



FAMILIES
OF VETERANS GUILD

SUMMER 2025

THE GUILD DIGEST

A LOOK BACK AT 2024 AND FORWARD TO 2025



AUSTRALIAN WAR WIDOWS NSW LIMITED

Trading as

FAMILIES OF VETERANS GUILD

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www.familiesofveterans.org.au

"We all belong to each other.

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

– King George VI, 1941

Under the patronage of

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

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The material in this
The Guild 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

**Formation of Commonwealth Naval
Forces & Australian Army (1901)**

1 March 2025

Kokedama making in Canberra

1 March 2025

Sound healing session in Sydney

2 March 2025

Kiama regional visit

6 March 2025

Online meditation

6 March 2025

International Women's Day

8 March 2025

Macramé workshop in Canberra

15 March 2025

Parramatta Club 70th anniversary

19 March 2025

Iraq War commencement (2003)

20 March 2025

Visit the Pompeii Exhibition Canberra

28 March 2025

Online clay art workshop

28 March 2025

Formation of the RAAF (1921)

31 March 2025

RAN Sea King crash (2005)

2 April 2025

Online meal prep info session

4 April 2025

Siege of Tobruk commences (1941)

10 April 2025

Mother's Day photoshoot Sydney

13 April 2025

Indoor playground in Canberra

14 April 2025

Central Coast regional visit

14 April 2025

Family yoga in Sydney

16 April 2025

Easter weekend

18-21 April 2025

Battle of Kapyong commences (1951)

22 April 2025

Online Easter craft workshop

22 April 2025

ANZAC Field of Remembrance

23 April 2025

ANZAC Day

25 April 2025

Mother's Day photoshoot Canberra

27 April 2025

Formation of the Women's Royal

Australian Naval Service (1941)

April 2025

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President Queen Dunbar (right) with (from left to right): Former State and National President Meg Green AM, Her Excellency Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW, Former State and National President Rhondda Vanzella OAM.

Welcome to the first edition of *The Guild Digest* of 2025. I extend my best wishes to you all for the new year ahead. The start of a new year always brings a sense of hope and renewal, allowing us to reflect on our past accomplishments and look forward to what lies ahead. It's a time for us to focus on making the most of the upcoming year and to prioritise our wellbeing.

Looking back on 2024, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have met so many more of you at our war widows regional visits, commemorations and special events such as the ANZAC Field of Remembrance, the AGM and War Widows Day. Each encounter with you is incredibly special to me. Your stories provide solace, especially as I navigate the loss of my husband, Adam. Your lives stand as a testament to hope, reminding me that I will be fine.

Meeting so many regional members during our visits across NSW is particularly meaningful, as it highlights the sense of family that binds us all. Our shared experiences and mutual support is living proof of the healing power of connection and peer support. These days are truly priceless to me. Although I was unable to attend the recent visit to Batemans Bay in person, I was delighted to join online and engage with the war widows and their families in attendance. Technology, despite its challenges, is a blessing that allows us to connect with each other and our loved ones. I look forward to many more of you joining us online for our wellbeing activities or to watch special services like the live stream of the ANZAC Field of Remembrance. This enables members from all around NSW to participate in our unique service, whether with their social club or from home.

Reflecting on the past year, I am moved by the beautiful events

we held. The ANZAC Field of Remembrance was as poignant as ever, with hundreds of war widows and their families laying personal tributes in solemn silence within the great cathedral. War Widows Day last year was equally special, resonating profoundly with me as the service and videos dedicated to war widows told your stories of love and sacrifice.

As 2025 starts, I am eager to meet many more of you during the planned regional visits this year. As always at this time of year planning for the ANZAC Field of Remembrance is well underway, and I look forward to seeing many of you based in Sydney on Wednesday 23 April at St Andrew's Cathedral. I encourage you to attend this special event, as it is a significant time for us war widows and our families to gather and lay personal tributes to our loved ones. I also encourage our many regional social clubs to organise their own ANZAC Field of Remembrance gatherings so our regional members can view the service live or the recording. Please contact our team if you would like some assistance in arranging a gathering.

At the back of this edition of *The Guild Digest*, you will find instructions to register your attendance at the service, and enclosed is your own cross to write your tribute and decorate as you wish to honour the memory of your loved one. You can lay your cross at the service in Sydney, at your social club gathering, or at home. I am very much looking forward to this day when we gather all around NSW to honour the sacrifices of our loved ones.

MS QUEEN DUNBAR
President



Welcome to a new year and the summer edition of *The Guild Digest*. It is my pleasure to address you at the start of this promising year.

2024 was a particularly productive year for the organisation as we continued to learn and adapt our organisation to meet the needs of current and future members. Engagement with you was high throughout the year and we look forward to that continuing this year. Throughout 2024, feedback from members also prompted us to review how we were implementing our new brand to ensure greater inclusion of the words war widows, particularly at commemorative events. Your input has been invaluable as we continue to evolve, bringing perspectives that enrich the Board's understanding. Supporting war widows is at the heart of our mission, and your feedback is essential to ensure you are well represented and your needs are met.

In 2025, the Board wants to hear even more from you. We are

working on a project to invite members to attend Board meetings, allowing you to listen to discussions and share your views, needs and expectations directly. This initiative provides more opportunities for the Board to hear directly from members. We will keep you updated on this project's progress once it is finalised.

Last year, we made significant strides in developing a funding plan for our future. In recent months, we have developed the guiding documentation required to attract philanthropic grants and investment. We've also been preparing a new funding model for the organisation which seeks to increase revenue streams both in terms of volume and value, reducing our reliance on our investment capital. Finally, late last year we made our first prebudget submission to the Australian Government seeking funding over the next few years while we build other revenue streams. While it is too early to predict the outcome of this submission, rest assured we will continue advocating for government support for our organisation as we

are critical to the wellbeing of those that stand behind and were left behind Australia's veterans.

Looking ahead, I look forward to seeing many of you at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance on 23 April 2025; it will no doubt be another moving event. I'd also like to formally thank the NSW Government for their support again this year in displaying the Field at the Anzac Memorial Hyde Park throughout ANZAC week. Last year we were able to display the field for the first time inside the Hall of Memory and look forward to doing so again this year.

Just before April is International Women's Day in March. A day that holds deep meaning for me and many of you. This day has evolved into an opportunity for women worldwide to share their stories, drive change and progress, and raise awareness of ongoing issues. As Board Chair of an organisation founded by women, for women, I see this day as a chance to showcase our members' stories and the impact of our organisation. Many of you serve as role models for younger generations of women. As we commemorate International Women's Day this year with the theme 'March Forward', it will serve as a timely reminder of our commitment to building a better future for women and families connected to defence service, drawing upon your enduring legacy.

The Board and I, alongside the rest of the team are looking forward to another great year for our inspiring organisation. We hope you are too.

MS TRICIA HOBSON
Board Chair



The Government delivering their Response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Happy New Year! Last year we were able to achieve a lot for veterans and veteran families and this year we've already hit the ground running.

In my last column, I acknowledged the Government's receipt of the Final Report from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. As promised, we've acted swiftly and in early December 2024 I joined the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to release the Government Response to all 122 of the Royal Commission's recommendations. The Government agreed or agreed-in-principle to 104 recommendations and noted 17 recommendations for further consideration. We have commenced immediate action on the implementation of the agreed recommendations, which will involve the most comprehensive reform ever undertaken of the culture, systems and processes supporting Defence personnel, veterans and their families.

