



FAMILIES
OF VETERANS GUILD
Owned by Australian War Widows NSW Ltd

WINTER 2025

THE GUILD DIGEST

OUR COMMON BOND



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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BRIG King CSC and M Carr.

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THE DIGEST

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DISCLAIMER:

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

Online writing through grief

18 September 2025

Canberra kokedama workshop

19 September 2025

Cook and connect: family dinner

24 September 2025

Canberra Floriade wellbeing walk

25 September 2025

Sydney clay art session

27 September 2025

Sydney wellbeing walk

3 October 2025

Canberra wellbeing walk

3 October 2025

Sydney picnic at Government House

5 October 2025

Online watercolour painting

8 October 2025

Online writing through grief

16 October 2025

Key Dates

Arrival of INTERFET in East Timor (1999)

20 September 2025

World Maritime Day

25 September 2025

Vietnam Forces Welcome Home Parade, Sydney (1987)

3 October 2025

World Mental Health Day

10 October 2025

War Widows Day

19 October 2025

United Nations Day

24 October 2025

Change of Beersheba (1917)

31 October 2025

AIF first convoy sails from Albany (1914)

1 November 2025

World War One Armistice signed (1918)

11 November 2025

Remembrance Day

11 November 2025

War Widows Guild of Australia formed (1945)

22 November 2025

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HIGHLIGHTS





From left to right: Queen Dunbar with Jo Turner and Michelle Carr at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance lunch.

I have been reflecting on the past 12 months and the time we have spent together.

It has been a year full of connections, commemorations and support grounded in the shared understanding that comes from us walking this path with you together.

Throughout the last financial year, I have attended 12 club events, including five in regional NSW, and represented war widows at 15 official commemorations. Each occasion is an opportunity to remember and to ensure our stories continue to be heard.

Our 72nd Annual ANZAC Field of Remembrance was a standout moment. Many of you joined us for what was our largest attendance in years. Bringing the Field back to the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park meant that every cross and every loved one's name was in the Hall of Memory for all to see.

On ANZAC Day, we returned to the March, thanks to the efforts of Lynne Boyd, and I was proud to walk alongside other widows, children, and veteran families down Elizabeth Street. Later that day, I was honoured to represent you at the Remembrance Foundation's ANZAC Day Tribute Concert, where I read the ANZAC Requiem. It was for many a moment of reflection that acknowledged the service and sacrifice of all who have served, and the loss carried by their families.

War Widows Day in October 2024 was another important milestone. Many members joined us for the service in Martin Place and lunch at the Fullerton Hotel, while 10 clubs hosted their own gatherings around the state and commemorated this day within their own communities. The day was marked by our War Widows Day symbol, the wattle, and supported by the Governor-General, Sam Mostyn AC.

I also want to acknowledge the work of our volunteers, who last year organised more than 600 club gatherings and made over 5,000 Friendship Line calls. Those calls and gatherings keep war widows connected, especially during times when distance or circumstances make it harder to come together.

Some of my most meaningful moments as your President have been on the road, meeting members in places like Forster, Port Macquarie, Laurieton and Newcastle. Meeting Jennifer St George, granddaughter of Jessie Vasey CBE OBE, was a reminder of the long history and enduring purpose of our Guild. I've also met women whose lives have been changed through our services, including social work support, and I've been reminded that the need for what we do remains as strong as ever.

This calendar year is already well underway, with the 2025 ANZAC Field of Remembrance, ANZAC Day and over 20 commemorative events behind us. While we've had fewer regional visits so far due to resourcing, I am looking forward to getting back out there to see more of you before the year ends.

Thank you for the way you support each other, uphold our traditions, and share your stories, ensuring the sacrifices of war widows and veteran families are never forgotten.

MS QUEEN DUNBAR
President



Tricia Hobson laying a wreath on behalf of war widows and veteran families at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance.

I have been Chair of the Board for 3 years now and have served on the Board since 2019. During this time, I have seen the organisation grow in all areas of governance, structure, programs, services management and leadership.

