



FAMILIES  
OF VETERANS GUILD

AUTUMN 2024

# THE GUILD DIGEST

ANZAC FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE & ANZAC DAY





AUSTRALIAN WAR WIDOWS  
NSW LIMITED

Trading as

FAMILIES OF VETERANS GUILD

ABN 24 083 075 914

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*"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  
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**THE DIGEST**  
ISSN 2652-8606

**PUBLISHER**  
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\$30 due 1 April each year

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FOR YOUR DIARY

Events & Key Dates

**Technology Drop In Sessions**  
3 July & 7 August 2024

**Castle Hill & Surrounds Regional  
Lunch**  
26 June 2024

**Peer Support & Sound Healing  
Cronulla**  
27 June 2024

**Peer Support & Sound Healing  
Chatswood**  
13 July 2024

**Community Art Session Chatswood**  
12-13 July 2024

**Chatswood Social Club Christmas  
in July**  
16 July 2024

**Annual General Meeting**  
15 August 2024

**Campbelltown & Surrounds  
Regional Lunch**  
August 2024

Key Commemorative Dates

**Battle of Shah Wali Kot,  
Afghanistan (2010)**  
10-14 June 2024

**Black Hawk Helicopter Tragedy  
(1996)**  
12 June 2024

**International Widows' Day**  
23 June 2024

**Formation of Royal Australian Navy**  
10 July 2024

**The Battle of Fromelles (1916)**  
19 July 2024

**Arrival of RAMSI forces in the  
Solomon Islands (2003)**  
24 July 2024

**Korean Veterans' Day**  
27 July 2024

**Cowra Breakout by Japanese  
Prisoners of War (1944)**  
5 August 2024

**Victory in The Pacific Day (1945)**  
15 August 2024

**Vietnam Veterans' Day**  
18 August 2024

CONTENT

- 03 President's Message
- 04 Chair Update
- 05 Minister for Veterans' Affairs
- 06 NSW Minister for Veterans
- 07 Programs Update
- 08 Advocacy Update
- 10 Remembering Them ANZAC Day
- 12 ANZAC Field of Remembrance
- 16 Your Story, Our Story
- 20 Club News
- 21 Out and About
- 22 Feature Articles
- 26 Building Your Skills
- 28 FAQs
- 30 Self Care Feature Article
- 31 Recipe & Thanks
- 32 Member News
- 34 Noticeboard

OUR COVERS

**Front**  
Our junior volunteers assisting  
war widows decorating their  
crosses at the ANZAC Field of  
Remembrance.

 FAMILIES OF VETERANS GUILD AUTUMN 2024  
**THE GUILD DIGEST**



**Back**  
Picture collage of our ANZAC  
Field of Remembrance.





*President Queen Dunbar delivering her address at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance in April.*

Every year, April is always one of our busiest months on the events calendar with numerous commemorations and services in the lead up to the ANZAC Field of Remembrance and ANZAC Day. And this year was no exception with our moving 72nd ANZAC Field of Remembrance attracting the highest attendance in a few years, the displaying of the crosses over at the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park and the launching of our new brand, Families of Veterans Guild.

Our organisation has delivered remarkable outcomes in our long history, and that's because of all the amazing war widows that came before us who fought long and hard for recognition and rights. We will always carry on their legacy, we will always support and advocate on your behalf and create opportunities for you to connect and support each other. Our name has changed, but our support, friendship and care for you, has not and will not.

The ANZAC Field of Remembrance is one such beautiful example. It is a sacred, special, and significant day for you. This year we invited the families of veterans to join us and as I gave my address at the service, I could tell the day meant a lot to all. There was a beautiful mix of young and old, war widows and families of veterans, distinguished guests and longtime members. Side by side, we stood together and supported each other. Side by side, we remembered and honoured our loved ones, with our own personal tribute.

Added to that, having the crosses displayed at the Anzac Memorial's Hall of Memory was truly special.

This ANZAC Day, war widows and veterans families were seen, heard and not forgotten. It is important for us to keep our traditions and legacy as we open our doors to other families of veterans.

In the lead up to ANZAC Day, I attended many services and commemorations where I met many of our members and laid wreaths on behalf of war widows and families of veterans. On the day, I was honoured to march with other war widows and the many families of veterans at the ANZAC Day March in Sydney. It was wonderful to see war widows, children, grandchildren and partners of our veterans marching to the applause and thanks from the public. I was also invited to read the ANZAC Requiem at the 2024 Lest We Forget ANZAC Day Tribute Concert on ANZAC Day, broadcast on Channel 7. It was a touching moment for the families of veterans to feel so seen and recognised; it was a truly special day for us all.

In the coming months, I will continue to visit our clubs and members around NSW, and I look forward to sharing those special moments with you. As a widow myself, let me assure you once more that war widows, alongside your families and the families of veterans, will remain at the heart of our organisation.

As our motto says, "We all belong to each other. We all need each other."

### MS QUEEN DUNBAR

#### President



*President Queen Dunbar (left) during the pre-audience with Her Excellency Margaret Beazley AC KC (middle), Michelle Carr and her two children.*





Tricia Hobson (left) with The Archbishop of Sydney and our President, Queen Dunbar, at this year's ANZAC Field of Remembrance.

I am proud and honoured to welcome you to this edition of *The Guild Digest*. You will notice that we have returned to the original name of this publication, which many of you might remember. What a start of the year it has been!

The ANZAC Field of Remembrance was once again, a beautiful and moving service, with many of our members and dignitaries sharing how special the service was for them this year. I encourage you to read more about the day on page 12 of this edition of *The Guild Digest*.

As ANZAC week began, we officially launched our new brand, the Families of Veterans Guild. I'd like to thank you all for the support you have shown the organisation during this time of transition. Our priority is to ensure that Australia never forgets its war widows and that they continue to receive the support and recognition they deserve. To do this, we must continue to be seen and heard as an organisation, and remain relevant in order to carry forward the legacy of our founder, Jessie Vasey CBE OBE. As she shared with us almost 70 years ago, "We are now becoming an older women's group, and I feel that if we remain as such, the organisation will die. We must become an inclusive group if we are to survive."

She was right; under the name War Widows we have struggled to maintain relevance in our broader community and attract the support required to ensure that war widows are not forgotten. It has been so pleasing to read through the feedback received on the name change, from members, widows, families, our Patron, Ministers, stakeholders and business partners. We have been commended at all levels for doing what

is needed in our sector: removing barriers to support.

As a symbol of our unity and our common bond, I was so proud to see war widows and families of veterans marching together behind our banner at the ANZAC Day March in Sydney. I was particularly moved and proud to see so many generations standing side by side behind our logo and colours on national TV. It was a powerful moment. You should all be proud for opening your arms to future generations so they, too, can find comfort and support amongst the people who understand them the most.

This new journey does not mean that anything will change for our war widows. With the company name staying as it is – Australian War Widows NSW Ltd – war widows own our new brand. Just as they were the first to move in 1946, creating a new community and new pathways for support, so too have we been the first to move again in 2024, creating more communities and pathways for support. Practically, the services, advocacy and support delivered to our war widows will remain as it is experienced today and will improve. We still have a dedicated team looking after our War Widows Programs exclusively, and this will not change. This team will continue to provide continuous support to our Guild and Social Clubs, Friendship Line, Transport Program, 100th birthday recognition, war widows outreach and engagement, and service connection and case management for war widows.

In addition to these existing services, you will also now be able to access our Social Work and Wellbeing Program. This will support veterans' families, including war widows who need specialist case management, and services that target the foundations of wellbeing, including self-care, education, social connection and peer support. I invite you all to read more about our structure and services available on our website at [www.familiesofveterans.org.au](http://www.familiesofveterans.org.au).

I would like to thank all of you once again for your ongoing support of the organisation, your participation and your feedback.

What we have accomplished together is historical for our organisation and the families of veterans in Australia. We should all be very proud of what we have accomplished together. Thank you.

**MS TRICIA HOBSON**  
Board Chair





**W**e often say that it is families that provide the first-line of support to our veterans and Defence personnel.

These are not empty words. Without the people closest to them, our current and former serving personnel would not be able to do what they do.

This work is often unseen and unpaid, but it should never go unrecognised.

It is with this in mind that I would like to congratulate all those involved in the relaunch of the War Widows Guild of NSW as the Families of Veterans Guild. This inclusive rebrand is a reflection of the organisation's commitment to support all veteran families throughout life.