Consistent with a key recommendation, the Government is establishing a new statutory entity – a Defence and

Veterans' Service Commission – to oversee enduring and systemic reform, this will be led by Mr Michael Manthorpe PSM as the Interim Head of the Commission. Mr Manthorpe will head the interim organisation and work across government to deliver the establishment of a legislated oversight body by September 2025.

The Commission will provide independent oversight and evidence-based advice to improve suicide prevention and drive better outcomes for serving and ex-serving ADF personnel.

Significantly, the Government is also providing funding to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) to work with the veteran community on the design of a new agency within DVA focused on veterans' wellbeing, and to establish an Ex-Service Organisation peak body.

You'll hear more about how you can participate and have your say on the veterans' wellbeing agency in the coming months. We want your input so we get this new agency right so please keep an eye on DVA's social media platforms for information about how you can contribute.

In addition, a Taskforce is being established within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, drawing on expertise from across Government, to provide advice on the implementation of the response, including the recommendations requiring further consideration. The Taskforce will prioritise actions to ensure the immediate health and safety of Defence personnel and veterans, including the implementation of recommendations to address sexual misconduct and unacceptable behaviour.

The Government's response marks the beginning of a substantial and long-term program of reform across Defence, DVA and the veteran support system. I assure you that just as we moved swiftly on responding to the Royal Commission's Final Report, we are committed to implementing the accepted recommendations as quickly as possible. I've heard the calls for urgent action from those of you within the veteran community and the Government's response is a clear direction to Defence and DVA of our intent to deliver. As you know, we responded quickly to the recommendations in the Royal Commission's Interim Report, including important work to simplify and harmonise the veterans' legislation framework.

2025 promises to be a big year. I look forward to working with the Families of Veterans Guild and everyone in the Defence and veteran community to ensure those who have served our nation – and the families who support them – have the services and support they need. You can find the Government Response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's Final Report on the DVA website: www.dva.gov.au.

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



Minister Harris at the Anzac Memorial's 90th Anniversary Commemoration, November 2024.

Thank you for the opportunity to connect with the Families of Veterans Guild and War Widows community to provide an update on behalf of the NSW Government.

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

In early February I announced \$124,629 in funding for 99 community groups across the state in the latest round of the Anzac Community Grants Program. This program allocates funding for outstanding projects and initiatives that not only acknowledge Australia's military service history but also play a crucial role in educating future generations and enhancing the wellbeing of the veteran community in NSW.

Applications are closing soon for the 2025 Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship. This year the Scholarship will give NSW Year 10 and Year 11 History students the opportunity to travel on a fully-funded study tour to the Republic of Korea and Singapore to discover the history of Australians at war. If you know a student or family with keen history students, please share further information on this link www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/pams

This NSW Women's Week, from Sunday 2 March to Saturday 8 March, the Anzac Memorial is acknowledging 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 at www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au.

The Anzac Memorial currently has two feature exhibitions open in celebration of their 90th

anniversary. Treasures of the Anzac Memorial comprises a selection of treasures that have been donated to the Memorial by the public since its opening in 1934. You can also discover the works of the Memorial's Veteran Artist in Residence, Domenic Bartolo, in the They Never Returned; Though Their Name Liveth For Evermore exhibition which shares the stories behind local war memorials in Sydney. I encourage you to visit these exhibitions if you haven't done so yet.

Finally, in the first half of this year the NSW Government will launch the NSW Veterans Strategy and Action Plan 2025-30. This is the next iteration of the Veterans Strategy originally launched in 2021 and outlines the focus NSW will take to support veterans and their families over the next five years, incorporating recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide to help shape the Strategy.

I look forward to continuing to support the defence community and their families and working closely with the families of veterans and war widows of NSW throughout 2025.

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



Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Board Chair Jennifer Collins AM and The Hon. David Harris MP.

The poppy project brought to life

Late last year, significant art installations were unveiled at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway (KTMW), bringing together thousands of Australians in a collective act of remembrance. The Poppy Project, consisting of over 7,500 handcrafted poppies, was created by war widows and communities from NSW, ACT and QLD, many of whom were war widows and their families. These small yet powerful symbols of respect formed an extraordinary memorial garden and wall, honouring the sacrifices of veterans and their loved ones.

Spear-headed by KTMW Board Chair, Jennifer Collins AM, the project was a testament to community spirit and collaboration. A network of club coordinators and

KTMW staff played a vital role in providing participants with wool, patterns and reply envelopes, making the crafting process seamless. With their support, the project flourished, showcasing the immense gratitude felt towards veterans and the strength of community bonds. People from across Australia came together for this meaningful cause, and their efforts culminated in a stunning visual tribute.

Among those involved in the project were Yvonne, a war widow, and her sister Jennifer. Together, they crocheted poppies for the installation, with Yvonne further connecting with her local RSL Club in Old Bar NSW, to share the project's story and significance. During

her outreach, she discovered Major Scott Babington, an RSL member who frequently leads treks along the Kokoda Track. Major Babington, who has since become an ambassador for the project, honours the memory of four local men from the Manning area who gave their lives on the Kokoda Track. On his next visit to Papua New Guinea, he plans to place poppies on their graves as a gesture of remembrance.

The poppy display stands as a tribute to those who served and their families. Each handcrafted poppy embodies the gratitude of its creator and the stories and connections formed through this shared effort. The project has shown that honouring the past is a collective responsibility and an opportunity to unite communities through acts of care and remembrance.

For those who have yet to experience the beauty of this project, the KTMW offers a chance to view the sea of poppies and the poppy wall.

In reflecting on this initiative, we acknowledge and thank the many war widows, members and the wider community for their work. This project was brought to life by their dedication and effort.



Advocacy Update

Government Response to the Royal Commission's Final Report

On 2 December 2024, the Australian Government responded to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's Final Report. Out of 122 recommendations, 104 were accepted, one was rejected, and 17 are under further review. An independent statutory body and a Veteran Wellbeing Agency will be established, which our community strongly supports.

In our final submission to the Royal Commission, we called for a new approach to delivering veteran and family wellbeing that allows the Department of Defence and the ADF to focus on their core functions, while another arm of

government handles the lifetime care of veterans and their families. It is pleasing to see this vision coming to life through the government's agreement to establish a Veteran Wellbeing Agency.

However changes for families and widows as a result of the Royal Commission are minimal. The Royal Commission did not make specific recommendations for families, and more needs to be done. You can read more about the gaps impacting widows and families in our CEO's latest opinion piece by scanning the QR code on this page or visit: www.themandarin.com.au/282943-but-what-about-our-veteran-families/

While the recommendations for families were not what we wanted to see, the Royal Commission did validate much of the lived experience of widows and families of veterans. Volume 6 of their final report highlighted the important role families of veterans play in the defence and veteran systems. Providing us with data and research findings we can now use to make our advocacy cases

stronger. At the close of the Royal Commission, Commissioner Brown noted that though they were winding up the work has now started. We could not agree more. There is much more to come in the aftermath of the Royal Commission, and we will do our best to ensure the learnings and lived experiences shared throughout the Commission are not lost to the pages of history.



Read our
opinion piece
here



Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment & Support (VETS) Bill Update

The VETS Bill passed the House of Representatives and was introduced into the Senate on 18 November 2024. Although read for a second time, it did not pass the Senate before Parliament stood down for 2024. It is anticipated to pass in early 2025. We were hopeful that one of our no-cost amendments,

the removal of the term "Wholly Dependent Partner," might have been proposed.

