



FAMILIES
OF VETERANS GUILD

Proudly owned & operated by Australian War Widows NSW Ltd

AUTUMN 2025

THE GUILD DIGEST

SPECIAL EDITION ANZAC FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE & ANZAC DAY



AUSTRALIAN WAR WIDOWS NSW LIMITED

Trading as

FAMILIES OF VETERANS GUILD

ABN 24 083 075 914

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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Our office is not attended every business day.
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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

Wellbeing Activities

Sydney wellbeing walk

5 June 2025

Online decluttering workshop

12 June 2025

Canberra wellbeing walk

13 June 2025

Canberra veteran families dinner

14 June 2025

Sydney sound healing

15 June 2025

Sydney creative writing workshop

20 June 2025

Sydney candle making workshop

21 June 2025

Online watercolour painting

27 June 2025

Canberra sound healing

28 June 2025

Coffs Harbour wellbeing walk

22 June 2025

Canberra wellbeing walk

4 July 2025

Sydney mini-golf

8 July 2025

Sydney wellbeing walk

12 July 2025

Sydney veteran families lunch

16 July 2025

Online candle making workshop

25 July 2025

Canberra clay workshop

26 July 2025

Key Dates

Formation of the Australian Squadrons in Bomber Command

5 June 2025

D-Day, Liberation of Europe commences (1944)

6 June 2025

Battle of Shah Wali Kot, Afghanistan (2010)

10-15 June 2025

Black Hawk helicopter tragedy (1996)

12 June 2025

International Widows' Day

23 June 2025

Reserve Forces Day

1 July 2025

NAIDOC Week

6-13 July 2025

Formation of Royal Australian Navy

10 July 2025

The Battle of Fromelles (1916)

19 July 2025

Arrival of RAMSI forces in the Solomon Islands (2003)

24 July 2025

Korean Veterans' Day

27 July 2025

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HIGHLIGHTS





From left to right: Queen Dunbar with Former Presidents Rhondda Vanzella OAM, Meg Green AM and Wendy Thompson, laying their tributes on behalf of war widows passed at the 73rd ANZAC Field of Remembrance.

Each year, the ANZAC Field of Remembrance reminds us why we do what we do. This year's service was quite moving and uplifting. From within the grandeur of St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney, to those joining us online in Coffs Harbour, Albury, Goulburn, Laurieton and Nowra, we came together united in remembrance of our veteran loved ones. This is the only ceremony where war widows and families lay their own tributes. It is one of my most treasured days of the year. Aside from it being deeply personal, it is a day where I sit side by side with war widows and families, holding hands, supporting each other and expressing our emotions without having to say a word.

To all who joined us in person or online: thank you, for remembering, and for honouring the sacrifices made not just by those in uniform, but by their families who stand beside them.

I encourage you to take a few minutes to watch the Field of Remembrance tribute video by scanning the QR code on Page 9. It captures the spirit and emotion of the day in a way words sometimes cannot. It also shows how our community continues to grow and evolve while holding tightly to the traditions that ground us.

ANZAC Day itself, and the lead up to it, was full of moments that reminded me of the strength of you all. From school services to dawn commemorations and sunset tributes, Guild members stood proudly across the state and beyond. I was honoured to attend services at Five Dock, the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, the RSL NSW Dawn Service and the Lest We Forget Sunset Tribute at the Sydney Opera House. Rain or shine, we were there, seen, heard, and remembered.

Every wreath laid was not just a symbol of respect but a recognition of the generations who have

walked this path before us and those who will follow. I thank each one of you who represented us so meaningfully this ANZAC Day. Your presence mattered.

I was also proud to see many of you at the ANZAC Day March in the Sydney CBD. Walking behind a joint banner that brought together war widows and veteran families was a powerful moment of unity and visibility. The March, attended by thousands despite the early rain, reminded us of how far we've come. Decades ago, women like Jessie Vasey fought for the right to be included. This year, walking alongside younger generations of veteran families, we honoured that legacy while reflecting our evolving identity.

One particularly memorable encounter last month was a brief but powerful conversation I had with Gina Rinehart, who I met at the RSL NSW ANZAC Day Service. Introduced by the Archbishop of Sydney, I shared with Ms Rinehart our mission— how we began with supporting war widows but have grown. She acknowledged how hard it can be for spouses, especially when managing homes, careers and children while their partners serve. She thanked me for the work we do, and I was reminded once again that even in short conversations, our message resonates.

We are here because of the women who came before us — the ones who fought to be seen, heard, and recognised. And we remain here for the families who walk this path today. Our strength lies in our unity and our ability to honour the past while building for the future.

MS QUEEN DUNBAR
President



Tricia Hobson greeting our Patron, Her Excellency Margaret Beazley AC KC, at the 73rd ANZAC Field of Remembrance.