In that spirit, we're working to simplify and harmonise veteran compensation legislation, the first recommendation of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's interim report.

Many of you would have engaged with the veteran compensation system and as such, I don't need to tell you how unnecessarily complex and confusing the current three act system is.

This simplification and harmonisation process seeks to make things easier to understand, apply for and implement for veterans, veteran families and Department of Veterans' Affairs staff.

Thank you to the Families of Veterans Guild for your submission on the legislation. It's only through engagement and advocacy from organisations like yours that we can ensure we get this right,

ultimately reaching the common goal of producing better outcomes for veterans and families.

We're working to introduce this legislation to the Parliament soon and seek to have it in place by the middle of 2026 in order to allow time for advocates to be trained, ICT systems to be upgraded and, vitally, for veterans and families to be provided the advice they need on what changes will mean for them.

I'd like to acknowledge the impact Anzac Day has on our veteran community.

On Anzac Day we not only commemorate what happened on the beaches of Gallipoli some 109 years ago, we recognise, remember and pay tribute to the more than two million Australians who have served in our uniform over the years, and the 103,000 who have lost their lives.

I'm glad to see the tradition of the Guild's ANZAC Field of Remembrance event continued this year, giving veteran families the opportunity to personally commemorate their lost loved ones.

I had the enormous privilege of participating in the Dawn Service in Villers-Bretonneux on Anzac Day.

Visiting the site of some of Australia's bloodiest battles was a sobering experience. It was also an opportunity to reflect on the impact service has on local communities and families the world over – with many Australians undertaking personal pilgrimages more than a century post war.

The impact of war does not lessen with time. Anzac Day is a time to recognise that for many, the war within continues long after a veteran returns home. This is not just a burden for our veterans, but their families too.

Thank you all for the advocacy and support you provide to the veteran community.

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



*Minister Harris reading the Field of Remembrance tributes of war widows and families displayed at the Anzac Memorial.*

I welcome this opportunity to connect with the War Widows and Families of Veterans community and provide an update on the many activities that have recently taken place.

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the recent launch of the Families of Veterans Guild. Thank you to Renee Wilson, CEO, and the team for their work in the consultation and launching of this new brand. I have shared this change through my NSW Government networks.

Earlier in March I was sadly unable to attend the International Women's Day events at the Anzac Memorial, but I know a number of you were in attendance. I hope those who attended enjoyed the day and I encourage you to subscribe to the Anzac Memorial's newsletter to stay up to date on future events - <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/subscribe>

I appeared as a witness at the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's hearing block in Sydney on 18 March. This was the final public hearing, with the report due by 9 September 2024. I look forward to reading the outcomes of the Royal Commission and working with the NSW Office for Veterans Affairs to review and share these findings with the community.

In April I attended a number of commemorations, including the Field of Remembrance service and the

RSL and Schools Remember Anzac Commemoration at the Anzac Memorial.

The Field of Remembrance service was incredibly moving and it was great to see so many of you in attendance, and I know that local commemorations were held across the state. The annual service at St Andrew's Cathedral allows us to honour the personal sacrifices and contributions that war widows have made.

On Anzac Day, I took part in RSL LifeCare's Anzac Day Dawn Service Sydney Harbour Bridge Climb. It was a unique way to experience a Dawn Service and I am grateful for this opportunity. I then went to my local Anzac Day services where it was heartening to see the large crowds turn out to support local service men and women.

In late May, the NSW Office for Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with DVA, RSL NSW and RSL LifeCare held a Defence and Veteran Community Forum in Nowra. This was a great opportunity for veterans, current serving members and their families to learn about what services and supports are available to them.

I also attended the annual Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service at the Anzac Memorial. This event is an important acknowledgment of the service and sacrifice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans and I was grateful that I could attend as both Minister for Veterans and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty.

I am proud to be involved with the veteran community and I look forward to continuing working closely with the war widows and families of veterans of NSW.

Yours sincerely,

**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



# Programs update

**W**e have recently made a number of minor structural changes internally that take the first steps in improving our support for our community.

We have realigned our activities into three core programs, making it easier to understand what we do, how and for whom.

This realignment also makes it much easier to see the connection between our vision, mission and programs.

Our vision is to improve the lives of the families of Australian Veterans. Our mission is to provide the families of veterans with a voice, facilitate access to services and entitlements, and support their social and emotional wellbeing.

## Our Programs

### War Widows Program

The purpose of the war widows program is to support the needs and interests of war widows in NSW, Tasmania and wherever else the need arises. The program is focused on wellbeing support provided through social connection and peer support. It includes:

- Guild and Social Clubs
- Friendship Line
- Transport Program
- 100th birthday recognition
- War widow outreach and engagement
- War widow service connection & case management

### Social Work and Wellbeing Program

The purpose of this program is to support veteran families in the community access services, support and entitlements supporting their wellbeing. The goal is empowering self-advocacy and efficacy through

the sharing of information, to build knowledge and confidence. It includes:

- Social work & complex case management
- Service navigation & education
- Our Space
- Scholarships (AVCAT and leadership development)

### Awareness and Advocacy Program

The purpose of this program is to address gaps in the design and implementation of the veteran support system, and issues in its operation. The program's focus is identifying and advocating for the needs of veteran families and war widows, building public knowledge and awareness, and systems of support. It includes:

- Major events such as War Widows Day and the ANZAC Field of Remembrance.
- Stakeholder and community engagements and consultation on matters affecting veteran families and war widows.
- Advocacy campaigns including National War Widows Day and Veteran Family Recognition.
- Representing community interests at consultations with stakeholders and government.
- Written submissions and engagements with Royal Commission and within the veteran sector on veteran family matters.
- Thought leadership, policy proposals and public relations.



# Advocacy Update

There has been a lot happening on the Advocacy front over the last few months including:

- Aged Care Act Consultation
- Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide hearings
- Veterans' Legislation Reform Consultation
- Making War Widows Day a national day
- Supporting families in their calls to recognise their loved ones who died in training accidents
- Joining the calls to end violence against women.

In this edition of *The Guild Digest*, we focus on the contributions made to the Age Care Act Consultation and the Veterans Legislation reform consultation.

## Aged Care Act consultation

In summary, our contribution to this consultation emphasises the importance of protecting the interests of aging war widows amidst changing legislative frameworks. Key points highlighted include:

- Shift in Focus: Welcoming the Act's shift towards a people-focused and rights-based approach, anticipating positive impacts on veterans and war widows in aged care.
- Supporter and Representative Sections: Supporting changes aimed at preserving autonomy and promoting engagement of older persons.
- Concerns and Recommendations:
  - Definition of 'War Widow': Urging clarity and consistency in terminology with Veterans Legislation to ensure adequate coverage for Gold Card holders.
  - Inclusion of Widow(er)s: Advocating for explicit reference to both veterans and their spouses within the Act.

- Alignment with Veteran Legislation: Highlighting potential redundancies due to ongoing Veteran Legislation reforms and urging inclusion of new Act's name for future coverage.

### Additional Concerns Raised:

- Interoperability of Systems: Seeking clarity on how the Act aligns with the veteran system to address overlapping needs.
- Oversight of Aged Care Sector: Noting concerns within the veteran community about oversight and proposing greater education and awareness of regulatory roles.

The submission concludes by expressing hope that the provided information will aid in the development and implementation of the new Aged Care Act.

## Veterans Legislation Reform consultation

On 26 April 2024 we made our submission to DVA regarding the draft Bill. View our full submission by scanning the QR code on this page.

Fundamentally, we see the harmonisation Bill and the 'enhanced' MRCA as the first step in a much larger project of system reform and simplification and would encourage both sides of politics, government, and its departments to not rest once this Bill is passed. Additional work required on the 'enhanced' MRCA includes:

- Include a definition of veteran family within the legislation.
- Remove privacy barriers that prevent families from being meaningfully engaged.
- Remove inequity in the provision of funeral entitlements.
- Remove inequity for bereaved families under the Acute Support Package.
- Extend entitlements to lifetime mental health care for children of veterans who have passed during or because of their service.