Over the last few years, we have invested in our future by evolving to respond to changes in our environment which presented risks to the longevity of the organisation. This investment in time resources and capability has seen the organisation re-establish itself and set the conditions for sustained success.

In the latter half of last year, the Board focused heavily on the development of a new funding strategy for the organisation. This work resulted in a comprehensive plan for the organisation which sets out the funding needs, and outlines strategies and activities required to achieve them. The central aim of the

funding plan is to minimise the organisation's reliance on our reserves to fund the organisation's operations. Instead moving to a model where the operations of the organisation are mainly funded in partnership with government and philanthropic donors.

To achieve this, we need to build new funding channels and programs to increase the revenue generated through these streams. Work under this funding plan commenced this financial year and is in its early stages. I look forward to keeping you up to date on this work throughout the year.

Understanding member experience is central to the Board in making its decisions, which is why throughout the year we introduced the Member Feedback Initiative which I wrote to members about earlier this year. In July, we held our first feedback session hearing from two members. These members shared with us their thoughts

and experiences regarding the implementation of the branding work, the scope of programs and services, their thoughts on integrating the membership base and the advocacy needs of war widows.

As a direct result of what we heard in this session the Board, through the CEO is:

- Adjusting the tag line under the brand name;
- Ensuring wellbeing activities are marketed to war widows; and
- Expanding wellbeing and engagement activities.

Our next session is in October, and I look forward to keeping you up to date.

Finally, I wanted to let you know we have been approached by War Widows SA to support their membership from 2026 as they wind up this year. The Board has considered this proposal carefully. The Board was keen to ensure that by extending our support to SA we were not diminishing services and support available to NSW war widows and members. Following a detailed analysis, we are comfortable that resources will not be diminished following a transfer of assets from War Widow SA to fund the extension of our support. More detail will come on this as we work through that with War Widows SA.

War Widows are at the heart of who we are and what we do, and we don't want to see any left behind no matter where they live.

MS TRICIA HOBSON
Board Chair



The Hon Matt Keogh MP lays a wreath at the Australian National Korean War Memorial in Canberra to mark the 75th anniversary of Australian service in the Korean War. (Image: Department of Defence)

I am honoured to have been re-appointed Minister for Veterans' Affairs following the federal election in May. Having undertaken this job for three years and through engagement with organisations like yours, I am only too aware of the significant challenges and opportunities confronted by veterans and families.

In my last column, I noted our work with the veteran community on the co-design of a new agency focused on veteran and family wellbeing, as recommended by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is now drawing together the findings from those consultations to inform an operating model, governance structures and accountability frameworks of a new veteran and family wellbeing agency.

Importantly, the development of the new agency is being shaped by the veteran community for the veteran community. The government is committed to delivering better

outcomes for veterans and families and we see the new agency as an important driving force to that end.

That is why we have approached the design of the new agency as a partnership with the veteran community since the Royal Commission handed down its findings. My personal thanks to those who have already contributed their time and ideas to this process.

Further, we have now legislated to establish an oversight body for Defence and DVA, the Defence and Veteran Service Commission and appointed interim Commissioners. This delivers on what the Royal Commission called its most important recommendation.

The Albanese Government will continue to work through this year on implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

It is also important that we commemorate the service and sacrifice of our Defence Force members, and there are a number of significant milestones this year.

In June, hundreds of Australians joined Korean War veterans, families and descendants for a moving National Commemorative Service in Canberra for the 75th anniversary of Australian service in the Korean War. Over 18,000 Australian personnel served in Korea, with more than 360 of them paying the ultimate price – more than 40 are still missing in action, presumed dead.

August 15 was the 80th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific and the end of the Second World War. The Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial paid special tribute to the men and women who served. Almost a million Australians were enlisted to serve in this conflict, both on the home front and overseas.