As I stood in St Andrew's Cathedral for the ANZAC Field of Remembrance, surrounded by war widows from all corners of the state, I was once again struck by the deep sense of solidarity that fills the space whenever we gather. Each year, this ceremony offers a moment to reflect—not just on sacrifice, but on the enduring connection between those who have experienced loss due to defence service. It's not simply tradition—it's a reaffirmation of who we are and why this community matters.

The 'We Remember' video shared at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance acknowledged the unseen service of widows and their families—the ongoing impact of defence life that often begins long before loss. The reading of The Silent Ranks at the end of the service was particularly powerful. It reminded us that while many in our community never wore a uniform,

their role in supporting Australia's Defence Force is just as significant.

On ANZAC Day, I was honoured to attend the Dawn Service at Martin Place. A moving service that reminds all of what is given for the country we live in today. ANZAC day is not only about honouring those in uniform, it's about recognising those who carry the impact of that service: widows, families, children, who all deserve to be acknowledged. That includes you, our members. And it must include recognising your needs, your stories and your voices.

Listening to your voices is always a priority for the Board. This year, we are introducing dedicated feedback sessions into most Board meeting agendas. These sessions will give members an opportunity to speak directly to the Board—building on other channels like our AGM, organisational events and formal reporting.

We've already seen the value of your feedback as we integrated our new

brand throughout 2024. For example, feedback provided at the 2024 AGM directly influenced how we've been integrating the new brand across the organisation, including ensuring our company name Australian War Widows NSW Ltd features in our formal communications.

In 2025, our key priority as a Board is implementing a new funding plan for the organisation. Currently, as many know our organisation is largely funded by investment returns and capital. We must diversify this funding model for the organisation to achieve greater sustainability. We have a plan to do so and that will be implemented throughout the course of 2025. I look forward to talking about this more at this year's AGM.

The Board is encouraged that it is making the right decisions for the organisation and the continuity of our mission. Figures like the number of new members help us understand not only the need for the organisation but its influence and acceptance in the community. In 2024 we welcomed 89 new members—the most since our change journey began in 2021. Most of these new members are and identify as war widows. It is pleasing to see the results of becoming more visible and inclusive in our community.

Our aim is clear: to remain a strong, credible voice for war widows and all veteran families. As global uncertainty increases, so too does the weight of service—and its impact on families. We are here to meet that need. And we are building on strong foundations, thanks to you.

MS TRICIA HOBSON
Board Chair



The Hon David Harris MP at the Field of Remembrance Service, laying a tribute on behalf of the NSW Government.

It's a pleasure to be able to share an update with you on a number of important initiatives that have recently been announced.

In April, Premier Chris Minns and I unveiled the designs for a new war memorial dedicated to honouring the service and sacrifice of contemporary veterans and their families.

The Memorial will be constructed at the Domain in Sydney. It will offer a contemplative space for veterans, their families and the broader community to acknowledge and remember the service and sacrifice of those who have served in the Australian Defence Force from 1990 to the present day. More information on the memorial and its design is available here: www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/memorial/

I also launched the next NSW Veterans Strategy 2025-2030. The Strategy incorporates learnings from our first strategy, our engagement with the veteran community, and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. I encourage you to download the Strategy to find out how NSW Government will support veterans and their families in NSW over the next five years: www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/strategy

It was wonderful to see many of you at the Anzac Field of Remembrance service at St Andrew's Cathedral on 23 April. The service was incredibly moving, and it was heartwarming to see so many war widows and families of veterans in attendance

honouring the personal sacrifices and contributions that war widows have made. I also had the pleasure of attending the NSW Anzac Day Dawn Service at the Cenotaph in Martin Place acknowledging the 110th anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli.

The NSW Office for Veterans Affairs, RSL NSW and Monash University recently launched a survey as part of an important research project aimed at improving support services for women veterans in NSW. *Shaping Support Services for Women Veterans* focusses on tailoring veteran wellbeing services to better meet the unique needs of women veterans in NSW. The survey is available here: bit.ly/womenveteransproject-survey

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.

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

Advocacy Update

Recognition requires action

In recent months, we have continued to push for real, lasting recognition of war widows and veteran families within government policy, strategy, and funding. From Federal Budget decisions to national wellbeing strategies and election commitments, we're working to ensure the impacts of service on families are no longer overlooked.

We've seen promising signs of progress, including the first-ever major party election commitment focused on veteran families. But it's clear we have much further to go. The latest Defence budget missed the mark, and proposed reforms still fall short of what families need and deserve.

To keep going, we need your support. Every message, every story, every shared experience helps us demonstrate the strength and urgency of this community. Thank you to those who have already taken the time to reach out. Your contributions are helping shape national conversations.

A step forward—but not the finish line

In the lead-up to the Federal Election, we welcomed a landmark \$5 million commitment from the Liberal National Party to expand support for veteran families. While we were unable to secure a commitment in the seven days prior to election, this moment still marks progress.