In September and October, we worked with the Veteran Family Advocate to find an alternative term. Key organisations agreed on an interim term "Bereaved Partner."

At the War Widows National meeting, our President Queen Dunbar argued for this change, emphasising the need for respectful terminology.

CEO Renee Wilson noted that "Wholly Dependent Partner" reinforced gender bias and lacked respect for families' roles. Unfortunately, this

momentum was halted when the Minister's Office perceived it might impede the Bill's passage. The Minister's Office is open to considering the amendment after the Bill passes. We will continue advocating for this change and share more information soon.

Key Changes Coming in Aged Care: New Aged Care Act 2024

In November 2024, Government's Aged Care Bill 2024 passed the parliament and will become law on 1 July 2025. This Act centralises aged care laws into one piece of legislation and ensures no current recipient will be worse off, with transitional arrangements in place.

The new Act is 'rights-based,' defining the rights of aged care recipients, obligations

of providers and enforcement by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. We know that a proportion of war widows access the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) or Restorative Care. These programs will be combined into the 'Support at Home Program' by 2027, increasing entitlements.

The lifetime contribution cap will increase from

\$80,000 to \$130,000 but won't affect those approved before 1 July 2025.

Veterans and war widows with DVA entitlements will continue to receive them under the new Act. DVA has published resources to help navigate the system, available via the QR code on this page or visit: www.dva.gov.au/get-support/health-support/care-home-or-aged-care



Find **DVA's** resources here

Senate Inquiry into the Defence Honours and Awards System

On Friday 7 February, our CEO Renee Wilson appeared in front of the Senate Committee to give evidence on the Defence Honours and Awards System, amplifying the voices of veterans families.

It isn't often that the voices of families of veterans get to be heard in their own right during important

discussions like this. We are grateful to the Senate Committee for enquiring into the views of families and wanting to know more about their experiences.

Scan the QR code on this page to hear this important discussion about recognising the service and sacrifice of our veterans and their families.



Watch our **CEO's** appearance here

Looking Ahead



The changes coming with the new legislations and the establishment of the Veteran Wellbeing Agency represent significant steps forward, but there is still much work to be done.

We appreciate the ongoing support of our members and the broader community. Together, we can make a difference and create a better future for all veterans and their families. If you have any questions or would like to get involved in our advocacy efforts, please do not hesitate to reach out by contacting us at guild@fov.org.au.



Our State President, Queen Dunbar with NSW Premier Chris Minns and Peter Overton at the Remembrance Day service in Sydney.

Representing war widows & families Remembrance Day 2024

In November last year, several members and Board Directors represented war widows and families of veterans at Remembrance Day ceremonies and commemorations across New South Wales. Members and Directors played a vital role in honouring the sacrifices of Australia's servicemen and women, laying wreaths and participating in solemn tributes. We give our thanks to all members and Directors who represented war widows and the organisation through the week of Remembrance Day.

As the gentle November breeze swept through New South Wales, the month was marked by solemnity and reverence. At various ceremonies, members of our organisation, representing war widows and veteran families, gathered to pay tribute to the brave men and women who served our nation.

From the bustling heart of Sydney to the serene locales of

Medowie, our representatives stood resolute, ensuring that the memories of those who sacrificed for Australia were honoured with the utmost dignity. On 11 November, the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney, bore witness to a poignant Remembrance Day Service. Our President, Queen Dunbar, alongside RSL NSW and Sydney Legacy's Presidents, laid wreaths to commemorate the fallen. The sombre notes of the bugle echoed through the crowd,

a timeless reminder of the courage and dedication of our servicemen and women.

In the days leading up to this central event, our members were actively involved in various commemorations. On 10 November, the NSW Association of Jewish Service & Ex-Service Men & Women (NAJEX) held a moving ceremony at the NSW Jewish War Memorial. Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton's address

resonated deeply with attendees, highlighting the shared history and sacrifices of the Jewish community. Queen Dunbar's presence and her wreath-laying were poignant gestures of solidarity and remembrance.

At The Entrance and Long Jetty RSL Service, war widow Joyce Mason laid a wreath in a heartfelt tribute to those who served. Similarly, in Chatswood, Michelle Carr represented our organisation at the Garden of Remembrance, where local schools and community groups came together, adding a personal touch with readings and musical tributes.

Medowie RSL Sub-Branch's commemoration at Medowie Social saw local war widow Adele Richards honour the sacrifices of veterans. While at St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney, Board Director Yvonne Stapleton's wreath-laying ceremony marked the 106th anniversary of Armistice with traditional hymns and prayers.

At the serene Sydney War Graves Cemetery within Rookwood Cemetery, our President attended a beautiful service hosted by RSL Western Metropolitan District, offering a wreath on behalf of war widows and families. This gathering, held a week before Remembrance Day, was a serene moment of reflection amidst the city's hustle and bustle.

The Mounties Group Board of Directors' Remembrance Day event was another highlight, with local war widows Dulcie Davis and Diane Carstairs attending on behalf of our organisation. Guests were invited to lay wreaths, fostering a sense of communal remembrance and respect.

Throughout November, war widows and Board Directors demonstrated unwavering commitment, ensuring that the legacy of Australia's veterans and their families is remembered. Each wreath laid, each ceremony attended, was a testament to the enduring respect and gratitude we hold for those who have served. Together, we stood united, honouring their service and sacrifice, and reinforcing our dedication to supporting war widows and veteran families.



Top: Remembrance Day service in Sydney, image courtesy of RSL NSW.
Middle: Members from The Entrance and Long Jetty at their local service.
Bottom: Member Michelle Carr laid a wreath at the Chatswood service.

Marie Cahill

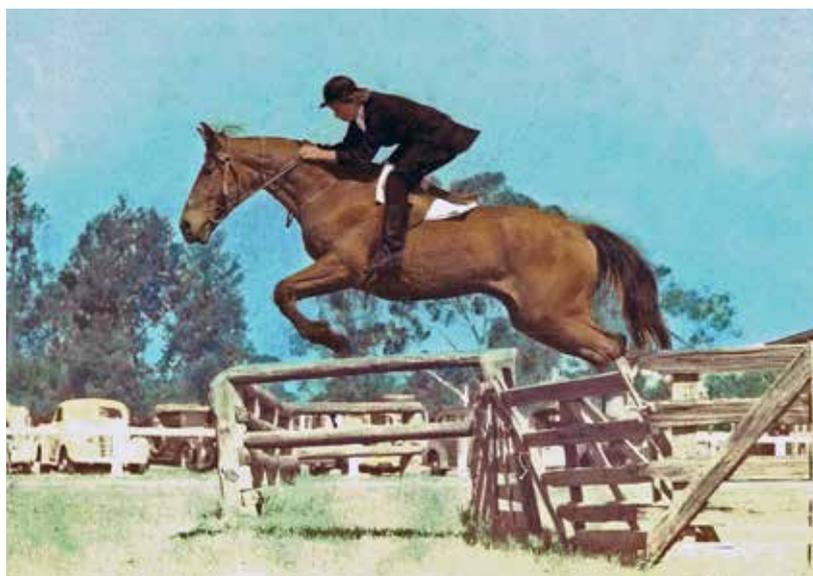
105 years of life, love and adventure

There is a well-known saying, 'Age is just a number' and war widow Marie Cahill has proved it to be true. Marie has just turned 105 years old this February. Her life tells the story of a remarkable and inspiring woman who has repeatedly defied gender and age stereotypes.