Read our submission:





- Adjust prescribed limits to domestic assistance provisions to allow greater flexibility in their application. This would empower veterans and families to be able to keep pace with the costs of services.
- Recognise veteran families and their role in the new legislative framework.
- Include veteran family engagement and a role for DVA in the provisions that govern Transition Support.
- Adjust the attendant care entitlements to reflect community understanding, expectation and language.
- Adjust the wholly dependent partner provisions to reflect community understanding, expectation and language.
- Extend liability provisions to cover deaths in duty caused by disease that has been treated while the person is a member of the ADF and has passed as a result of that disease while in service.

We used our submission to reiterate the following key points from our earlier submission in May 2023:

- Support for the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Council, but it needs to include veteran families with different experiences represented on this Council. This may include those bereaved by service, those whose veteran has been wounded/ injured, and a parent of a veteran.
- Support for the merging of the Commissions, but the Government ought to consider making the following amendments to the section the Repatriation Commission ('the Commission'):
  - Expand the remit of the Commission to include veteran family needs and considerations.
  - Include the capacity for the Commission to consider submissions from the veteran community sector and advocacy bodies regarding the operation of the MRCA, claims consideration and policy development.
  - Enhance the transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of the Commission. The Commission operates with unclear external accountability and transparency. Many veterans and their families don't understand

what it is, its role and its responsibility. Many veterans and their families confuse the Commission with DVA.

- Improve how the Commission operates. There is currently very limited opportunity for the community sector to engage with the Commissions, to make submissions and co-develop policy.

### What's next on the agenda?

#### *Veterans Homecare Program*

We want to hear from all of you who receive or access the program: why? Because we know it doesn't always meet your needs and we want to advocate for changes to ensure it does.

#### *Acute Care Support Package*

This seeks to provide short-term flexible support to eligible veterans and their families, to adjust to new and challenging life circumstances that may result in the family being at risk of experiencing crisis. New and challenging life circumstances can be more than an event: they can be about the impact an event, or a series of events has on a family's ability to function. The kinds of circumstances that may impact a family are unexpected and may impact each family member differently.

However, there are many limitations to the program that mean that widows and families need to meet strict time frames or eligibility criteria in order to access, leaving many without support.

#### *We want to hear your thoughts*

We would like to hear your thoughts on both of these programs and what changes or improvements you would like to see. We will gather responses and advocate for reform by sharing proposed amendments to the programs.

Your input is essential in our advocacy work. We thank you for your participation and are looking forward to hearing your views on this program. Please share your views by scanning this QR code.

Share your views here:



## Representing war widows & families

*Throughout ANZAC Week, representatives of the Families of Veterans Guild attended services to honour our service men and women across the state. We thank all who proudly represented us at these events. We could not cover them all here, but head to our new website to read more:*

*[www.familiesofveterans.org.au/anzac-day-wrap](http://www.familiesofveterans.org.au/anzac-day-wrap)*

### RSL NSW ANZAC Day Dawn Service

Our President, Queen Dunbar, laid a wreath next to Sydney Legacy President Ian Thompson at the RSL NSW ANZAC Day Dawn Service at the Cenotaph in Martin Place. A truly moving service with the Last Post resonating through the streets of Sydney CBD, where thousands of people gathered to pay their respect.



### ANZAC Day March

On ANZAC Day, we were deeply honoured to see war widows and families of veterans marching together behind our banner during the ANZAC Day March in Sydney. It was an honour for all these generations to march side by side while the public was thanking them for their sacrifices.

### RSL LifeCare ANZAC March and Service

On 17 April, our President, Queen Dunbar, and our CEO, Renee Wilson, attended the RSL LifeCare ANZAC March and Service at the ANZAC Village in Narrabeen. It was, as always, a special morning where they had the opportunity to catch up with many of our members and wave to them as they proudly marched.



### North Ryde RSL ANZAC Day Service

On ANZAC Day, member Nola Hill laid a wreath on behalf of war widows and families at the RSL Memorial Garden in North Ryde.

Pictured left is our member Nola Hill with City of Ryde Mayor Trenton Brown and Jordan Lane MP, Member for Ryde.



### Chatswood ANZAC Day Dawn Service

Our CEO, Renee Wilson, laid a wreath on behalf of our organisation, war widows and families at the Chatswood RSL ANZAC Day Dawn Service.

It was a lovely way to start a long day, remembering the ANZACs and the fallen, commemorating their sacrifice and honouring their service.





## ***Five Dock RSL***

Our President, Queen Dunbar, had a lovely time at the Five Dock RSL in company of member Sue Doolin and her family.

Queen laid a wreath on behalf of our organisation, war widows and families. She also spent some time to get to know Sue, who she found amazing. Sue's family was there to support her at the service, and they are all very proud of her.



## ***Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway ANZAC Day Service***

On 20 April, Queen Dunbar also represented our organisation at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway (KTMW) ANZAC Day Service. It was, as every year, a very popular and moving service, with many dignitaries in attendance. Thank you KTMW for another beautiful service.

## ***Holsworthy High School ANZAC Day***

Many of our members gathered at the Holsworthy High School for the ANZAC Day service. They were invited by the School, as they are every year, and were pleased to come together to pay their respect to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.



## ***Lest We Forget ANZAC Day Tribute Concert***

On ANZAC Day, our President, Queen Dunbar, was invited to provide the ANZAC Requiem at the beginning of the Lest We Forget ANZAC Day Tribute concert. It was a great honour for Queen. The concert was organised by the Remembrance Foundation and was broadcast on Channel 7. Queen was pleased to also see member Michelle Carr and her two children participating in the tribute.

## ***Live exhibition of the ANZAC Field of Remembrance***

During the week leading up to ANZAC Day, all the crosses laid by our war widows and families at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance were displayed at the Anzac Memorial. A heartfelt thank you to the Anzac Memorial for their support and for shining a light on our veterans' families during this significant week.



## 72nd ANZAC Field of Remembrance



*This year's Master of Ceremonies, our member and war widow Wendy McKean.*

It was special, unique, moving: it was our 72nd ANZAC Field of Remembrance. All in attendance have agreed, there is something very special about this service. As our President, Queen Dunbar, said during her welcome speech, "The ANZAC Field of Remembrance is the only commemoration where veterans' families, in particular war widows, are at the centre of the service, laying their own personal tributes to their loved ones. This service is unique, and we will continue to honour its 72 years legacy for years to come."

Many dignitaries gathered at St Andrews Cathedral, alongside war widows and families of our veterans, including our Patron, Her Excellency Margaret Beazley, Governor of NSW and Mr Wilson, The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP, Assistant Minister for Defence and for Veterans' Affairs, The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, representing the Federal Opposition, The Hon David Harris MP, NSW Minister for Veterans Affairs, and representatives of the Navy, Army, Air Force, the City of Sydney, the Royal Commission, international governments and many other organisations.

Our Master of Ceremonies this year was Wendy McKean. Wendy's husband, Vic, served in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) for 20 years and a further 15 years in the RAAF Reserve. Wendy has been a dedicated volunteer on the Friendship and Birthday Line for seven years and has been involved in the running of various social clubs since Vic passed away in 2015. It was an honour to have Wendy as our Master of Ceremonies for this year's ANZAC Field of Remembrance. Her support and dedication to other war widows, to many social clubs and to our organisation is commendable.

The service was hosted by St Andrew's Cathedral Clergy: the Archbishop of Sydney, The Most Reverend Kanishka Raffel, who delivered a moving address, and the Dean of Sydney, the Very Reverend Sandy Grant.

In a personal and moving speech, our President, Queen Dunbar, shared her thoughts about the day: "Today, as I thank our service personnel and pay my own tribute to my husband, I will remember all of you, the mothers, the fathers, siblings, the husbands, the wives, the children and grandchildren: those whose lives have been impacted by defence service and who continue to serve our country, supporting their serving member during and well beyond service."







*Our State President, Queen Dunbar (right), laying her tribute alongside Royal Commissioners Mr Nick Kaldas APM (middle) and The Hon. James Douglas KC (left) in remembrance of veterans lost to suicide.*

When all war widows stood to lay their tribute alongside their friends and family, the emotion filling the cathedral was palpable. Hands held, arms wrapped around one another, this is the moment that makes this service so unique, this is the moment that is bittersweet as one witnesses the wonderful friendships that arose from adversity.

This year we welcomed three of the widows from the 2023 Talisman Saber tragedy. It was inspiring to see many war widows offering their open arms and words of support as they attended their first ANZAC Field of Remembrance. Sarah participated in the laying of the conflict crosses, and Caitland concluded our service with the words of those who stand behind and beside our veterans: the moving words of the Silent Ranks poem. Holding the hand of her young son, the emotion was raw as she read the words, "I am the one who is left behind".