It marks a real sign of political recognition of the important role of families.

The opposition commitment was the first time a major party has recognised that families—spouses, partners, children—carry their own burdens of service. As we know, they are often the first responders to a

veteran's trauma, the long-term carers, the silent majority in the veteran support system. Their challenges are complex, and their resilience is often taken for granted.

Such funding would support trauma-informed casework, peer support networks, wellbeing programs and career development for war widows and veteran families. It reflects what we've said all along: families aren't just bystanders to service, they are central to the wellbeing of veterans and the improvement of the support system.

While the election is over, our advocacy on this is just starting. We

will continue to push for meaningful support beyond the words, and we need our community behind us. Your voice helps ensure war widows and veteran families are supported.

How You Can Help

We encourage you to stay involved, share your experience and stand with us as we continue to advocate for

real support. Email us at ceo@fov.org.au with your experience, your expectations, or your message of support.

Veteran families deserve recognition, support and a system that works for them.

Watch our latest video 'Voices of Families' to find out why it is important to support families at all stages of their lives.

Watch
Voices of
Families here



Defence and Veteran Family Wellbeing Strategy must deliver more than promises

Earlier this year, the Department of Veterans' Affairs released its draft *Defence and Veteran Family Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2030*. We've submitted a formal response calling for a stronger, more practical approach to supporting families.

While we welcome the development of a national strategy, our position is clear: it must go further. In summary, the strategy doesn't leverage what is already known in terms of service gaps, needs

and support. Materially, it will preserve the status quo for the next five years while the Department of Defence and DVA seek to learn more. Families cannot afford another five years of vague commitments and delayed action.

We've called for immediate reforms, including:

- Lifetime mental health treatment for children of deceased veterans
- Mental health care for partners, parents, and children of veterans

- In-home care support for families with young children
- Removal of outdated, dependency-based language from policy

These are practical steps the Government can take to make a real difference.

If you believe families deserve better, we want to hear from you. Email us at ceo@fov.org.au with your experience, your expectations, or your message of support. Every voice helps us build a stronger case for lasting change.

Read our
response here



Budget leaves veteran families behind

This year's Federal Budget delivered just prior to the election provided another missed opportunity to support the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

While \$50.3 billion has been committed to strengthening technical defence capability, just 0.12% of that amount was directed to the Department of Veterans' Affairs—and even less to the

community sector and \$0 to support families.

The budget offered no meaningful investment in programs that support partners, parents, or children of veterans—despite the clear findings of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Once again, families were overlooked. There was no progress for the war widows who are still excluded

from crisis support, no reinstatement of healthcare cards for children of deceased veterans, and no relief for families carrying the weight of long term caregiving.

Government already partners with industry to deliver technical defence capability. It's time to apply that same approach to the veteran support sector—one that includes partnering with family and veteran

organisations to deliver grass roots support.

We're continuing to advocate for change, but your voice strengthens our case. Email us at ceo@fov.org.au to share your experience, your expectations, or your support for proper investment in the wellbeing of veteran families.

Our goal is to ensure families are no longer an afterthought in national defence planning.



This year's Master of Ceremonies, Lyn Bye (left) and her daughter Casey Lucas (right) laying tributes for the sacrifices of veterans and their families during World War One (WWI) on behalf of WWI widow Marjorie Cameron who was watching the service online.

Honouring service & sacrifice: 73rd ANZAC Field of Remembrance

In the quiet moments before ANZAC Day, a gathering takes place that gives families, especially war widows, a chance to remember in their own way. The ANZAC Field of Remembrance is not just a ceremony—it's a space where people can pause and lay a tribute for someone they loved. It offers a moment to honour lives lived, and service given, in a way that is both shared and personal.

Held on 23 April 2025, the 73rd ANZAC Field of Remembrance returned to the grounds of St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney. The Field of Remembrance continues to give families the opportunity to mark the legacy of their family's service and reflect on their experiences.

The service at St Andrew's Cathedral was livestreamed to ensure members outside of Sydney could be a part of the service. It included the laying of wooden crosses, hymns, readings and a minute's silence. Those in attendance included members, Defence representatives, clergy

and community figures. Together, they stood side by side with widows and families who live with the loss of someone who served.

As many know, the ANZAC Field of Remembrance began in 1952, when Mrs C.J. Pope, widow of Rear-Admiral C.J. Pope RAN,

Watch our video tribute



organised the first service with the support of War Widows NSW. It was inspired by a similar tradition she saw in London. Since then, the Field has been held in Sydney every year, offering a way to mark the impact of service and sacrifice.

Each cross laid in the Field represents someone remembered: a life, a story, and the people who carry that memory forward. The people that never forget.