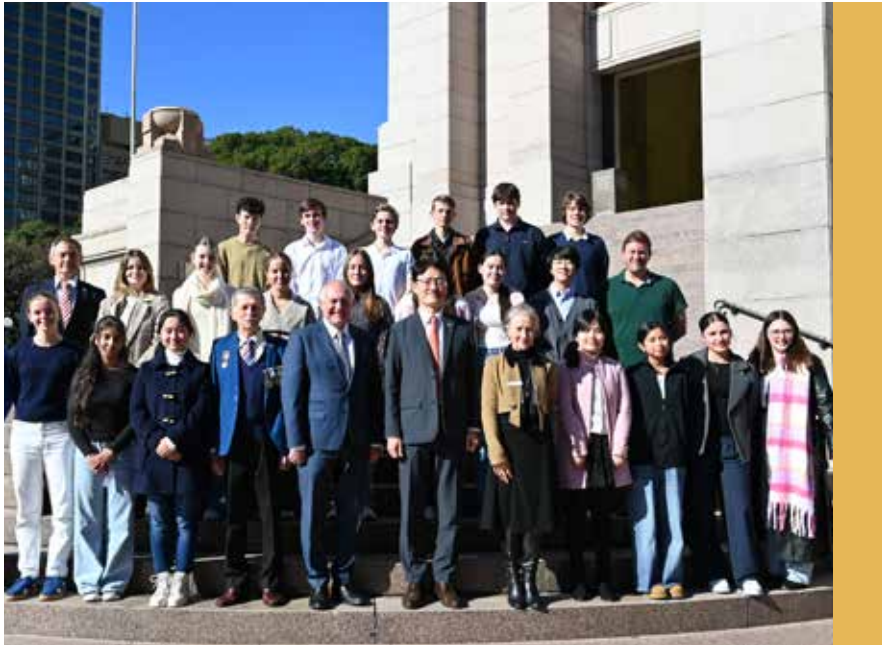
You would be only too aware that soon after the end of the war, Mrs Jessie Mary Vasey founded the Australian War Widows Craft Guild, the forerunner of the Families of Veterans Guild and the other associations doing such remarkable work supporting war widows, war widowers and their families around Australia.

And so it is fitting I wish Australian War Widows Inc. a happy 80th anniversary, along with my best wishes for the forthcoming War Widows Day in October.

At the end of August, the nation will pause again for a solemn National Commemorative Service to mark 75 years since Australians began to serve in the Malayan Emergency.

Finally, thank you for your work in supporting war widows and veteran families.

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



Minister Harris, the Consul-General of the Republic of Korea, Korean War veteran Johny Bineham, Tour Historian Brad Manera and Caroline Mackaness with the PAMS 2025 Scholars and Teachers.

Thank you for this opportunity to connect with the Families of Veterans Guild and War Widows community. It's been a typically busy few months.

In May, I was pleased to announce the NSW Government's partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs and RSL LifeCare in the adaptive reuse of Richmond Court House to develop a new Veterans' and Families' Hub that will support veterans and their families in the Hawkesbury.

Works will begin later this year to restore and revitalise the court house into a custom designed facility to support veterans and their families in the region. For more information on the Richmond Veterans and Families Hub, visit www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/richmond-court-house/

I also recently announced that the NSW Government has expanded free vehicle access to NSW national parks to all DVA Veteran Card holders, including those with a White Card or

Orange Card. NSW has an incredible network of 895 national parks and reserves that conserve close to 10 per cent of the state. Removing the charge will make it easier for all Commonwealth Veteran Card holders to enjoy more of these natural wonderlands. To apply for the pass, visit pass.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/concession/

In June, the Anzac Memorial opened a new exhibition, Art From Behind the Wire. The exhibition features posters, magazines and other printed material created by Second World War prisoners of war as well as sketches of the Japanese war crimes trials held on Morotai in December 1945. The exhibition closes at the end of October and I encourage you to take a look if you have the chance. For full details visit www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/event/art-behind-wire

Also in June I was pleased to announce the two veteran artists awarded as the 2025 Anzac Memorial Veteran Artists in Residence. Congratulations to

Hugh Semple, a watercolour painter and Warrick Young a film maker who have each received \$10,000 thanks to support from the Veterans Benevolent Fund to use the Memorial for inspiration for their art.