The ANZAC Field of Remembrance and its 72-year tradition is a fundamental day for our community, a tradition we will continue and share with the public so the nation can see and get to know, the families who are left behind.

The crosses laid by war widows and families were on display at the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park from the day of the event until the day after ANZAC Day. It was wonderful to see 4,000 visitors passing through the Hall of Memory on ANZAC Day and seeing the crosses laid by the families of our veterans. Many left personal messages in remembrance of our veterans.

Lest We Forget.



*Paying tributes to our veterans the way we know best. War widows and families laying their own personal tributes to their loved ones.*

Scan the QR code to view the recording of the service





# ANZAC FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE









## The meaning of ANZAC Day

### Mrs Noni Daw & Mrs Shirley McLaren OAM

**F**or 97-year-old Noni Daw, ANZAC Day looks a little different from her younger years. When she was much younger, she used to march on ANZAC Day, which she always loved.

But these days, you will find her at home on ANZAC Day. She starts the day by listening to the Australian War Memorial's Dawn Service Ceremony on the radio. Then for the rest of the day, she is glued to the television, watching the news and the ANZAC Day March in Sydney, as well as the Dawn Service ceremonies in Gallipoli and Villers-Bretonneux.

Her daughter, Helen, even jokes how she is not allowed to call her mum on the day, as it interrupts Noni watching the television.

"She doesn't want to speak to me on the phone on ANZAC Day," said Helen. "She just wants to watch the TV."

ANZAC Day is important to Noni for many reasons, not least because her father, Lieutenant Stanley Delves, served in the First World War and her second husband, Bernie Daw, served in both the Second World War and Korea.

"Dad's generation was so traumatised by war that no-one spoke about it," said Noni, who is one of our members. "Not many of them really marched."



Mrs Noni Daw's father, Lieutenant Stanley Delves.

Back in 1990, when her Dad was 95 years old, he delivered a speech on ANZAC Day at his nursing home. In his speech he wrote:

"On ANZAC Day, we recall the heroism of men and women who defended principles in many theatres of war in many lands.

"We acknowledge that we who survived, owe our way of life to many thousands who no longer share it."

He also outlined why it is so important that we continue to mark ANZAC Day. While the speech was delivered 34 years ago, his message remains relevant today. He said:

"Let us have a real and deserved pride in their courage and achievements.

"Let us honour our dead and, for those with unknown graves in foreign lands, may ANZAC Day be their memorial engraved upon our nation's heart and conscience.

"Let ANZAC Day live on for the future, not only as a day of remembrance but a day of dedication of peace for the future of the world."

*"I pay tribute to my dear Dad, Herbert Stanley Delves. He enlisted in the First World War, aged 19, in the 34th Battalion. He served in France and Belgium, and attended officer training at Oxford, became a 2nd Lieutenant. He was wounded twice - first time seriously, admitted to the London General Hospital in May 1918, then convalesced at Cranbrook Castle in Scotland. Later back in the fields, he was again wounded, this time admitted to a casualty hospital. He returned home safely in August 1919. Dad spoke very little about his war experiences, but he loved to talk about Scotland! His resilience was amazing, a truly loving father. He went to Teacher's College in Sydney and taught in country schools until retirement. On ANZAC Day, whilst in the nursing home, he enjoyed giving talks. Dad passed away aged 95."*

Noni Daw





*Mrs Shirley McLaren OAM at the ANZAC Day March.*

Shirley McLaren, both a war widow and a veteran, also thinks it is incredibly important that we continue to mark ANZAC Day. For 34 years, as Patron of the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) in Sydney, she led the WRAAF in Sydney's ANZAC Day March.

"There's something deep inside of me that cannot let ANZAC Day go without commemoration, without remembrance," said Shirley. "For me, the day is about camaraderie and reflection. I'm thinking of their courage, their sacrifice, their mateship and endurance. I'm thinking of the conditions they served in."

Shirley lives at the RSL ANZAC Village in Narabeen in northern-Sydney, which locals fondly refer to as 'The War Vets'. It is located on 100 acres, with approximately 1,600 residents in independent living, and comprises veterans and family members of veterans. In the section where Shirley lives, there are 130 units and just over 180 residents.

Every year, two weeks before ANZAC Day, Shirley and other residents plant 500 handmade knitted and crocheted poppies in the area they live. The poppies they make are red with a black centre for the veterans, red with a white centre for the nurses, and purple for the animals.

On ANZAC Day, her day starts with a Dawn Service ceremony on Veterans Parade, the road outside ANZAC Village. Shirley says the ceremony is popular with residents and locals, and there are usually around 2,000 people in attendance.

Following the Dawn Service, at 7:30am, between 30

to 40 volunteer taxi drivers will pick up a number of the residents, including Shirley, and, under NSW Police escort, drive the veterans into Sydney where the taxis will take part in the ANZAC Day march. Shirley will wind the window of the car down to wave to the spectators, as her taxi makes it way down the street.

After the march, the taxi will drive Shirley back to ANZAC Village where she will spend the day with other residents. Later, as the sun sets on yet another ANZAC Day, Shirley will make her way to the memorial on Veterans Parade, where she will have a quiet moment of reflection.

"I do a sunset ceremony every year on ANZAC Day," said Shirley. "It's a quiet, personal moment of reflection. I take a bunch of rosemary with me to honour my dad and my husband, Roy, and all other veterans – all those people who are affected by war, including those who served in Afghanistan and Somalia and all other conflicts."

Back at her villa, she has what she calls her 'military wall', which showcases her husband's military accolades, as well as her own. There's also a picture of her husband, Roy. On ANZAC Day, and once a week throughout the year, she picks six stems of rosemary from her garden and places them in a vase next to his picture. It is a ritual she has been doing for 52 years.

"I made a promise to not forget," said Shirley. "I will always remember them."



*Planted hand-knitted poppies at the ANZAC Village in Narabeen.*

## The story of a Vietnam War Widow

### *I was there*



*Vietnam War Widows at the Cenotaph, Sydney, with The Hon. David Harris, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, on Vietnam Veterans Day in 2023.*

**T**his season, we would like to tell you the story of a woman who was there; a woman who was there through thick and thin, who was there from the start. Who stood stoically whilst heartbroken as she saw her husband and her family's sacrifices unseen, untold, unrecognised for so long.

This is the story of a Vietnam War Widow. One story of many. A story we wish to tell so our history does not go unseen, untold or forgotten; so our history does not repeat itself.

SJ shared her memories about her time with her husband with us recently. In her written tale, she remembers her husband fondly, telling us she was fortunate to have shared his life for over sixty years. She held the house together whilst he was gone serving his country, she raised their children and was his carer for twenty years of his life.

Her husband served in the Armed Forces for a total of 20 years: 12 years as permanent and 8 years in the reserves. SJ was there when he made the decision to re-enlist. She was there the day he departed for Vietnam, when she stood alone at Kingsford Smith Airport to farewell him. "He was in civvies carrying his own passport, travelling on a commercial airline," SJ recalls.

Seven months later, SJ was there again, welcoming him home. "[I was] grateful that he was physically intact, even though he was 7 stone lighter (44kg)," she tells us. She was there also to share his pride when he applied for membership with the RSL and again sharing his disappointment noting the hostile reception he and other servicemen received upon their return.

50,000 Australians, served in Vietnam. Veterans of this war came home without receiving the honours they deserved, as they returned from a war that was controversial at the time. Many in our society were against the Vietnam War and publicity around the war and the conscription turned the conflict into a controversial and sometimes heated debate.

In October 1987, SJ encouraged her husband to attend the Welcome Home Parade and he made contact there with many he had served with. "The following month he and others gathered at Anzac House to form their own 'intra mural' RSL Sub Branch," she says. "They now had a voice and were able to air their views and concerns."

She remembers how they worked together, gathering counsellors and legal professionals, overcoming obstacles they encountered to gain benefits due to them. At the time, there were many gaps in the system for Vietnam veterans.



*War Widows welcoming home Vietnam Veterans at the 1987 Welcome Home Parade.*





*Congregation standing up to honour the Vietnam War Widows as they lay their tributes to their loved ones, at the 2023 Vietnam Veterans' Day Commemoration at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney.*

SJ was there on the ANZAC Day following the Welcome Home Parade, watching as he marched in front of his group with their banner unfurled for the first time. "Their pride had been restored," she tells us.