Born in Broken Hill on 19 February 1920, Marie moved with her family to Narrandera, in the Riverina region of south-western New South Wales, when she was six years old and has lived there ever since. She is still living in her own home independently although she now gets *Meals on Wheels* five days a week.

The first chapter of Marie's incredible life story is her horse riding days. When Marie was a young girl in Narrandera, she developed a deep love of horse riding and became quite good at it. As a teenager, Marie rode in a number of agricultural shows in the Riverina region, picking up accolades along the way.

Her first award came in October 1932. Marie placed second at the Narrandera Jubilee Show in the 'Girl Rider Under 13 years' category. A few years later, in 1935 when she was 15 years old, she again placed second but this time at the Griffith Show in the 'Best Girl Rider Award' in the open class.



That same year, Marie left school but continued to ride in district shows where she came either first or second in 10 events at the Narrandera Shows between 1935 and 1946.

Not long after the Second World War started, Marie became engaged to Narrandera local, William Arthur "Dally" Wyatt. They married that same year and a year later, in 1941, had their first and only child – a daughter named Ronda.

Like so many families of that generation, war separated them for a long time. Eighteen months after Ronda was born, in December 1942, Dally was called up for military service. He would be gone for much of the next three years and would go on to serve in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

It was also during this time that Marie continued to make a name

for herself riding horses. During the war years and for a time afterward, Marie was asked to ride in local horse races. Marie was the only female jockey competing in those days, proving that women – and mothers – were capable of more than the societal expectations of the time.

Several years after Dally returned from war, at age 29, Marie started working at a local dress shop. She worked as an assistant to the dress maker, Flo Harris, making alterations to garments. She worked there on and off from 1949 to 1963.

Following her time in Mrs Harris' dress shop, Marie started studying at the Narrandera Technical College in the mid-late 1960s. By now, Marie was in her mid-40s. She studied a number of courses part-time, including floral art and

woodwork, which she each studied for two years. Other courses she undertook included leatherwork, landscape painting, bark painting, china painting, stretch sewing, heirloom sewing, patchwork and even public speaking.

Proving you can master new skills and knowledge at any age, Marie gained her teacher's certificate in Brazilian Embroidery and during the 1980s, when she was in her 60s, she taught it at a local material shop in Narrandera.

Sadly, however, on 16 August 1980, just 10 days after his 72nd birthday, Marie's husband, Dally, passed away in his sleep. A few years after Dally's passing, Marie married Vince Cahill and together they started travelling around Australia and overseas. This would be the start of many adventures for Marie.

Marie's first overseas holiday was around her 65th birthday. She travelled with Vince to America. The following year she travelled to Japan and Korea, as well as to England, Scotland, Ireland, France and Italy. The year after

that, in 1987, Marie and Vince towed a camper-trailer with their Subaru Sportswagon and toured New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia.

Unfortunately, in the years that followed, Vince's health declined and he passed away in January 1993. In November that year, at age 73, Marie travelled through Europe with her niece, Annette. They visited Italy, France, Holland, Belgium and Germany – where she enjoyed a white Christmas with the family of Annette's husband.

Marie recalls that one of the highlights of the visit was singing Jingle Bells while riding toboggans on the snow one night at Schladming in Austria.

Her overseas adventures since then are many. She has seen the Niagara Falls and road tripped across Canada and America with daughter Ronda and granddaughter Jennifer. Marie, Ronda and Jennifer also attended a Webster Family Reunion in Ohio on this trip. She has travelled to Uzbekistan, Korea, China,

Vietnam and Laos. She has taken a helicopter flight over the Franz Joseph Glacier on the South Island of New Zealand. For her 95th birthday, Marie enjoyed a South-Pacific Cruise that included island hopping in French Polynesia.

If you need any more proof that age is just a number, back in January 2003, for her upcoming 83rd birthday, Marie climbed the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Time-and-time again, Marie has proved stereotypes wrong with her go-getting attitude, inspiring her family, friends and countless others over the course of her life.

If you were to flick through the albums of her life, the photos tell the story of a woman who sought excitement and adventure; who loves her family and friends and is deeply loved in return; who made deep connections in the Narrandera community and served her community in many roles; and who truly lives life to the fullest.

At 105 years old, Marie teaches us one of the greatest lessons of all: age really is just a number.



Marie with her grandson on her 100th Birthday.



Marie, 83, climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

War Widows *club gatherings*

Last year ended with several gatherings held by war widows social clubs across the regions to celebrate Christmas and the new year. Social clubs across NSW gathered for their final meeting of 2024 and celebrate another year of being surrounded by friends who understand.

Northern Beaches War Widow Social Club Christmas lunch

The Northern Beaches War Widow Social Club had a Christmas lunch at The Beach Club Collaroy. Eighteen members, including outgoing Club Coordinator Shirley McLaren OAM, attended to mark the end of the year and celebrate Mrs McLaren's final event as Club Coordinator.

The group enjoyed a seafood meal and shared reflections on the year. Pamela Goodhart-Dodd was introduced as the incoming Coordinator from 2025. Mrs McLaren was thanked for her service and leadership over the years.



The Entrance Christmas lunch

The Entrance and Long Jetty War Widows hosted a Christmas lunch at Diggers The Entrance, attended by 34 members and guests, including Board Director Lynne Sullivan. Made possible by volunteers and a grant from Diggers The Entrance, the event featured a festive two-course meal and Christmas-themed activities.

Guests from across the region, including members from the new Kurri Kurri Social Club made new connections.

Castle Hill Christmas morning tea

The Castle Hill Social Club celebrated its first year with a morning tea at Vanilla Cream Café, Amaroo Park. Members enjoyed a delicious spread of sweets and desserts while reflecting on the club's achievements and plans for 2025.

Special guest Cheryl Hill, President of the Castle Hill RSL Sub-Branch, commended the club for its connections among veteran families. Club Coordinator Ann O'Connor was thanked for her leadership, and appreciation was extended to the Castle Hill RSL Sub-Branch for their financial support.





Younger Members Social Club Christmas gathering

46 members of the Younger Members War Widows Social Club gathered for a festive lunch at Mazzaro Restaurant, Sydney. The event, organised by Frances Goddard and Board Director Lynne Sullivan, featured delicious food, a lively atmosphere and a raffle.

New members were warmly welcomed on the day. Member Jenny Ware shared, “the joy of breaking bread and celebrating with each other is a powerful reminder of our motto, *‘We all belong to each other. We all need each other...’*”



Macarthur Social Club Christmas lunch

Macarthur war widows had a Christmas lunch at Campbelltown RSL. Two Coordinators Kay Meredith and Fran O’Donohoe planned a lovely Christmas set menu, with festive meats and Christmas pudding for dessert.

The coordinator’s dressed the tables with decorations and made lovely gift bags for Christmas presents. 15 members joined the lunch, the first Christmas lunch for one of the newest social clubs.

Bay and Basin Christmas lunch

The Bay and Basin War Widows Social Club celebrated a year of connection and support with a Christmas gathering, marking the final meeting of 2024.

Coordinated by Carol Barnes, the event brought together war widows for a joyful end of year celebration and had special guest Ray Pearson, Pension Officer at Nowra Legacy.

Find a
social club
near you





Canberra regional outreach in October 2024.