In addition to the service in Sydney, ANZAC Field of Remembrance gatherings were also held in regional communities across NSW. Guild members gathered in regional towns and cities including Coffs Harbour, Albury, Goulburn, Laurieton and Nowra. These gatherings continue to be an important part of our broader purpose: ensuring that commemoration is accessible and meaningful no matter where war widows and veteran families live.

To ensure members of our community from around the country can be involved, we continue to offer ways for people to participate no matter where they live. This year, war

widows and families could order a wooden cross to be laid with their tribute on their behalf at the Field in Sydney, or take part in the Virtual Field of Remembrance by placing a tribute online. The livestream remains a key way to connect those who cannot be there in person.

Following the service, the Field was again displayed at the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney, creating a visible space of reflection and respect for the whole community.

As our President said at this year's service, *"We gather here not only to remember, but to continue. To continue honouring, to continue telling their stories, and to continue supporting each other."*

This is what the ANZAC Field of Remembrance offers: a way to mark remembrance that is personal, honest, and shared.

To everyone who took part—whether in Sydney, online, or quietly at home—thank you for remembering and for standing with families who continue to carry these stories.

You can watch this year's tribute video and lay your tribute in our virtual field by scanning the QR codes on this page.

Lay your tribute in our virtual Field



Our Junior Crew, assisting war widows to personalise their crosses at the 73rd ANZAC Field of Remembrance service in Sydney.

UNITED IN REMEMBRANCE





UNITED IN REMEMBRANCE





UNITED IN REMEMBRANCE





ANZAC Field of Remembrance

social clubs gatherings

War widows and their families gathered across NSW to honour loved ones through local ANZAC Field of Remembrance services. Each gathering offered a moment to pause, lay a cross, and remember someone who served, together, and in their own way. While the central service was held at St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney, it reached well beyond the city.

Through livestreams and local gatherings, members across the state came together in their own communities. From Coffs Harbour to Albury, from Nowra to Laurieton, each gathering reflected the same purpose: to ensure that remembrance remains accessible, meaningful, and personal—no matter where war widows and veteran families live.

Laurieton ANZAC Field of Remembrance regional gathering

In Laurieton, at least 20 Guild members and guests gathered at the United Services Club to take part in the livestream of the ANZAC Field of Remembrance. Attendees included Port Macquarie war widows, local Legacy President, and torch bearers. The club staff provided a welcoming space with morning tea, and members were given a box, sand, and rosemary to lay their custom crosses, creating a local tribute that was displayed at the club until ANZAC Day.

The gathering was particularly meaningful for a 100-year-old war widow who appreciated still being able to watch the service despite not being able to travel. Many attendees noted that being able to take part in the cross-laying ceremony made them feel included, even from a distance. As one member put it, *"It was special to still be part of the service and not be forgotten."*

The Legacy attendees also shared how moving the service was, even through the livestream. Several members expressed interest in attending again next year and bringing more people from the community. Some chose to lay their crosses on the day, while others planned to do so at the town's ANZAC Day service. A number of attendees also took programs to share with family members outside the region, extending the reach of the occasion.

This gathering in Laurieton reflects our commitment to ensuring that remembrance is not limited by location. Whether in city centres or regional towns, we want to help members continue to find meaningful ways to come together, honour service, and carry forward the memory of those they've lost.



Gathering for the ANZAC Field of Remembrance in Albury

In Albury, Guild members gathered at Legacy House for morning tea and to watch the ANZAC Field of Remembrance service via livestream. Thirteen people attended this year, with some travelling from Wodonga to join the group. The gathering still provided an opportunity to come together and reflect.

The Albury group appreciated being able to take part. As one attendee noted, *"We did appreciate having that livestream because if we didn't, we wouldn't have got any at all."* The morning was simple and focused—sharing tea, conversation, and the service. Attendees valued the chance to be part of the broader remembrance, even from a distance. We are grateful for the ongoing support and assistance of the local Legacy Club who has facilitated this live stream for the last two years.



Gathering at the RSL Shoalhaven Veteran and Family Hub in Nowra

In Nowra, six war widows gathered at the Shoalhaven Veteran and Family Hub to watch the ANZAC Field of Remembrance service together. Held in the Purple Poppy Room, the morning included tea, scones and cake.

The livestream created a chance to pause and reflect in the company of others. The women appreciated being able to recognise the day together, and the hub valued the opportunity to support those in the local veteran community through shared remembrance. Thank you to RSL LifeCare for the support with this gathering.

Gathering in Coffs Harbour for war widows in the region

Guild members gathered at C.ex Coffs to take part in this year's ANZAC Field of Remembrance livestream. Around 20 war widows attended, most travelling from towns across the region including Grafton, Macksville and Nambucca.