SJ was there when her husband transitioned into civilian life. "It was not easy," she recalls. "He had passed all his exams but [had] nothing to show [for] his qualifications."

When describing her time with her husband, SJ wrote that life was good, but there were times when she had to walk on eggshells. Through the years, PTSD made their lives more and more complex. "Like many veterans, he had held it together for many years. But there came a time when it was not safe to share the same bed," SJ remembers. The flashbacks and nightmares increased, so he sought help. Back then, the initial treatment required isolation from the outside world. "When I was allowed to visit him, he looked so fragile." As always, she was there to bring him home.

"Those who suffer from PTSD hold onto what is safe and eliminate all else," SJ explains. "In doing so they tend to cloister their loved ones, unwilling to allow outsiders into their homes." Whilst she describes their relationship as good and fulfilling, after his passing, she found that she had no network outside of her immediate family. "I had to start again, seeking out

old friends, not that many were left, and gathering new contacts," she writes. "At my age, it has not been easy. I always considered myself to be independent, one who could stand on her own two feet, but I had lost my mate, I was/am alone."

SJ's story is an important reminder of how unique our lives as veteran spouses and families are, and how we need each other's support to thrive. It is a reminder that we need to connect with one another, at any stage of the journey and long before the worst happens. We are here to provide support and connection when one needs it most, and from the people best placed to provide them support: their peers. "Until one has experienced such a loss, one does not realise or appreciate another's grief," SJ tells us in closing her story. "To those who have suffered, I feel for you. You are, we are unique."



*Vietnam War Widows laying their tributes at the Cenotaph on Vietnam Veterans' Day in 2023.*



# Social & guild clubs gatherings

*Social & Guild Clubs resumed their meeting for the year and we have also visited a few of our Regional Clubs. Our team and board members love the opportunity to meet our members and spend some time to get to know each and everyone of you.*

## Bonding with art and craft

At the **Penrith and Lower Blue Mountains Social Club** meeting late last year, the ladies had a visit from a Bunnings representative who conducted a hands-on, fun and creative session making trendy log placemats for a pot, complete with a potted daisy. The ladies had loads of fun and sharing of gardening knowledge. (Below)



The **Wollongong War Widows** gathered to learn what you can make from a toilet roll! The ladies had fun making and glueing flowers from toilet rolls. The flowers looked fantastic! They really enjoyed making those and had a great time. What a great idea ladies! (Below)



## Regional Visits

We came together in **Ulladulla** to celebrate our resilient community of war widows, families and friends. We cherished this opportunity to reconnect, share updates, and strengthen the bonds that make our community so special. A heartfelt thank you to all who joined us, including our fantastic coordinators, special guests, and our incredible team. (Below)



Our **Gerroa regional visit** was truly special, marked by the serene and beautiful setting at the Gerroa Boat Fisherman's Club. Members from the Wollongong, Nowra, and Kiama Social Clubs joined us, alongside members from nearby areas. (Below)



During our visit in **Narrandera**, Jennifer Collins AM and our team engaged with women from across the region. Highlights included welcoming new members, sharing valuable resources, and the inspiring presence of 104-year-old Marie Cahill, a member for over 40 years. (Below)





# Our members *out & about*

*Thank you to all our members who share pictures of you getting together! We love witnessing your friendships developing and growing with each other, some of you building life-long friendships and bonding at outings on a regular basis. The gift of friendship you give one another is a pillar our organisation was built upon.*

Our member and volunteer, **Annette Mahoney** was one of the winners of the Royal Easter Show ticket draw that was organised by our War Widows Program Team. Elizabeth took her sister Elizabeth with her and they both enjoyed a fun day at the show. (Below)



Our members and volunteers **Wendy McKean and Lesley Gray** went on a beautiful holiday together. The below picture is of them at the Silo Art Trail at Devenish near Shepparton. It warms our heart to see such strong friendships built between members.



Member **Rhonda Harrington** represented our organisation in Tasmania at the Reception to recognise the service of recently deployed Tasmanians and all Tasmanian veterans. The reception was organised by The Hon Guy Barnett MP, Minister for Veterans Affairs (pictured below with Rhonda Harrington)



Members **Carol Barnes and Wendy Roberts OAM** went to two ANZAC Day services, including one at a local School. They laid wattle on behalf of the War Widows and Legacy. Wendy had some wattle pin broches made up and they wore them to both services.

They were asked a lot of questions about the wattle and they loved explaining its meaning to all. Carol said it was a lovely service at the school, with a concert atmosphere and children signing but still all about our veterans. (Below)



# The importance of diversity

*A reflection piece from our Board Chair Tricia Hobson*



Recently, I read an article in the *Harvard Business Review* that resonated with me, titled 'Women in Leadership Face Ageism at Every Age'. The premise of the article speaks for itself: women face bias in the workplace no matter if they are younger or older.

If you are not familiar with ageism as a concept, it was originally coined to describe the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination toward others based on their age. In the workforce, there was the mistaken belief that increasing age resulted in diminishing performance and older employees should retire to make way for the 'young guns' climbing the ranks.

However, women face a special type of ageism: gender bias conflates with biases about age and women face discrimination at every age and every

stage of their career and life.

Women in their 20s face condescending comments about their age, referred to as too young and inexperienced, while older women have their experience overlooked as organisations opt for younger people with 'fresh ideas'.

As the article said, 'no age was the right age to be a woman leader.'

In March this year, we delivered a webinar to mark International Women's Day, discussing how we can inspire inclusion for women of different ages. I was honoured to be one of the panel members along three inspiring and insightful women, Jennifer Collins AM, RSL NSW Board Chair, Sophie Ray and Morgan Stanley's Bernie Connolly.

In this discussion, we covered the importance of diversity in corporate governance and, for me, the importance of having a diverse group on our board. I have learnt so much from older women throughout my whole life and continue to do so on our board. My experience has shown me the huge benefit that we gain as an organisation when we bring women of all ages to the Board table, particularly older women, and especially those who do not necessarily come from a corporate governance background.

They bring to the table what I like to call 'unfiltered views', as they don't come with a way of thinking shaped by corporate governance, and they don't come to the table with filtered views on issues. Often on boards, that generally include a majority of men, it can be difficult for women to have their



**From left to right:** Queen Dunbar, Lynne Boyd, Wendy Thompson, Her Excellency Margaret Beazley AC KC and Tricia Hobson at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance.





*From left to right: Rhondda Vanzella OAM, Tricia Hobson, Queen Dunbar, Bree Till and Gwen Cherne.*

voices heard. I find that older women ensure they will be heard. They are not scared to ask really open and honest questions, they are not intimidated and they ask questions constantly. This assists me in stopping to really think about looking at issues afresh and in a way that I might not have looked at them for quite some time. It is such an important aspect and I have learnt an enormous amount about my own approach to governance, how I chair and what I can bring to the board through those women.

As a Board, our Directors Lynne Sullivan and Lynne Boyd have kept us grounded and connected to



*Board Directors Lynne Boyd (left) and Lynne Sullivan (right)*

our community and members, ensured the voices of older and ageing war widows are heard and understood, and reminded us of the importance of communication and connection, and putting our members at the heart of every decision we make as a board.

Across the spectrum of age, our members have faced ageism in some capacity. Our younger members might have felt too young to be a war widow, while our older members had to fight long and hard just to be seen and heard.

At events like the ANZAC Field of Remembrance, it is heartwarming to see the younger war widows helping older war widows to their seats, and see older war widows offering words of support and comfort to younger ones. Then there are the beautiful ways our older members support the young. A younger member in her early stages of grief said she looked to the older war widows for hope, strength and inspiration. She explained how seeing the older women happy and thriving gave her a little spark of hope that one day she too might feel that way again.

Age is no barrier for the gift of friendship and women of all ages matter to us.



*From left to right: Deputy Chair Stuart Clark AM FACID, Board Director Jennifer Collins AM, President Queen Dunbar, Board Director Bree Till, CEO Renee Wilson, Board Directors MAJGEN Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM and Lynne Boyd, and Board Chair Tricia Hobson.*

# The War Widows Friendship Line

*Every few weeks, Fiona Duncan White gives 97-year-old Noni Daw a call. They talk about anything and everything. They might discuss a book they've read, or a movie they've seen, or they might chat about their children or grandchildren.*

**“W**e talk about everything and nothing,” said Fiona. “It’s always a great chinwag.”

Fiona is a volunteer of our Friendship Line and currently calls 20 of our members every five weeks or so.