War Widows *regional visits*

2024 marked a successful year of reconnecting regional war widows. Our team and Board Directors were able to travel across many regions to visit and support the organising of outings with the help of Social Club Coordinators and volunteers. Last year we were able to facilitate the opening of several new social clubs and more war widows coming together, with more engagement planned for this new year.

Our team made 14 regional visits in 2024, covering hundreds of kilometres to reach communities in areas including Narrandera, Lismore, Forster, Castle Hill, Macarthur, Batemans Bay, Tamworth, Orange, Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, Canberra, The Entrance and Albury. These efforts led to the establishment of new social clubs opening in Kurri Kurri, Castle Hill and Macarthur.

Through these visits, we engaged with over 600 regional war widows, with nearly half of them attending one of our activities for the first time. In

preparing the activities, our team connected with over 2,000 war widows, using the opportunity to also help them access vital information about aged care, transport and home services. The discussions held at our regional visits provide direct support to members who are unsure where to start or what resources are available for their needs.

In our outreach efforts, we also welcomed new members, many of whom were introduced to the community and the Guild during these regional events. We were able to reach war widows and families of veterans

that are not connected with us through working with local RSL Clubs, Legacy, current members connections, and the ESO community to find locals in the area that are connected to defence and introduce ourselves.

The success of 2024 is a testament to the dedication of our Social Club Coordinators, volunteers, support of our members and the War Widows Program. We look forward to be able to reach even more war widows through this outreach, ensuring that they feel seen, supported and empowered.

REGIONAL OUTREACH



Our South West Sydney region outreach in August 2024.



Batemans Bay regional outreach in December 2024.



Orange regional outreach in November 2024.



Regional outreach in Tamworth in November 2024.



Regional outreach in Coffs Harbour in September 2024.



Regional outreach in Albury in September 2024.



From left to right: Mayor of The Hills Shire Dr Peter Gangemi, Former Board Director Lynne Boyd, State Member for Castle Hill Mark Hodges MP, CEO Renee Wilson, RSL Sub-Branch President Cheryl Hill, Malcolm and Dianne Botfield.

Connecting War Widows Expanding Peer Support in Castle Hill

Throughout 2024, an opportunity to work in partnership with a local RSL Sub-Branch resulted in a new community forming for local war widows and veteran families.

In June 2024, together with Castle Hill RSL Sub-Branch, we hosted a lunch that was met with an amazing turnout from local war widows and special guests, including Mark Hodges MP, State Member for Castle Hill, Dr Peter Gangemi, Mayor of The Hills Shire and RSL Sub-Branch representatives. The

event aimed to provide a space for local war widows to connect and form new friendships.

Walking around the room, one could feel the strong sense of community. Mayor Gangemi told us of the tight-knit nature of the Hills area and the strong sense of helping and being there

for one another, something that isn't always easy to find in a large city. We certainly found this to be true when we spoke to Sue and Shirley, who's stories are a testament to this.

Sue attended the lunch to support her 90-year-old neighbour, Shirley. After years

of supporting each other, their relationship has grown from neighbours to family. Sue sees Shirley as a mother, and Shirley views Sue as a daughter. Despite the generational gap, they find true support in each other, doing almost everything together. With Sue's mother passed and Shirley's son living in the USA, their bond has deepened. Sue takes Shirley to places, while Shirley offers Sue guidance. Though Sue isn't connected to defence, her bond with Shirley has made her part of a veteran's family, understanding, through Shirley's stories, the service and sacrifices of families better than most Australians.

We also met Carolyn, who lost her husband two and a half years ago. She initially hesitated to attend the lunch but decided to go and asked her good friend to come with her for support. Having her friend supporting her was essential and she was delighted to connect with women who share similar experiences and understood her journey.

At Carolyn's table, member Shirley was telling Carolyn how

wonderful it had been for her to be welcomed with open arms at the Younger Members Social Club after the passing of her husband. She told her about the bond and connection she shares with other Vietnam war widows and how unique and special it is. At the same table was a widow who had lost her husband only six months before. She shared that she was still adjusting and that her life felt empty without him. She reflected on how she appreciated the opportunity of coming to the lunch and meet new people.

Amongst the unique stories we found commonality. A shared journey of caring for a veteran and coping with grief and loss. These women have endured hardships unimaginable to most, yet they remain grateful for their experiences and the support they find in each other. They embody the resilience and thankfulness common among war widows; they are a true inspiration to us all.

Local State MP Mark Hodge said it was incredibly important for him to attend this event to demonstrate his recognition of

veterans and their families in his community. Particularly war widows, who's sacrifices and service continues today and into the future, as they continue to live with the impact of service every day. He said it is important for them to know their sacrifice and loss will never be forgotten.

Mayor Gangemi expressed his gratitude at attending the lunch and learning about our organisation, highlighting that in a community that includes many veterans and families of veterans, such an initiative is "absolutely essential."

RSL Sub-Branch President, Cheryl Hill, praised the initiative, noting the surprising number of war widows in the area and the importance of bringing them together.

As a result of this event, we were able to establish a new social club for war widows and veteran families in Castle Hill. To find out more about this social club or to find a social club near you, please contact us at warwidows@fov.org.au or call us on (02) 9267 6577.



Wellbeing Program update

2024 was a big year for the growth of our wellbeing activities. Through the year, our Wellbeing Team was able to offer and experiment with many new activities, held across New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory and also online! From intergenerational art sessions to wellness walks and workshops, we were able to offer activities for everyone and can't wait to take feedback into action with many new activities planned for this year.



Throughout last year, our Social Work and Wellbeing Program hosted 23 unique activities that focused on connection, creativity and self-care for war widows and veteran families. Through these activities, we engaged 238 war widows and veteran families across New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia.

Our biggest activities included art sessions, wellness walks, creative workshops like macramé and kokedama, online activities, photoshoots and sound healing for mental health, with many of these activities drawing fresh faces to our organisation.

The Christmas photoshoots, in partnership with RSL Lifecare, held in Sydney and Canberra were one of our standout successes, engaging with 38 families, creating new and lasting

memories. With the introduction of online wellbeing sessions in late 2024, we reached usual participants from New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory but also welcomed war widows and veteran families from South Australia, Victoria and Queensland who are unable to attend in person events.

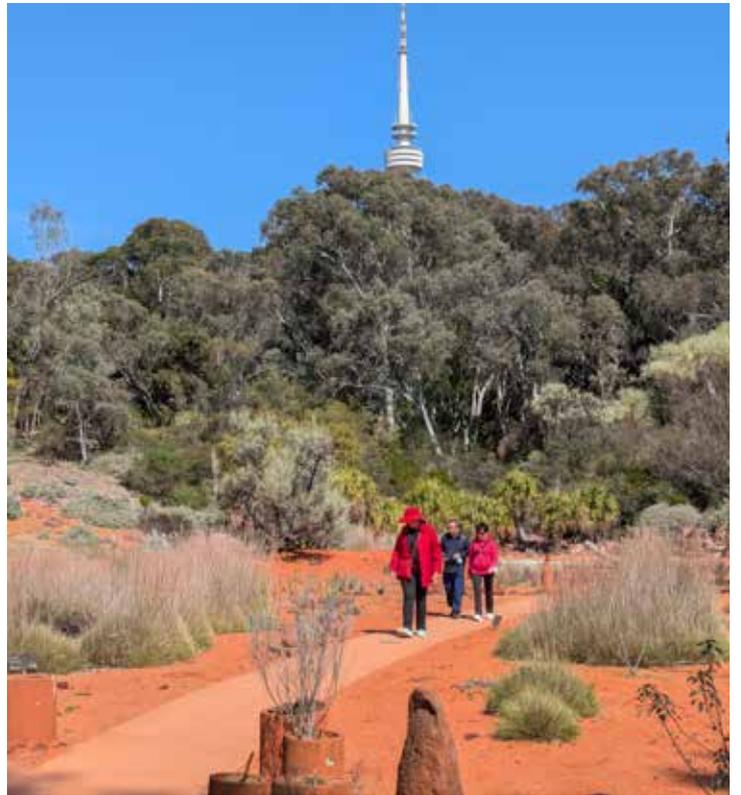
Collaborations with other organisations have been a great help to broaden our network and connect with more people in our community. Our partnership with the Defence Community Organisation at the Randwick Family Centre for example, has been one of our great collaborations of 2024, helping us reach even more families.