On 15 August, we commemorated Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day, the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. A series of events took place at the Anzac Memorial including tours of the Air Raid Shelters in Hyde Park and the display of a WW2 searchlight. It was a special opportunity to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of our Second World War veterans. We also commemorated Vietnam Veterans Day on 18 August, on the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan.

In September, the Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship will see twenty scholars with a passion for history participate in a study tour to the Republic of Korea and Singapore. I recently met the students at the Anzac Memorial, and wish them well on their trip. You can learn more about the Scholarship and trip on the Office for Veterans Affairs website – www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/pams

As Minister for Veterans, I am proud to be involved with the veteran community and I look forward to continuing working closely with the war widows and the families of veterans in 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

Operation Update

Since the start of the year, we have made a number of changes to how the organisation is operating. In this Operation Update, our CEO, Renee Wilson provides information on changes to structure and improvements to service delivery.

As many are aware, in March our War Widows Program Manager Joanne decided to move on from the organisation. Over the last three years, Joanne has done a wonderful job navigating the War Widows Program through and out of COVID, engaging regionally and supporting many widows around the state.

With Joanne's departure, I spent time looking at the resourcing needs of the organisation and reviewed our staffing structure. As we move forward, it is important that we bring the War Widows Program along the journey and improve what we do and how we do it. I am also keen to enhance the support we provide to all our volunteers.

As a result of this work, I have realigned the program and service delivery functions under the leadership and management of Lisa Stephenson. As many of you know, Lisa has worked on war widows services before and has established a thriving Wellbeing Program and social work service over the last 12 months. Bringing the War Widows Program under Lisa's leadership with my support will enable us to enhance our service delivery, increase our impact and importantly, provide better support to you all.

Working with Lisa on this journey is a new social worker, Hayley, who comes to us with experience working in community organisations that connect people to resources and support in their community. She is already helping us integrate new processes within the program.

We have also recently welcomed a new Operations Manager, Jacinta. Jacinta is experienced in the non-for-profit sector and joins us from Special Olympics Australia. Jacinta will deliver a new framework for the organisation to help us recruit, retain and support more volunteers throughout the organisation. She will also focus on membership management, policy and process implementation and grant funding.

Over the coming months those accessing services through the War Widows, Social Work and Wellbeing Programs can expect more engagement as we check subscriptions to services, confirm consent, prepare new volunteer guidelines and frameworks and develop new reports to support social club coordinators. We are also embarking on implementing our first strategic funding plan for the organisation over the next few months. This will become more visible as we start to build key funding channels like donations and bequests.

We are excited about delivering all of this with and for you.

RENEE WILSON
Chief Operating Officer

PROGRAMS & SERVICES UNDER LISA'S LEADERSHIP



Advocacy Update

Progress, persistence and the power of our voice

It has been an important few months for veteran families across the country and for our ongoing advocacy efforts. From national inquiries to sector reform consultations, we've worked hard to ensure that the experiences of war widows, partners, children, carers and families of veterans are seen, heard and acted upon.

In this update, we highlight our recent work in four key areas: recognition for families of those wounded, injured or killed in service; the establishment of a Defence and Veteran Services Commission; the creation of a national peak body for the veteran support sector; and a review of the veteran compensation and income support system.

Recognition for sacrifice: a senate inquiry recommends action

On 19 June 2025, the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee tabled its report into the Defence Honours and Awards System. In a major step forward, the Committee supported our call to government seeking the implementation of the 2021 Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal Report;

"It is clear to the Committee that currently medallic recognition only depicts an ADF member

or veteran's service and omits the consequences they or their family have sacrificed as a result of their service."

The Committee's 5th Recommendation asks the Australian Government to consider implementing the 2021 recommendations and create new forms of medallic and emblematic recognition for veterans and their families who have been wounded, injured or killed as a result of service.