“The Friendship Line is a means of communication with all our members, but especially rural members, and it extends a line of friendship to them,” said Fiona.

Fiona became a volunteer on the Friendship Line about five years ago, not too long after her husband had passed away, and has since made over 1100 calls to our members.



*Fiona Duncan White at the 2023 ANZAC Field of Remembrance*



*Our volunteers gathered to discuss the Friendship Line, ideas, and feedback in 2023 in Chatswood.*

She said becoming a Friendship Line volunteer gave her purpose at a time when she felt a little lost. While the purpose of the Friendship Line is to provide contact to members who may be socially isolated, Fiona gets just as much out of it as the people she is calling.

“The Friendship Line transcends generations,” said Fiona. “My husband served in the Vietnam War, but I might speak to ladies whose husband’s served in World War Two. I love hearing their stories of what they went through during and after the war. I learn a lot from them.”

Service life, and loving a veteran, is another topic often spoken about. What makes the Friendship Line different from conversations with other people is that connection to a loved one’s Defence service.

Fiona loves her conversations with Noni, who she has been calling for several years now. She describes her as funny, intelligent and very with it. Noni, who lives in far north NSW and does not attend one of our social groups, equally loves the calls.



"I love the Friendship Line and Fiona," says Noni. "It keeps me connected to the organisation and to another war widow. We talk about everything, we're like old friends."

In between the phone calls, Fiona and Noni stay in touch with text messages. As both are avid readers, the topic quite often is books.

Fiona said our organisation made her feel very welcome after her husband passed away, and she enjoys being a volunteer on the Friendship Line as a way of giving back to the organisation.

"I like to look after my list of ladies," said Fiona. "They love the calls, they love speaking to someone different from their day-to-day lives."

She encourages other members to become a volunteer and is even trying to talk her sister into it. She said you can just start small with a list of five members to regularly call.

"It's fun," said Fiona. "It's not a chore. You don't know what the conversation is going to be. It's that unknown that turns out to be a really nice positive."

If you would like to become a volunteer on the Friendship Line, or if you would like to register for the Friendship Line, please contact us on (02) 9267 6577 or email [programs@fov.org.au](mailto:programs@fov.org.au).

Scan the QR code to  
become a volunteer



*Our volunteers at the 2016 Christmas Party at the Hilton.*

When Fiona first became a volunteer on the Friendship Line, she was sent some paperwork from our head office. Part of the paperwork included the below poem about volunteering.

### *Why be a volunteer?*

*"It's not for the money;  
It's not for the fame;  
It's not for any personal gain.  
It's just for the love of your fellow  
man.  
It's just to give a helping hand.  
It's just to give a little of one's self.  
That's something you can't buy with  
wealth.  
It's not for the medal worn with pride.  
It's for that feeling deep inside.  
It's that feeling that you've been a  
part,  
Of helping people far and near,  
That makes you a volunteer."*

*Author Unknown*

## WHATSAPP – LESSON 101

*WhatsApp is a great way to keep in touch and stay connected through group chats and video calls where you can see and hear your family and friends. WhatsApp allows you to share photos, messages and calls with your loved ones, and is the best way for groups of friends or families to keep in contact through group chats. It is the next best thing to sitting down to have a chat with them in the same room, and they could be on the other side of the world or just around the corner.*



### What is WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is a free video and voice chatting application that lets you talk, for free, with any other WhatsApp user over the internet typically friends and family. It's an amazing way to reach out. You can call or text anyone in the world for free: all you need is a phone and internet connection. You can also use it whilst you are overseas and connected to wifi.

Many use the group chat feature to share information and pictures within the family or friend group they create. You can also have one-on-one chats with anyone in the world.

### How to install WhatsApp

WhatsApp can be installed through your phone's applications store. If you are using an iPhone, install WhatsApp using the official App Store. If you're using an Android phone, install WhatsApp using the official Google Play Store.

### How to get signed up

Once you have installed WhatsApp on your device, tap on its icon to open the app and follow the steps to create an account.

You will be asked to provide your mobile phone number and to enter a verification code that will be sent to your mobile.

WhatsApp will also ask to access your contacts and

photos. This can make using the app more convenient and is safe, but you don't have to agree to share your personal data to be able to use WhatsApp.

### Getting started

WhatsApp can use the existing contacts in your phone to quickly create a contact list of people to call.

First, WhatsApp will ask permission to access the names and numbers of family and friends stored in your phone's contact list. If you agree, WhatsApp can search your contacts for people who have WhatsApp and create a list of them for you to call or text through the application.

You can only make a WhatsApp video call from a mobile phone, not from a computer. To make a call, first tap on Calls at the top of the screen (Android phones) or the bottom of the screen (iPhones). Then tap on the New Call icon, which is a phone symbol with a plus (+) sign next to it. Then find the name of the contact you want to call from the list. Finally, tap the video camera symbol next to the name to start the video call.

### How to stay safe from text and call scams on WhatsApp

Just like on any device, scams are a possibility on WhatsApp and it's best not to accept or make WhatsApp calls to people you don't know. Scammers



can reach you through text or calls, often providing links for you to click or using urgency or fear tactics to manipulate victims, so if something feels off, trust your instincts and end the call or delete and block the person.

Never share personal information, such as your bank details or government-issued numbers. Avoid clicking on any links or opening attachments in text messages from unknown sources.

Complete the privacy checkup to customise your privacy settings and add more layers of security. Adjust your privacy settings to control who can see your last seen and online status, profile photo, about information, live location, status updates, and group invites.

Finally, you can block and report unwanted contacts or conversations, and report channels that share illegal, harmful content, or spam. Following these guidelines will help keep your WhatsApp account secure and protect your privacy.



## Examples of common text and call scams to avoid

### 1. Loved one in need scams

A WhatsApp scammer pretends to be a close family member or friend with a new phone number. The scammer uses social engineering techniques, often asking for money to help with an emergency.

### 2. Gift card scams

The victim receives a text message claiming to be from a legitimate company, with a link to claim a supposedly free gift card. In reality, the link leads to a malicious website.

### 3. QR code scams

Like a gift card scam, in QR code scams, scammers use WhatsApp to send a QR code, asking you to scan the code to receive a prize. But, by following the scammer's instructions, you may end up giving them sensitive information that they can use for identity theft or to access your bank account.

### 4. Call forwarding scams

A call forwarding scam starts with an unsolicited phone call. The scammer convinces you to call a number that, without your knowledge, will enable call forwarding from your number to a new one that the scammer controls.

### 5. WhatsApp Gold scams

In a WhatsApp Gold scam, a scammer will send you a text claiming that you've been invited to WhatsApp Gold, an exclusive version of WhatsApp. This "invitation" includes a link that takes you to a spoofed website or infects your device with malware.

### How to spot a WhatsApp scam

Although WhatsApp scams take numerous different forms, they often share similar characteristics. Here are the most common signs of a WhatsApp scam:

- Unsolicited text messages from unfamiliar numbers
- Messages urging immediate action
- Messages with spelling and grammatical errors
- Requests for money or personal information
- Messages with suspicious links or attachments
- Messages claiming you won a lottery, prize, gift, coupons, etc.

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



# FAQs

We have received many questions about our rebrand over the last couple of months. Here is a snapshot of the questions you frequently asked us this autumn.

## *Why did we introduce the new brand?*

Our priority is to ensure that Australia never forgets its war widows and that they continue to receive the support and recognition they deserve. To do this we must continue to be seen and heard, remain relevant and carry forward a legacy that will support the next generation. Under the name 'War Widows', we have struggled to maintain relevance and attract the support required to ensure that war widows are not forgotten.

The new brand ensures that everybody in our community of veteran families knows that they have a place to belong when they need it. For many of us, we personally know that families of veterans need support, a community and a voice in the veteran system long before a veteran passes away.

***Scan this QR code to learn more about our rebrand***



## *Does this change leave war widows out?*

No, war widows are integral to our organisation, this change is about ensuring they are more included in our community. A war widow is a war widow because they are the family member of a veteran. However, only a small proportion of war widows identify with that term. For example, in NSW alone, we only know 15% of the war widows living in the community. With this change, we seek to know and support more.