Our reach and impact grew significantly through the year, with newsletter subscribers nearly

doubling from around 127 to 234 in just six months! Similarly, our Wellbeing Support Facebook group grew to 256 members, and our newly launched War Widows Facebook group gained 37 members in just over a month.

With the launch of new activities, more collaborations and meeting more families of veterans, our team has been able to provide and promote the importance of wellbeing, self-care and social connection to war widows and families of veterans. Our growth continues, and this new year seems to already be jampacked with activities to reach as many war widows and families of veterans as we can.

To find activities near you or to stay informed, contact us on wellbeing@fov.org.au or call us on (02) 9267 6577.



March Forward this International Women's Day

Jessie Vasey CBE OBE was a woman who, with many others, stood against gender bias and created a legacy for this generation of women to carry forward. She championed progress for an inspirational and resilient group of women in Australia. Our organisation has existed for over 79 years this year. Over this time, we have continued to support women impacted by war and grown to support those beyond the first definition of a war widow.

The story of the Guild is a powerful story of women helping women.

Immediately after World War II many war widows were adrift - often voiceless, suffering economic hardship and forgotten in the celebratory aftermath of war. In response to this limbo, Jessie Vasey established the Guild in 1945, with a mission to promote and protect the interests of war widows. Since then, it has supported thousands of

'The story of the Guild is a story of women helping women.'

- Tricia Hobson

war widows, who together have fought to improve the financial and social circumstances of war widows in Australia.

Jessie often spoke of the circumstances that led to war widows feeling invisible, left out, forgotten, and like the sacrifice they had made for the community was overlooked; it was time to stand for them.

Through her wartime work on behalf of war widows, Jessie understood the value of a pressure group when lobbying to parliament. If war widows were to have an impact on governments to improve their economic status they needed to be welded together. But they needed more.

Core to the Guild was bringing companionship and friendship to many lonely war widows. This was instrumental in helping to navigate grief and loss. Life was hard in the 1940s and this was complicated by intense grief. As a result, the social clubs created by Jessie became a lifeline for war widows. Because they'd lost their husbands to war, they shared an immediate unspoken understanding which gave them a deep sense of belonging. In response, war widows clubs were established all over regional and country New South Wales and beyond where war widows could get together, dispelling by their sisterhood the deadliest of enemies - loneliness.

When we think back at what the War Widows Organisation did, it is incredibly inspiring. These women stood up for a group of women who were not being adequately supported by government. They stood up to the social norms at the time that felt that grieving ought to be done behind closed doors and that it was fine to withdraw money, funds and pensions from women and children left behind by the wars.

"I am humbled by this group of women every day; their remarkable achievements are a testament to their extraordinary resilience and strength. We are proud of what we do and look forward to continuing to support families for years to come."

- Tricia Hobson

'We have been gifted a space that stands as one of Australia's most inspirational, empowering and forward-thinking organisations.'

- Tricia Hobson

Our President Queen Dunbar described her early days as a war widow, saying "all of the sudden I'm finding myself in my forties and a widow – and a war widow at that – and all these women who are a lot older than me just went 'come here' and gave me the biggest hugs every time they'd see me. I've realised that they were where I was, they were in their forties, fifties or sixties when they became widows and in turn, they were embraced by the women before them."

"In a world of darkness there were these voices, these women that were there and they stood shoulder to shoulder next to me saying *'you'll be fine, you'll get through this. We have been there, we have done this and we survived, and you will too,'*" Queen continues.

Jessie's tenacity and legacy continue to inspire us today. We have been gifted a space that stands as one of Australia's most inspirational, empowering and forward-thinking organisations. It is a place where we can learn

from the generations of women who came before us, preserving and honouring their legacy in our organisation that is now open to all veteran families.

CEO Renee Wilson recently shared her experience of caring for her veteran "I wish that I had found this group of incredible women 14 years ago when I needed them. Yes I wasn't a widow, but that doesn't matter to them. The war widows in New South Wales that I have met inspire me to be better and inspire me to do more, not only for them and this community, but for everyone."

Our Board Chair Tricia Hobson also shared her thoughts on what our organisation means to her: "I am humbled by this group of women every day; their remarkable achievements are a testament to their extraordinary resilience and strength. We are proud of what we do and look forward to continuing to support women and their families for years to come."

On 8 March 2025, for International Women's Day, the world will reflect on the achievements of so many women before us and their stories will continue to inspire us, so we can continue making progress and change for women around the world. For International Women's Day, let's celebrate each other, our common achievements and the stories of all the women on whose shoulders we stand on today. To the women before us: we thank you, may we continue the work you have done, may we continue standing up against gender bias and keep the legacy of women like Jessie Vasey alive.



**Watch our
IWD video
here**



"In a world of darkness there were these voices, these women that were there and they stood shoulder to shoulder next to me saying 'you'll be fine, you'll get through this.'"

- Queen Dunbar

Safely navigating social media

How to Protect Your Personal Information Online

In today's digital age, social media has become an integral part of our lives, offering a platform to connect with family and friends, share experiences and stay informed about the world. However, navigating these platforms safely is paramount to protecting personal information and avoiding potential pitfalls. This guide aims to provide tips and strategies to help you enjoy social media while keeping your personal data secure.



Understanding the Risks

While social media can be a wonderful tool, it also comes with risks, particularly regarding the sharing of personal information. Scammers and hackers often target users, exploiting their trust and sometimes limited experience with technology. By being aware of these risks, you can take steps to protect yourself.

Common Dangers Include:

- **Phishing Scams:** fraudulent messages or emails that appear legitimate but aim to steal your personal details.
- **Identity Theft:** using your personal information, such as your name, date of birth, or address, to commit fraud.
- **Privacy Breaches:** sharing too much information online, making it easier for strangers to access your private life.

Tips for Safe Social Media Use

1. Be selective with friend requests

Only accept friend requests from people you know personally. Scammers often create fake profiles to gain access to your personal information. If you receive a request from someone you don't recognise, it's best to ignore it or verify their identity through a mutual friend.

2. Adjust your privacy settings

Every social media platform has privacy settings that allow you to control who sees your information and posts. Take time to review and adjust these settings to ensure your profile is as private as possible. For example, on Facebook, you can limit who sees your posts, friend list and personal details to only your friends.

3. Think before you share

Before posting anything online, consider whether it's necessary to share that information. Avoid posting personal details like your home address, phone number or birthdate. Be cautious with photos that reveal too much about your location or daily activities.

4. Use strong, unique passwords

Create strong, unique passwords for each of your social media accounts. Avoid using easily guessed passwords like "123456" or "password." A combination of letters, numbers and special characters makes your password more secure. Additionally, consider using a password manager to keep track of your passwords.

