Wilsons favourite music playing in the background.



### **Congratulations to Nancye Pritchard on her 100th Birthday!**

The Epping WW Social Club celebrated the 100th Birthday of Mrs Nancye Pritchard.

Board Director Lynette Sullivan presented flowers, Life Membership Certificate and Life Member WW Badge to Mrs Pritchard.

Mrs Pritchard also received for the occasion letters from the King and Queen and the Prime Minister, and card from the Epping Social Club ladies.

## Happy birthday to members who have recently celebrated 100 years!

- Beryl Hayles MILPERRA
- Elaine Fitzpatrick GALSTON
- Esma Hulett WINSTON HILLS
- Hazel Crawley LAURIETON
- Ivy Bornefeldt S. WENTWORTHVILLE
- Jean Green TUNCURRY
- Joan Woodward MURWILLUMBAH
- Joyce Peters MACQUARIE PARK
- Linda Banks RUSHCUTTERS BAY
- Mavis Smith KEIRAVILLE
- Norma Wilson EMU PLAINS
- Nancye Pritchard BEECROFT
- Norma Potter CARLINGFORD
- Rosalind Selberg UMINA
- Yvonne Ryan ONE MILE BEACH

## Welcome to members who have recently joined

- ★ Alma Curran NORTH NOWRA
- ★ Anne Gridley NORTH SYDNEY
- ★ Beatrice Pierson NORTH NOWRA
- ★ Caitland Lyon WATTLE GROVE
- ★ Deirdre MOLLOY MANDURAMA
- ★ Elizabeth Duncan ALSTONVILLE
- ★ Emily McClurg CANBERRA
- ★ Janet Glasson ORCHARD HILLS
- ★ June Vaughan MOSS VALE
- ★ Kathryn Farlow MOLONG
- ★ Maisie MacLennan MACKSVILLE
- ★ Margaret Maher WODONGA
- ★ Marlene Danza DARLINGHURST
- ★ Marlene Willcocks KINCUMBER
- ★ Sandra Fallance ERMINGTON
- ★ Susan Sallans THIRROUL
- ★ Susan Ward ROSEVILLE



## Have you heard of Stepping On?

Stepping On is a free 7-weeks fall prevention program for adults aged 65 years and over, and Aboriginal adults aged 45 years and over.

Stepping On is run by NSW Health and there are multiple locations across the state. The best way to enquire about the program and enrol is via their website:

[www.steppingon.com](http://www.steppingon.com)

If you need help to enrol or would like more information or need assistance accessing their website, please don't hesitate in calling us on 02 9267 6577 or pop in during one of our technology drop in sessions at our Chatswood office (see below).

## Don't miss the ANZAC Field of Remembrance

The ANZAC Field of Remembrance will be held at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, on Friday 19 April 2024 at 10.30am.

Registrations are now open and will close on 9 April 2024.

You can find the QR code to register online at the back of this edition of The Digest. You can also register by calling us on (02) 9267 6577.

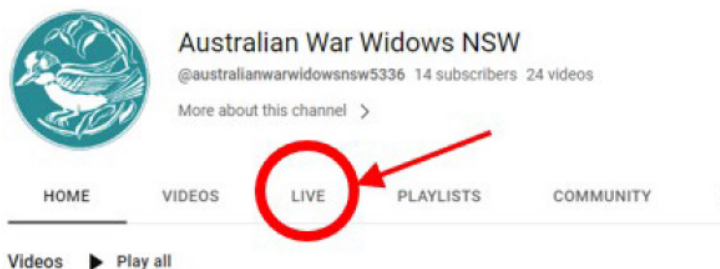
If you cannot join the service in Sydney, we invite you to watch the service online on our You Tube Channel.

To watch the online service, on the day you do not need to register, just join us online following the below guide:

go to:

[www.youtube.com/@australianwarwidowsnsw5336](http://www.youtube.com/@australianwarwidowsnsw5336)

Then click on the Live section as per below to find the 2024 live stream:



The 2024 Field of Remembrance will be available on the Live Channel 30 minutes prior the service start time. Simply click on the video to start viewing.

The video will remain available to watch after the event at any time.

AWWNSW Social & Guild clubs are encouraged to host a local event on the day to watch the service live. Please contact us if you would like to host an event on the day on 02 9267 6577.

Attached to this edition of The Digest is a wooden cross, kindly made by St Vincent's de Paul Society Men's Shed Haberfield. This cross is for you to lay your own tribute at our Sydney event, your local social club or at home.

## 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.

### International Women's Day Webinar

Join us online, on Thursday 7th March at 5.30pm, for an exclusive Webinar marking International Women's Day. This year we will be discussing the theme 'Inspire Inclusion' with a focus on age and agism. Specifically,

- the impact of agism and how it affects women of every age
- the importance and benefits of intra-generational connections and inclusion
- the barriers to this
- how a village of support can be built with a variety of people, of various age and backgrounds.

Don't miss out, register today.



[Register Here](#)

### AVCAT scholarship applications

AVCAT supports the children & grandchildren of Australian Veterans with the cost of tertiary education. They provide scholarships that help pay for textbooks and expenses and help ease the cost of living.

Applications will open 18 August 2024 and will close 31 October 2024.

For more information, about when and how to apply, visit [www.avcat.org.au](http://www.avcat.org.au)

### 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 published with any photo you wish to share with us.

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

[guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au](mailto:guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au)

### Assistance with Community Transport

No longer driving and having trouble managing public transport?

Contact 'My Aged Care':

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

**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*)





AUSTRALIAN  
WAR WIDOWS NSW LTD

Register now for the

A N Z A C

# Field of Remembrance

**FRIDAY 19 APRIL 2024 AT 10:30AM  
ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL, SYDNEY**

**Registrations are now open - close 29th March 2024**

*If you have mobility limitations, please register prior to 22 march.*

**To register:**

Scan the QR code on this flyer with your phone

or

Email us on [guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au](mailto:guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au)

or

Call us on 02 9267 6577

***Attached to this edition of The Digest is a wooden cross, kindly made by  
St Vincent's de Paul Society Men's Shed Haberfield.***

***This cross is for you to lay your own tribute at our Sydney event, your  
local social club or at home.***