The livestream ran smoothly, and the group appreciated being able to take part without needing to travel to Sydney. As one member put it, it was a *"wonderful day"* and *"a good service."* The gathering offered a way for members from across the mid-north coast to come together locally and take part in remembrance in a setting that was both accessible and familiar.

Goulburn ANZAC Field of Remembrance gathering

In Goulburn, members gathered at the Goulburn Soldiers Club for morning tea and to watch the ANZAC Field of Remembrance livestream together for the first time. Eight war widows attended. In a meaningful mark of support, the café had prepared fresh ANZAC biscuits for the week, adding a fitting touch to the occasion.

For many, the service brought back memories of attending in person. As one member shared, *"It's wonderful to view the service rather than just being told about it."* While age and distance now make travel to Sydney difficult, being able to watch the service together in a group of those who just get it meant a great deal.

The group appreciated the opportunity to be included, with one attendee travelling in from Yass to join. After the service, a few stayed on for lunch and spoke about plans for future gatherings. This local event marked the first time the livestream was shared in Goulburn—something members hope will continue. It provided a practical, respectful way to stay connected to the ANZAC Field of Remembrance and to each other.



President Queen Dunbar at the Lest We Forget Harbour Sunset Tribute at the Sydney Opera House on ANZAC Day eve.

Representing war widows & families ANZAC Day 2025

ANZAC Day is a time to remember the service and sacrifice of Australian men and women — and the sacrifices made by their families. For war widows and veteran families, being represented at commemorations is a recognition that was hard fought for and remains deeply significant. This year, members attended services across Sydney, regional NSW and Victoria, ensuring that our community was seen, acknowledged and honoured at commemorations across the state and beyond.

The gravity of ANZAC Day is not only seen in formal tributes but felt deeply in the quieter, more personal moments: a veteran's tears, a widow's steadying hand, generations laying flowers for someone they never met. These are the moments that remind us that the freedoms we enjoy came at a cost. As our CEO reflected, ANZAC Day is not only a time of remembrance, but of deep personal reckoning; of what is, and what

could have been. It is a powerful reminder that Australia's peace is protected by sacrifice. On 11 April, Northern Beaches War Widows Social Club Coordinator, Pamela Goodhart-Dodd, represented the Guild at the Pittwater House School ANZAC Service at Collaroy, where students, staff and community members gathered to reflect on the meaning of service.

On 13 April, President Queen Dunbar and Member Sue Doolin

attended the Five Dock RSL ANZAC Day Service and Luncheon at Five Dock Park and Club Five Dock. Community members came together to honour our veterans, followed by a gathering to continue the tradition of remembrance.

On 22 April, President Queen Dunbar and CEO Renee Wilson attended the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Service. Renee spoke at the event, highlighting the impacts of service and all that

is given for the country we enjoy today. Wreaths were laid in honour of all who have served.

On 23 April, Pamela Goodhart-Dodd participated in the RSL LifeCare Commemorative Service at Narrabeen, laying a wreath at the Montgomery Memorial Wall alongside veterans, families and residents.

On ANZAC Day itself, Guild representatives attended services across NSW and beyond. Board Chair Tricia Hobson and President Queen Dunbar attended the RSL NSW Dawn Service at the Martin Place Cenotaph, where the community gathered despite early rain.

Member Michelle Carr and her children represented the Guild at the Chatswood RSL Dawn Service, while Adele Richards attended the Medowie RSL Dawn Service, honouring local veterans and families through a wreath-laying tribute.

At North Ryde, Member Nola Hill took part in the RSL Memorial Garden service and community march. Members Kay Meredith and Judy Cole attended the Mounties ANZAC Day Service, while Member Merle Kelly represented the Guild at the Wodonga RSL Service, joining large regional turnouts across Victoria.

On the eve of ANZAC Day, President Queen Dunbar and Member Wendy McKean attended the Lest We Forget Harbour Sunset Tribute at the Sydney Opera House. Broadcast nationally, the ceremony brought together veterans, families and the wider community to mark the “going down of the sun” with stories, tributes and music.

The presence of our organisation representatives at these services is a reminder that the place of war widows and veteran families at commemorations was hard fought for. It continues to be important that we are visible and recognised. The ongoing support of the community, veterans and families ensures that the sacrifices of all those who served — and those who stood beside them — are not forgotten. Thank you to all members who represented war widows and veteran families this ANZAC Day.

Lest We Forget.



Top: Sue Doolin and her family at the Five Dock RSL ANZAC Day Service.

Middle: Queen Dunbar and Wendy McKean carrying torches at the Lest We Forget Harbour Sunset Tribute.

Bottom: Pamela Goodhart-Dodd at the RSL LifeCare Commemorative Service at Narrabeen.

LEST WE FORGET



Above: CEO Renee Wilson, delivering the ANZAC Day address at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Service.



Above: President Queen Dunbar (right) laying a wreath at the RSL NSW Dawn Service in Sydney.