5. Be skeptical of unsolicited messages

Be wary of messages from strangers or offers that seem too good to be true. Scammers often use enticing offers or urgent messages to trick you into providing your personal information. If you receive a suspicious message, do not respond, and report it to the social media platform.

6. Regularly update your software

Keeping your devices and applications updated is crucial for security. Regular updates often include security patches that protect you from the latest threats. Enable automatic updates on your devices to ensure you're always protected.

Staying Informed

Social media platforms frequently update their features and security measures. Staying informed about these changes will help you navigate the platforms safely. Follow trusted sources of information, such as official social media blogs or tech news websites, to stay up to date.

Conclusion

By following these tips, you can enjoy the benefits of social media while protecting your personal information. Remember, the key to safe social media use is being cautious and informed. Take the time to understand the platforms you use and make the necessary adjustments to safeguard your privacy. Social media can be a safe and enjoyable way to stay connected with loved ones and the world around you, as long as you use it wisely.

Join our online social group for war widows

What is the War Widows Social Group?

This Facebook group is a private online social group where information will be shared about in person social groups and regional visits, alongside wellbeing tips, and it's a place for you to connect and share with each other in a safe space.

Who is this group for?

This private group is exclusively for war widows of veterans of the Australian Defence Force and allied forces. We have strict selection criteria and regular moderation to ensure only war widows are connected to the group.

What is a private group?

In a private group on Facebook, only members of the group can see who's in the group and what they post. Admission to the group is only granted to those approved by the administrator.

Online War Widows Social Group rules

- Treat everyone with respect. Be kind and courteous.
- Contribute to the safety of the group.
- No promotions or spam.
- Respect everyone's privacy. What's shared in the community should stay in the community.

How to join the Facebook Group?

- Login to your Facebook account
- Search in the search bar for War Widows Social Group or type: www.facebook.com/groups/warwidows
- Make sure you answer all the membership questions otherwise your request will not be approved.

FAQs

We have received some questions from members over the last couple of months. Here is a snapshot of the questions you frequently asked us.

How are the wellbeing activities funded?

The wellbeing activities are open to both war widows and families of veterans to attend and benefit from. Each activity delivered in person or online is designed around delivering a benefit to the physical, mental or spiritual health of the participants. The activity costs are funded through the organisation's

budget, which is developed annually and approved by the Board. The costs of activities are supported and offset through State and Federal Government grants and through partnerships with other organisations. For example, some activities have been co-delivered recently with RSL LifeCare.

It has been pleasing to see many war widows engaging with the

activities throughout 2024 and we look forward to welcoming many more throughout 2025. During 2024, the positive wellbeing impact of many of the wellbeing activities was enhanced by the interaction between war widows and contemporary defence and veteran families at many of these activities as new connections were built and wisdom shared.

My local social club has closed, will it re-open?

We'd love to re-open as many war widows social clubs as we can. Over the last few years, we have started to see many of the clubs reduce their meeting frequency or chose to 'close' as attendance at social gatherings started to decline. We are working hard to connect with more war widows across the state and find more people who can

benefit from attendance at social clubs. Throughout 2024 we worked to re-establish a club in Kurri Kurri and establish two new clubs within the Greater Sydney area. We have some ideas already about where else we could establish or re-establish war widow social clubs this year, however before we go too far in our plans, we want to hear from you. Has your club closed? Would you like a club closer to you? Please let us know and we can add that to

our planning. There is a feedback form included with this edition of the Digest you can complete and send back or give us a call on 02 9267 6577. We'll keep you up to date here and in our newsletters.

Social connection is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of all war widows, and we want to ensure we are doing what we can to help facilitate that and overcome barriers to it as much as possible.

Who are the wellbeing activities for?

Our wellbeing activities are for anyone connected to defence service: war widows, spouses of former or current serving veterans, families, children, grandchildren etc. They are designed to support their wellbeing with different activities that appeal to members of our community of all ages. It aims to assist them to connect with each

other and their peers around an activity they enjoy or are trying for the first time. We strongly encourage war widows to attend as those activities support war widows' wellbeing and assist them in staying connected with their peers and to get to know other generations of veteran families. We encourage them to bring their families, children and grandchildren so they can bond around fun and relaxing activities.

There are numerous ways to support your wellbeing and we aim to offer different activities so they appeal to numerous interests. As we grow this program, your input and feedback is essential: we want to know what kind of activity you would like to do or try for the first time. If you have any ideas on how we can assist supporting your wellbeing, please contact us by email on wellbeing@fov.org.au or call 02 9267 6577.

Thank you for *your gift*

We would like to sincerely thank all our members who have left us a gift in their will. Leaving us a gift in your will, legally known as bequests, is a powerful way to give back, ensuring our support reaches war widows and families of our veterans for generations to come.

When you leave a gift in your will - large or small, you are empowering our organisation to continue our work in advocating for and supporting veteran families, including war widows well into the future. There is nothing more meaningful than completely

changing someone's life for the better. Through your gift, your life story can help to write incredible new chapters for others. Every contribution through a bequest, no matter the size or format, is incredibly vital.

We recently received a gift from a member who had passed away. We would like to sincerely thank and acknowledge the Gillies family and Mrs Dorothy Gillies for ensuring we can continue to support war widows and families of veterans for years to come.

Summer *recipe* Chicken-stuffed zucchini bake



Picture and recipe: [Centr.com](https://www.centr.com)

INGREDIENTS - FOR 4

2 tsp olive oil
 400g chicken mince
 2 onions finely chopped
 2 garlic cloves minced
 1 tsp ground fennel or fennel seeds
 salt & pepper, to taste
 4 zucchini sliced in half lengthwise

3 cups (700g) tomato passata
 1 tin of cannellini beans (400g tin) drained & rinsed
 20 pitted kalamata olives chopped
 1/2 cup (60g) breadcrumbs
 2 tbs parmesan finely grated
 4 sprigs of parsley finely chopped

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 200°C/fan-forced 180°C and line a medium sized baking tray with baking paper.
2. In a large frypan, over medium-high heat add oil and cook chicken, onion, garlic and fennel with some salt and pepper for about 5 minutes or until onion has softened and chicken is beginning to brown. Remove from heat, set aside and allow to cool.

3. Whilst chicken cooks, use a small spoon and hollow out the zucchini. Finely chop the removed centres and set aside.

4. In a medium saucepan, combine passata, beans and olives and season to taste.

5. Combine a quarter of the tomato sauce with the chicken mixture, breadcrumbs, chopped zucchini centres and season with salt and pepper. Use clean damp hands to mix well.

6. Fill the centre of each zucchini half with mixture and place on tray.

7. Combine parmesan and parsley and scatter over zucchini. Cover with foil and bake for 15 minutes.

8. Remove foil and continue to cook for another 15 minutes or until chicken is cooked through and they are nice and bubbly.