## *Does this mean we are competing with Legacy?*

No, certainly not. Legacy occupies a very important and well-respected place within the veteran community and the intent behind the name change isn't to seek to occupy the same space nor compete with them. Rather, the new brand name is filling existing gaps in the veteran support system both in service provision and in the groups of families who can access support.

Our services remain complementary to Legacy as they have done for nearly 80 years. We remain committed to our relationship with Legacy, because together, we can achieve better outcomes for all veterans' families, ensuring that no one is forgotten or left behind.

## *Are we moving away from our purpose?*

No, we are continuing the mission set out by our founder, Jessie Vasey CBE OBE. Almost 70 years ago, Jessie said "We are now becoming an older women's group and I feel that if we remain as such the organisation will die. We must become an inclusive group if we are to survive."

Since this comment in 1955, we have held on to this steadfast belief. We have been listening and opening our organisation beyond the traditional widow of war to include all widows whose loved



ones died as a result of their service, be it on operations, or from a service-related injury or illness.

Our progress continues to evolve with Jessie's vision and is responding to unmet community need – need which has been most recently highlighted throughout the evidence given at the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

### *What isn't changing?*

Our commitment and support of war widows and war widows' support organisations will not change. Nor will our advocacy for War Widows and our protection of their interests and entitlements, particularly in NSW, and lending our voice to national issues.

The types of services we offer to and for war widows only remain as is and there are no changes. In fact, we intend to improve them, with two staff members now solely dedicated to the delivery of the war widows' program. This program includes:

- Guild and Social Clubs
- Friendship Line
- Transport Program
- 100th birthday recognition
- War widow outreach and engagement
- War widow service connection & case management

Importantly, key events that recognise war widows and their service and sacrifices including the ANZAC Field of Remembrance and War Widows Day are not changing.

Other things that are not changing are the names of War Widows social groups around NSW, the war widows motto, the war widows badge, the inclusion of war widows on our board and in our governance, and the company name, which will remain Australian War Widows NSW.

### *What has changed?*

- The name the organisation operates under is changing.
- The scope of some of our services will grow as the organisation learns more about the new groups of families it is engaging with.
- The brand will feature in and on communications materials, letters and publications.
- The colours the organisation uses will move from teal and blue to green and gold.

### *Our brand change recognises three important points:*

1. Families of veterans are important
2. War widows are the families of veterans
3. Families of veterans deserve support, a voice and a community from the moment a veteran puts the uniform on.

For more than 78 years we have provided social and emotional support, a network of peers, understanding and advocacy. This will continue as we continue to work alongside all in the veteran support eco-system because it is only by filling existing gaps and collaborating with existing services can we achieve our vision of improving the lives of the families of our veterans.

*Scan this QR code to  
discover our new website*



# Advice from a war widow

*To partners of current serving ADF members*

**M**any years ago, Anne Cross would be sitting at her desk on a Monday morning when her husband, Garry, would call her saying he had to go to sea and didn't know when he'd be back.

Garry, who passed away in 2014 at age 67, was a submariner in the Royal Australian Navy and him being away was just part of the job.

"He did a lot of time at sea," said Anne. "I didn't mind because he hated being ashore, he didn't know what to do with himself."

Anne is pragmatic about the challenges that come with loving a serving member of the Australian Defence Force. She says it is just part of dealing with life. But she does admit you need a certain type of strength and independence to cope well.

"You will always need something when they are away at sea," said Anne. "Something will go wrong, or the car will need fixing."

Anne tells the story of when her father passed away in 1994. At the time, Garry was at sea. For various reasons, Anne struggled to get word to Garry of her father's death but eventually she got through to the right person.

"I knew it was a slim chance of him coming home for the funeral," said Anne. "But he managed to make it. He came back Sunday, attended the funeral on Tuesday and then went back to sea on Wednesday."

She knew Garry felt torn between supporting his grieving wife and going back to sea, where he was needed due to staff shortages. Anne understood. As she said, "It's just part of dealing with life."

But despite her independence and strength, Anne found life a little lonely. Everyone's experience being the partner of a Defence member is unique and different. While some partners feel well supported and well connected to other Defence partners and families, Anne did not.

"I was very involved in my career," said Anne. "And I found it hard to mix with the other Navy wives, who were all much younger than me."

This lack of connection to other Defence partners and families made it difficult for others to understand the unique challenges that come with loving a Defence member. Anne laughed as she said, "Most my civilian friends didn't have a clue."

Since becoming a war widow, Anne has found the support she didn't have during Garry's service. Through our organisation, Anne has connected with a "fabulous" group of women who were also married to submariners in the Navy.

"War Widows is brilliant," said Anne. "I've also met some totally inspiring women through my local RSL sub-branch, who I walk with once a week."

Since Garry's passing, Anne figured out that he was suffering from undiagnosed PTSD. To find some purpose among the grief, Anne volunteered as an advocate to help veterans pursue claims with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, which led to her realisation.

"I didn't figure out the full PTSD thing until I did the advocacy work," said Anne. "My supervisor gave me a checklist about PTSD and I remember reading it thinking, 'Yes, he ticked that box. Yes, he ticked that box, too'."

"You could not touch him in his sleep, he'd swing at you," added Anne. "He also drank a lot of alcohol, he used alcohol to deal with his PTSD."

As an only child, Anne says she was used to being independent. But, in hindsight, now knowing how wonderful it is to have a support network in the Defence community, she wishes she had had support during his years serving in the Navy.

As well as finding friends to navigate Defence life with, she recommends that partners of Defence members enjoy activities that have nothing to do with Defence.

She warns that, if not careful, partners can become as institutionalised as the serving member. She says its important partners have an identity outside of being the loved one of a Defence member. She also recommends learning some skills.

"My advice is learn some skills, like how to change a car tyre or how to fix things around the house, because you'll need them."



# Thank you to *all mothers*

This Mother's Day, we paid tribute to all mothers, including those who have lost their partners in service and those who have supported their children in military service. Your strength, love, and sacrifices are the cornerstone of our families and communities.

All of us at Families of Veterans Guild would like to thank all mothers for the relentless effort and countless sacrifices you put in every day. Thank you for being an inspiration to us all. We honour and celebrate you.



## Autumn *recipe*



### One-pot sausage pasta bake

#### INGREDIENTS

- 200g pork sausages
- 80g pasta, dried (or gluten free) shells or another small shape
- 1 tin of chopped tomatoes (400g tin)
- 3/4 cup (180ml) water
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- salt & pepper, to taste
- 150g baby spinach leaves
- 140g baby bocconcini sliced

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Picture & recipe: Centr.com

#### METHOD


1.  
Place a medium-sized ovenproof frypan over medium-high heat.
2.  
Remove skin from sausages and crumble into small pieces into the pan. Cook for 3-4 minutes or until lightly browned.
3.  
Stir through pasta, tomato, water and fennel and season with salt and pepper.
4.  
Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally or until the pasta is just cooked through.
5.  
Stir in the spinach and cook until just wilted.
6.  
Scatter over bocconcini slices and cook for a further 5 minutes or until the bocconcini is melted. Alternatively, place under the grill to melt and brown slightly.

## VALE

 Alice Pitkin MATRAVILLE  
 Alida Muir TAREE  
 Anne Elliott RAGLAN  
 Barbara Webb CORINDI  
 Beryl Amphlett CARLINGFORD  
 Beth Faux BARDON  
 Betty O'Neill CHINCHILLA  
 Betty Lamb CHERRY BROOK  
 Cecilia Gooley ELANORA HEIGHTS  
 Consuelo Shaw DRUMMOYNE  
 Dawn Volling CHARLESTOWN  
 Dorothy McLean MAROUBRA  
 Dorothy Windridge GREYSTANES  
 Edna Thompson N. TURRAMURRA  
 Edna McIver PORT MACQUARIE  
 Eileen Dawson MIRANDA  
 Eleanor Habermann GLENROY  
 Elsie Cooley TOORMINA  
 Enid Newberry OXLEY VALE  
 Esma Fullagar PENNANT HILLS  
 Esme Moody CATALINA  
 Esme White CAMDEN  
 Fay Arnaudon DUBBO  
 Flo Grant SOUTH PENRITH  
 Gloria Jones COOKS HILL  
 Grace Dearing HEATHCOTE  
 Grace Thomas BLAKEHURST  
 Greta Adams QUEANBEYAN  
 Gwendalyn Meale COOTAMUNDRA  
 Gwenyth Padman GRAYS POINT  
 Gwenyth Knight CROYDON  
 Heather Cummins WYOMING  
 Heather Libbesson BAULKHAM HILLS  
 Helen Robertson NARRANDERA  
 Ida Price S. HURSTVILLE  
 Iris Williams MURWILLUMBAH  
 Iris Nordstrom MOSMAN