Above: Member Wendy McKean laying a wreath at the Lest We Forget Harbour Sunset Tribute.



Above: Member Adele Richards representing war widows and veteran families at the Medowie RSL Dawn Service.



Above: Member Sue Doolin (left) and President Queen Dunbar (right) at the Five Dock RSL ANZAC Day Service.



Above: Member Michelle Carr and her children, Monique and Mason at the Chatswood RSL Dawn Service.



One community, one legacy: *war widows & veteran families march together*

On 25 April, for ANZAC Day, members and their families joined thousands in the Sydney CBD for the ANZAC Day March, walking behind a joint banner that brought together war widows and veteran families. This marked a significant moment of unity and visibility for our community.

The March, organised by RSL NSW, commenced at 9:00am along Elizabeth Street, following the Dawn Service at Martin Place. Despite early morning rain, more than 7,000 people gathered to honour those who served and their families.

For many war widows, participating in the March is a reminder of the long journey toward recognition. Decades ago, women like Jessie Vasey fought for the right to be seen and heard in commemorations that often overlooked their sacrifices. This year, walking side by side with younger generations of veteran families, our members continued that legacy.

The joint banner symbolised not only remembrance but also the evolving identity of our organisation. Since adopting the brand name 'Families of Veterans Guild' last year, we've aimed to

reflect the broader community we serve while honouring our roots. While change can be challenging, the presence of both longstanding and new members in the March demonstrated a shared commitment to ensuring that the sacrifices of war widows and veteran families are acknowledged.

Participation in the ANZAC Day March reinforces our place in the national story of service and sacrifice. It reminds us that remembrance is not only about the past but also about the ongoing support and recognition of those who continue to bear the burden of service.

Wellbeing Activities update

Over the past few months, we've had the privilege of hosting a variety of wellbeing activities for war widows, defence and veteran families. These activities have brought people together and offered a space to connect, relax, and recharge; something we all need, especially those walking the journey of being a war widow.



Our wellbeing activities are intentionally designed to cater to all ages and interests. Whether you're someone who enjoys getting creative, connecting with nature, or simply finding a quiet moment to reflect, there's something for everyone. For those of you who can't always make it to in-person activities in Sydney or Canberra, we've embraced the flexibility of online activities, allowing more widows and families from across Australia to join from the comfort of their own homes. It's been encouraging to see how these online sessions have allowed people to come together, even if they live far away.

In March, we ran a sound healing session, set against the backdrop of Cronulla Beach. Family members were immersed in the sounds of crystal bowls. It was a moment for everyone to pause, breathe, and simply be present. What followed was just as powerful: families shared experiences, stories, and offered one another support in a way only those who understand can.

Over four weeks in March, war widows and families in Canberra came together for a ukulele workshop. Led by Geoff and Pauline Bairnsfather, participants learned to play chords and songs, but the real value came from the bonds that were formed among the group as they shared in the experience of learning something

new together. There's something about picking up an instrument, no matter your age or skill level, that helps break down barriers and bring people closer together.

In Canberra, we also held a macrame wall hanging workshop. War widows and families sat together, crafting and chatting, and for many, it was more than just making something—it was about meeting new people, sharing a laugh, and nurturing social connections. There's power in those small moments where we can escape from the everyday, especially when we do it alongside others who are navigating, or have navigated, similar challenges.

The wellbeing walk in April around Yerrabi Pond in Canberra was another example of these activities reaching a diverse group. The 3km walk brought families closer to nature and to each other, as they enjoyed the vibrant birdlife and surroundings. It was a simple, grounding activity, but also an opportunity to continue building relationships, with some participants even bonding over drinks afterward at a local café.

Online we saw more people come to get to work with clay. War widows and veteran families from all over Australia joined virtually, creating their own clay artwork while

engaging in mindfulness. It was a chance to slow down, focus, and tune into the present moment—all from the comfort of home.

For many, the opportunity to try something new is what makes these activities so meaningful. From journaling workshops, where families explored gratitude and reflection, to kokedama (Japanese moss ball) workshops, where everyone got their hands dirty making plants together, there's always something to spark creativity and foster connection. Each activity is intentionally designed to create a safe space for war widows, partners, parents, and children to come together and enjoy a moment of peace in their lives.

Whether online or in person, we've seen how these activities can help families, particularly war widows, feel connected and supported. One participant shared that, *"I wouldn't have stopped and taken the time to engage in a mindful activity on my own, but when I can join a facilitated activity with other people on similar journeys, I am able to hold myself accountable for my self-care."* It's a simple truth: when we're with others who understand, it's easier to make time for ourselves.

As we move forward, we encourage all war widows to stay informed about upcoming activities and to join our private Facebook group. This is where you'll be the first to hear

about activities, whether they're in your area or online, and you'll have the chance to find something that suits your interests and needs. These activities are designed to provide opportunities to connect, relax, and explore new things, no matter your age or where you're located.