9. Heat the remaining tomato sauce to reduce slightly and thicken. Serve the sauce with the zucchini.

VALE

Agnes Clout Nth TURRAMURRA
Alice Burns DALMENY
Alva Payne WOODBERRY
Ann Dawson WOLLSTONECRAFT
Anne Roddick PENRITH
Betty Edwards UMINA
Betty Pearson NORTHBRIDGE
Betty Whitty MATRAVILLE
Betty Ellis LAVINGTON
Betty Plummer GOROKAN
Betty Adams BATHURST
Doreen Fay ARMIDALE
Dulcie Ellis RICHMOND
Edith Baker YAGOONA
Ellie Smith BUNDEENA
Elsie Pilgrim WOLLONGONG
Evelyn McGuinness SEFTON
Evelyn Allsopp TAREE
Geri Simpson VAUCLUSE
Hazel Budden KEMPSEY
Heather Peetz WYOMING

Janet Kensell MANLY
Jean McDonald BRINGELLY
Jean Temple WINSTON HILLS
Jean Saddington LAKE MUNMORAH
Joan Williams GUILDFORD
Joan McLean INGLEBURN
Joan Menzies FRENCHS FOREST
Joyce Blaschke LAKE MUNMORAH
Joyce O'Shannessy REVESBY
June Stibbard CHESTER HILL
Kay Walter RUSSELL LEA
LaReine Beal HARDEN
Lola Bachell ERMINGTON
Maisie Holman WOLLONGONG
Margaret Wright LAURIETON
Margaret Longhurst LEUMEAH
Mary Nesbitt TENAMBIT
Mary Jones PEAKHURST
Maureen Dent SHOAL BAY
Nancy Lovitt GORDON
Nancy Maillard OLD BAR

Norah Locke MARAYONG
Olga Williams DURAL
Pamela Collins BREAKFAST POINT
Pat Cowie SANS SOUCI
Pat Simm ELEEBANA
Phyllis Atkinson Nth PARRAMATTA
Rita Slattery INVERELL
Robin McKinnon PORT MACQUARIE
Ronnie Elder TUMBI UMBI
Sheila Bell LENNOX HEAD
Shirley Spencer OATLEY
Sylvia Sanders ROOTY HILL
Valerie Westacott SYLVANIA
Wilma Hodgson TERALBA

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



Correction & apology

It was brought to our attention that due to a historical issue in our system, our Vale section of the Winter 2023 edition of *The Guild Digest* included a member that has not passed away. Our sincere apologies are given to Mrs Alison Woodham and her family for accidentally including her name in the Vale section of *The Guild Digest*.

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

War widows who recently turned 100

- Dorothy Bremner ST IVES
- Ella Boulwood EARLWOOD
- Evelyn Shorter PORT MACQUARIE
- Elizabeth Hasler BOTANY
- Gladys Richardson MAROOCHYDORE
- Jean Gale WILEY PARK
- Mona Benney BASIN VIEW
- Nancy Blackman MORTDALE

Happy Birthday!



Welcome to our new members!

- ☀ Belle Fielder MACLEAN
- ☀ Brenda Anderson St GEORGES BASIN
- ☀ Carmel Simpson CASTLE HILL
- ☀ Caroline Kirche MOSMAN
- ☀ Cherie Perceval HAMLYN TERRACE
- ☀ Chris Knights WAHROONGA
- ☀ Di Botfield NORTH ROCKS
- ☀ Elaine Napier YASS
- ☀ Jenny Godin FARMBOROUGH HEIGHTS
- ☀ Margaret Crittenden BANORA POINT
- ☀ Marie Jeffrey CASTLE HILL
- ☀ Marion Smith GLENHAVEN
- ☀ Pauline Jackson GOOGONG
- ☀ Robert Rayner WOLLONGONG
- ☀ Tricia Besgrove ROSEMEADOW

We can't wait to get to know you!



Celebrating some very special 100th birthdays!

Congratulations to all our members who recently celebrated their 100th birthday! They are incredible milestones and we are delighted to share some of the pictures we have received. Congratulations to you ladies!



Evelyn Shorter had a wonderful birthday celebration with her family. Her daughter told us she was very grateful for the flowers we sent for her birthday and said war widows in Port Macquarie have been an integral part of Evelyn's life in many ways.



Ella Boulwood celebrated her 100th birthday with a very special family party. Congratulations Ella!

Technology information

Do you have a copy of the Little Book of Scams?

In today's digital age, scams are becoming increasingly sophisticated and prevalent. It's crucial to stay informed and vigilant to protect yourself and your loved ones.

The Little Book of Scams is an essential guide that helps you recognise, avoid and report scams. By understanding the tactics used by scammers, you can safeguard your personal information and financial security.

This book covers a wide range of scams, from online fraud to phone scams, and provides practical tips on how to spot and avoid them. It also includes real-life examples and advice on what to do if you fall victim to a scam. Don't wait until it's too late – call us to order your copy on (02) 9267 6577 or download the guide online below by **scanning the QR code.**

Arm yourself with the knowledge to outsmart scammers!



Community Services Guide

Did you get your copy of our new Community Service Guide?

We have launched our new and updated *Community Services Guide*, previously called the *Ready Reference Guide* to assist you learn about the wide range of services and support available for our community. The guide includes a wide range of service providers, this guide is a unique and invaluable resource for those seeking assistance and connection to community programs that benefit defence and veteran families, including war widows.

You can access the Community Services Guide by scanning the QR code below. For any enquiries or if you would like a hard copy version, please email us at guild@fov.org.au or call 02 9267 6577.



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.

- **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*)
- **Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling** – 1800 011 046
- **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*)
- **1800RESPECT** – 1800 737 732 (*24 hour sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling service*)
- **Defence Member and Family Support Helpline** – 1800 624 608

Shoes available under Gold Card arrangements

Earlier this year we had several enquiries regarding the types of shoes that are covered by the Gold Card. We were asked specifically if DVA would consider funding alternative brands other than comfort and fit shoes.

DVA has now advised that the register of shoes funded by the Gold Card was last reviewed in 2023 and an additional 50 new styles were added to this, bringing the total number of styles suitable for women to 180 and 30 brands are represented in this addition. A full register of what is available can be found when you scan the QR code on this page.



DVA has advised that new styles are added to the register as they become available. If the style or brand your podiatrist recommends is not available on DVA's list lets start writing! Correspondence on this requesting the addition of new styles and brands can be directed to your local DVA state office, or you can send it to us, and we will pass it on.

Join Our Wellbeing Newsletter Today!

Are you looking to enhance your overall wellbeing? Join our Wellbeing Newsletter, an integral part of our Wellbeing Program designed specifically for war widows and veteran families.

Our newsletter offers valuable information aimed at helping you navigate the unique challenges you may face and resources dedicated to improving your mental, emotional and physical health.

Highlights of our newsletter include:

- Articles on mental health and resilience.
- Tips on managing stress and fostering emotional wellbeing.
- Updates on upcoming free events tailored for war widows and veteran families.
- Inspiring stories from the veteran community to uplift and motivate you.
- Access to mindfulness and self-care practices.

By signing up, you'll be the first to know about our free activities, offering opportunities to unite our community, to connect with others who understand your journey and to participate in activities designed to support your wellbeing. Whether it's a community meet-up, a wellness workshop, or a mindfulness session, our events are here to help you thrive.

Subscribe to our Wellbeing Newsletter today and take the first step towards a healthier, happier you. Sign up for our newsletter by scanning the QR code or call us at (02) 9267 6577.





FAMILIES
OF VETERANS GUILD

Register now for the

ANZAC

Field of Remembrance

WEDNESDAY 23 APRIL 2025 AT 10:30AM
ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL, SYDNEY

Registrations are now open - close 11 April 2025

If you have mobility limitations, please register prior to 31 March 2025

To register:

Scan the QR code on this flyer with your phone

or

Email us on guild@fov.org.au

or

Call us on 02 9267 6577

Attached to this edition of The Guild 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.