 Isabel Matthews MAROUBRA  
 Ivy Murray EARLWOOD  
 Janice O'Brien SWANSEA  
 Jean Williams NARRANDERA  
 Jean Russell KENTHURST  
 Joan Lavender FIVE DOCK  
 Joan Sagresta VINEYARD  
 Joan Jarman OATLEY  
 Joan Fulwood GUNNEDAH  
 Joy Cameron SYDNEY  
 Joyce Pickard Narrabeen  
 Joyce Reading BINGARA  
 June Smith GALSTON  
 June Drake ARMIDALE  
 June Huntington BOWRAL  
 June Hoysted FORSTER  
 Leila James GUNNEDAH  
 Linda Hillier WARRIEWOOD  
 Lois Sanderson TINTENBAR  
 Loris Bartlett OYSTER BAY  
 Marea Stubbs BLACKWELL  
 Margaret Dooley LITHGOW  
 Margaret Johnston BANORA POINT  
 Margaret Garretty BIRRONG  
 Margaret Whyte THORNLEIGH  
 Margaret Mahoney BONDI BEACH  
 Marie McDonald BOTANIC RIDGE  
 Marjorie Bolton GRASSMERE  
 Marjorie Grace GUNNEDAH  
 Mary Dorsman HORNSBY  
 Mary Bourke CARINGBAH  
 Mavis Frater GOONELLABAH  
 Mavis Lill INGLEBURN  
 Mavis Wheeler BEGA  
 Morag Russell NEW LAMBTON  
 Muriel Burnley SALAMANDER  
 Nancy Comer GULGONG

 Nancy Hansen EPPING  
 Nancy Abernethy TRUNDLE  
 Nancye Nuttall TUMUT  
 Nellie Bulmer FORSTER  
 Noela Armour BROADMEADOW  
 Noelene Silverstone BAULKHAM HILLS  
 Noreen McLean N. PARRAMATTA  
 Norma Black CRONULLA  
 Patricia Fraser STRATHFIELD  
 Patricia Dunks SOUTH PENRITH  
 Pauline Cottier GYMEA  
 Peggy Funston NARRABEEN  
 Phyllis Mathwin WHITEBRIDGE  
 Phyllis Austin MIRANDA  
 Pierrette Short VAUCLUSE  
 Rita King BOWRAL  
 Roma Miller TUNCURRY  
 Ruth Smith WENTWORTHVILLE  
 Shirley Littlejohn WYOMING  
 Shirley Anderson INGLEBURN  
 Theresa Neal CAMDEN  
 Una Boyce AM OBE MOSMAN  
 Una Levy CUTTAGEE  
 Ursula Middleton KINCUMBER  
 Valda Cross BALLINA  
 Valerie Reynolds BLACKBUTT  
 Vera Webber NORTH RYDE  
 Veronica Woods KINCUMBER  
 Violet Shanley JUNCTION HILL  
 Wilma Squires WOOLLOOWARE  
 Winifred Durham STRATHFIELD  
 Winifred Selwood UMINA BEACH

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

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

 Margaret Stubbs CASTLE HILL  
 Eileen Wheeler ALBURY  
 Phyllis Strahan MORUYA  
 Mavis Sidman CAMDEN  
 Joan Cummings BALGOWLAH  
 Joan Middenway KINGS POINT  
 Florence Ikin TAREE  
 Dorothy Hubbard WOLLONGONG  
 Mary Tagg BUNDEENA  
 Beryl Bird WOLLONGBAR  
 Helen Creak CONNELLS POINT  
 Betty Press CURRARONG  
 Meryl Rickett COORANBONG  
 Marie Foley FORSTER  
 June Comins YASS  
 Evelyn Allsopp TAREE

## Welcome to members who have recently joined

 Anita Gazzard S. MURWILLUMBAH  
 Cheryl Burgess EPPING  
 Gisela Somerville EUNGELLA  
 Julie Flower JORDON SPRINGS  
 Kathleen Manning ULLADULLA  
 Laurel Clarke MIRINDA  
 Maureen Reed CARLINGFORD  
 Maureen Hunt LAKEWOOD  
 Nicole Thomson-Pride WAMBERAL  
 Noelene Fuller WEST WYALONG  
 Renee Warburton THEODORE  
 Yvonne Cochran WARICK FARM



## Celebrating some very special birthdays!

*We have received many photos from members and families who celebrated milestone birthdays with some of our oldest war widows. Congratulations to all who have recently turned 100! What an achievement!*



**Above:** All went well for the 100th celebration of Beryl Bird and even the weather behaved itself. The sun shone despite forecasts for flooding rain. She enjoyed all the family around her, all the cards that came and the bunches of beautiful flowers.



**Above:** Meryl Ricket on her 100th birthday, enjoying the surprise delivery of flowers from our War Widows Program team. Happy birthday Meryl!



**Above:** Mary Folley celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends. Mary was delighted to receive the bouquet of flowers on her birthday from our War Widows Program Team. Thank you for sharing your special day with us Mary!

**Below:** Surrounded by 120 family and friends, Betty Press had a wonderful birthday celebration. Pictured below with local member Mrs Fiona Phillips MP & Mr Gareth Ward MP.



**Left:** The Cronulla War Widows Social Club monthly meeting was the perfect occasion for the ladies and our team to celebrate and honour Mary Tagg, who turned 100 years young in April. Board member, Lynne Boyd, presented Mary with the framed life member certificate and pin, while the ladies presented a beautiful bouquet of native flowers along with a card signed by all the members.

### DVA Community Nursing Program

If you have long-term, high-level personal care needs, DVA's Community Nursing Program could be more suitable to you than other programs.

DVA funds clinically necessary community nursing services for DVA clients through the Community Nursing Program. This care must be provided in the client's home.

Find out more on the DVA website by scanning this QR code:



### Families of Veterans Guild 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.

### The Kokoda Track needs our help for their 'Poppy Project'

The Kokoda Track needs our help for their 'Poppy Project'. In a stirring tribute to our veterans and their families, the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway and Families of Veterans Guild is embarking on a heartwarming initiative: The Crochet Poppy Project.

This remarkable endeavour involves the creation of a grand installation comprised of knit and crochet poppies. Poppies served as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made by military personnel during both World Wars, and their symbolic significance continues to resonate today.

The Crochet Poppy Project is more than just an art installation: it is a testament to the enduring spirit of community and collaboration. Each poppy lovingly crafted by our members will stand as a symbol of gratitude and respect for the sacrifices made by our veterans and their families.

Led by Board Director Jennifer Collins AM, and in partnership with the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway and our dedicated club coordinators, this project invites members with a passion for crochet or knitting to join in this meaningful endeavour. Over 3000 poppies are to be produced by October 2024 to create a wall of poppies at the Kokoda Track Memorial walkway on Kokoda Day 3 November 2024.

Whether you are a seasoned crochet enthusiast or new to the craft, we welcome you to be a part of this inspiring initiative.

If you are interested, please contact Kelly at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway on 02 9166 0890 and she will send you a pattern, the wool, and a reply envelope to return your finished poppies.

We look forward to this unique tribute for our veterans and their families.





## Announcing the winner of the Quilt competition

In our Spring edition of *The Guild Digest*, we announced a competition to enter the draw to win a quilt donated by one of our members who has made quilts her all life. As she is now 87, she decided to donate the last quilt she was able to make to our organisation. All members who renewed their membership and made a donation were included in the draw to win the quilt.

Erin Longbottom, aged 98, was the lucky winner of the quilt mentioned on page 32 of the Spring *Guild Digest*. Erin expressed her sheer surprise and joy upon receiving the call, stating, "oh wonderful, what a surprise, and I am very happy with this very generous gift. It means a lot to me." Overwhelmed with gratitude, she added, "I never often win anything. I can't even remember the last time I did win anything. This has come as a total surprise, and I'm delighted."

When Erin heard the story of the quilt, she said this is really special and she is so grateful to have won something which carries such a lovely story. Thank you to our generous donour for making someone's day!

## 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).

## 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)