We hope to see more of you at our upcoming activities, whether in person or online. Remember, you're not alone—these activities are for you, with you in mind. We're here to walk alongside you, offering not just activities, but a chance to grow, to connect, and to care for yourself.















VALE

 Alexandra Tchan WOY WOY	 Gloria Evans COFFS HARBOUR	 Muriel Dewberry REVESBY
 Alisa Bramley LONG JETTY	 Grace Evans DAPTO	 Noelene Mahoney PENSHURST
 Anne Roddick PENRITH	 Heather Boyce DENISTONE	 Norma England MUDGEE
 Beryl Marshall CORLETTE	 Helen Taylor TASCOTT	 Norma Nicol CARSS PARK
 Betty law ROSELANDS	 Irene Harvey WOY WOY	 Patricia Davis GOROKAN
 Betty Wright OAM WOOLGOOLGA	 Jacqueline Pobjoy	 Patricia Lloyd PEAKHURST
 Cecily Atton HEATHCOTE	 EAST QUEANBEYAN	 Patricia Jennings CRANE BROOK
 Daun Matheson NARRABEEN	 Jill Tinson KINCUMBER	 Patricia Keedle MACQUARIE
 Dawn Binns GRAFTON	 Joan O'Donnell W. PYMBLE	 FIELDS
 Dawn Welfare ASHFIELD	 Joyce Brown LEURA	 Patricia MacAlpine CRONULLA
 Diana McGrath BRAIDWOOD	 Joyce Yates HORNSBY	 Patricia Potter CASTLE HILL
 Doreen Owen W. WODONGA	 June Annesley CHARMHAVEN	 Ruth Brown BALLINA
 Dulcie Davis LEPPINGTON	 Laurel Munday CHERRYBROOK	 Sandar Thomas PENRITH
 Eileen Wedderburn GREENACRE	 Lynette Rolfe SANCTUARY PT	 Shirley Cahill RIVERWOOD
 Elizabeth Cadden PALM BEACH	 Margaret Eley BANORA POINT	 Shirley Webb GLEBE
 Elsie Mary Howard SPRINGWOOD	 Margaret Hyde WILLOUGHBY	 Sylvia Mitchell NARRABEEN
 Emily Clark ALLAWAH	 Margaret Stubbs CASTLE HILL	 Winifred Fallick COLLAROY
 Ethel Lacey WOOLLAHRA	 Margaret Tanner RIVERVIEW	 PLATEAU
 Faye Bartlett UMINA	 Marie Blackstock W. WYALONG	 Yvonne Langdon WAGGA
 Gladys Williams WELLINGTON	 Marlene Shields QUEANBEYAN	 WAGGA
 Gladys Wright WYOMING	 Mary Rose Hall KURNELL	

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

Welcome new members

-  Barbara Glasson ORANGE
-  Betty Hume VINCENTIA
-  Daphne Rae NARRABEEN
-  Donella Kinnish DUNGARUBBA
-  Elsie Russ KELLYVILLE RIDGE
-  Glenice Muggleton NOWRA
-  Ian Campbell MOSMAN
-  Margaret McNeil LAKE CATHIE
-  Nancy Baker HUSKISSON
-  Pauline James OAM RABY
-  Ruth Kelly MURRUMBATEMAN
-  Shaoru Lin BALMAIN

We can't wait to get to
know you!



Members who recently turned 100

-  Anita Shepherd ALSTONVILLE
-  Beryl O'Rourke KILLARNEY VALE
-  Beryl Copas SUTHERLAND
-  Daphne Ashton UMINA BEACH
-  Helen Taylor TASCOTT
-  Joan Wilmore PATERSON
-  Joan McLauchlan FRENCHS FOREST
-  Joyce Waters EMU PLAINS
-  Joyce Sutherland MUDGEE
-  Margaret Wright LAURIETON
-  Margaret Bradford CROMER
-  Marjorie Cameron LAURIETON
-  Patricia Sweeney GORDON
-  Shirley Jarrett LOFTUS

Happy Birthday!





Vale Dawn Welfare, Life Member

We pay tribute to Dawn Welfare, a dedicated member of our community and a former Board Director, who passed away recently. Dawn's commitment to supporting veterans and their families was evident throughout her involvement with our organisation.

Dawn was the wife of Korean War veteran Kevin Welfare, who served with the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. Though Dawn and Kevin met after the war in 1966, she became increasingly proud of Kevin's service as she learned more about his experiences. Kevin was passionate about supporting fellow veterans and was posthumously awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for his services to the veteran community. Dawn often spoke of her desire to ensure the sacrifices of Korean War veterans were not forgotten.

Within our organisation, Dawn was known for her leadership and community spirit. As the coordinator of the Petersham Social Club, she helped bring members together, creating a space of connection and support. Dawn also played an important role in securing funds through the Petersham Fund, helping to strengthen the organisation's future.

Dawn valued the sense of belonging that came from being part of the war widows community. She spoke about the understanding and connection that came from sharing stories and experiences with other members. Her dedication to remembering the contributions of veterans and their families will be long remembered.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Dawn's family, friends, and all who knew her. She will be dearly missed.

Pictured above: Dawn Welfare (front centre) with fellow war widows and her daughter on War Widows Day in 2024.

***"When you get with war widows,
you get this feeling, you know."***

- Dawn Welfare



Vale Margaret Tanner, Life Member

We are saddened to recognise the recent passing of Life Member Margaret Tanner. At 103 years old, Margaret was one of Australia's oldest remaining war widows and a respected member of our organisation.

Margaret became a war widow in 1949 when she lost her husband, Noel Tanner, who served as a skipper during World War Two. She was left to raise their young son on her own and faced the challenges of widowhood with quiet strength and resilience. Margaret chose to build a life grounded in family, friendship, and community involvement.

Margaret joined Australian War Widows NSW in 1951, starting her involvement with the City Evening group at Sydney RSL in 1968, encouraged by her friend Betty Bromley. From then on, she remained involved and connected. Margaret valued the support and companionship she found within the Guild and made many lasting friendships.

Known for her willingness to meet new people, she often shared how much she appreciated the company of other war widows, especially at social events and meetings.

Reflecting on her long life, Margaret spoke about how grateful she was for the support she received as a war widow, recognising that earlier generations did not have the same opportunities for connection. Her words and actions demonstrated her commitment to building and maintaining a strong community of support for widows.

Margaret will be remembered for her practical wisdom, her enduring friendships, and her quiet determination to live life on her own terms. We extend our deepest condolences to Margaret's family and friends.

Pictured above: Margaret Tanner (left) with her niece on War Widows Day in 2023.

Open Arms group programs & activities

Open Arms offers a range of free group programs to assist war widows, defence and veteran families, in living their best life. It's recommended speaking with an Open Arms staff member for assistance in finding the right program for you.

Open Arms' range of group activities includes both face-to-face group treatment programs and online groups that target wellbeing and mental health.

They currently have no face-to-face programs in NSW, but there are several online workshops to help you cover topics that might be applicable in your life. You do not have to be a part of Open Arms to register, and it is free for all war widows, defence and veteran families.

The online session will usually run no longer than an hour and a half. You can learn more about these programs and enrol by visiting their website (scan the QR code below). You can choose your state as 'Online', then view all the different workshops currently running.

As of now, there are sessions in May and June open for registering interest:

- Doing anger differently
- Sleeping better
- Managing pain
- Recovery from trauma



Stay Safe Online

When was the last time you changed your email password?

Our email accounts have become crucial tools for communication. However, they also pose attractive targets for hackers. One of the simplest yet most effective ways to protect your email account from unauthorised access is by regularly changing your password.

Hackers can send malicious emails to your contacts, posing as you. This can lead to problems, including the spread of viruses, phishing scams, and even identity theft.

Remember, keeping your email account secure not only protects your information but also safeguards your contacts from potential threats. Taking a few minutes to update your password can save you and your loved ones a lot of trouble. Make it a habit – your digital security is worth the effort!

Do you have a copy of the Little Black 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 Black 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!



Veteran Hearing Services Framework

The Veteran Hearing Services Framework helps ensure that veterans and eligible spouses can access hearing aids and maintenance services through the Hearing Services Program (HSP). It focuses on providing fair and consistent funding for appropriate hearing devices, especially for those with service-related hearing loss.

What's Covered:

- **Hearing Aids:** Fully subsidised aids through the HSP.
- **Maintenance and Repairs:** An annual maintenance agreement covers maintenance costs, including repairs, batteries, and cleaning. Providers can claim these costs using DVA-specific item numbers (e.g., item 777).
- **Replacement Aids:** If hearing aids funded through the HSP are lost, stolen, or damaged, replacements are covered without additional fees (admin fees waived for DVA clients).
- **No Out-of-Pocket Costs:** There are no gap payments for fully subsidised hearing aids under the current DVA health card arrangements.

Visit your local hearing services provider to discuss your needs and get your voucher.

For more information, or to check if you might be eligible, visit www.dva.gov.au/veteran-hearing-services-framework, call the Hearing Services Program on 1800 500 726, or email Hearing@dva.gov.au.

How can My Aged Care empower you?

My Aged Care offers information, assessments, referrals, and support to help individuals access services that enable them to live independently and with autonomy. By providing a clear pathway to services such as in-home care, short-term support, and residential aged care, My Aged Care empowers older Australians to make informed decisions and maintain control over their care choices.

<https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/> or phone: 1800 200 422

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