We are particularly proud that our submission—and our evidence at the February hearing—was quoted in the final report. Our CEO, Renee Wilson, gave voice to the experience many families carry silently:

"The lack of that recognition in our system means there is no

conversation starter, no purple heart, for instance, on someone's chest on ANZAC Day that causes the conversation, 'hey, tell me about your service.'"

This is an important moment. Our voices were heard. We are grateful to the Senate Committee for listening.

Access the
report here



Rethinking compensation and income support

In May, we made a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Compensation and Income Support for Veterans. This system remains one of the most complex and challenging areas of the veteran experience.

While recent reforms have consolidated legislation, the adversarial

culture and bureaucratic hurdles remain. Veterans and families still need help navigating entitlements—often relying on underfunded advocacy services. Our submission calls for a return to the founding principles of the compensation system: recognising the unique

nature of military service, and ensuring fair, timely and transparent access to support.

We also incorporated direct feedback from veteran families—who shared a mix of frustrations, from poor advocacy quality to delays and administrative burden. Their voices

highlight the urgency of cultural and procedural change at the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Read our full submission via this QR code.



Building a stronger sector: towards a national peak body

Throughout April and May, we were involved in the consultations to design a national peak body for the veteran support sector and Veteran Wellbeing Agency, implementing Recommendations 87 and 89 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

These consultations have highlighted the diversity

and complexity of our sector, and the clear need for independent, accountable leadership to support organisations working across the country.

We've heard strong themes emerge around equity, inclusion, capacity-building, and sector-wide collaboration. A peak body can serve as a

strategic voice for veterans and their families and as a mechanism for enabling long-term structural change within our sector.

Importantly, this body will not replace our organisation or our advocacy. It will complement and could strengthen our work, providing another

vehicle through which we can raise the voices of war widows and veteran families.

We look forward to seeing the outcomes of these consultations and to ensuring that the needs of families remain central in future reform.

Supporting systemic reform: the Defence and Veteran Services Commission

In June, we made a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the legislation establishing the new Defence and Veteran Services Commission. This Commission will deliver on Recommendation 122 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

We strongly support this step forward, but have advocated for a clearer, stronger objective that reflects the complex nature of suicide prevention.

We've proposed a revised object: *"... to improve wellbeing outcomes for veterans and their families and reduce the incidents of suicide and suicidality among the veteran community through the provision of independent, evidence-based advice of system reform."*

This wording reflects the real needs of our community. It also centres the role of families and seek their

inclusion. Including families in this legislation is fundamental to creating an obligation to support them and inquiring into issues they face.

In August, our CEO provided further

evidence to the Senate Committee during their public hearing, building onto our submission and amplifying the voices of war widows and families who have shared their experiences with us.

Watch the
hearings here



The work continues

As always, thank you to everyone who has shared their story, written to a Senator, or responded to one of our requests for feedback. Your lived experience is what shapes our advocacy—and gives it power.

Each of these efforts reflects the real lives, needs and sacrifices of war widows and veteran families. If you would like to share your lived experience with us, please email ceo@fov.org.au or call (02) 9267 6577.

OUR 2025 AGM UPDATE

PROVIDING MEMBERS WITH INFORMATION FROM OUR AGM

The 26th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Australian War Widows NSW Ltd (now trading as the Families of Veterans Guild) was held on 27 August 2025. More than 50 members from around NSW joined the meeting in person and online to hear about the company's results for the year and its impact.



Financial results

The financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025 were presented, showing a strong financial position despite sustaining a deficit for the year. The company received an unqualified audit and continues to rely heavily on investment income, which accounted for 87% of revenue. Operational costs exceeded revenue, leading to a deficit, but investment losses have begun to recover in the new financial year.

Total revenue was \$1.4 million, with expenditures of \$2.2 million; 60% of

expenses were direct member and charitable benefits, 35% indirect benefits, and 5% administrative costs. Donations are fully allocated to program delivery, while other revenues fund broader operations. Throughout the year, program and service expenses increased, reflecting program activity and staff filling vacancies. The organisation performed better than budgeted, with a deficit of \$779,730 versus a projected \$1.55 million deficit, due to higher investment returns and lower expenditures. The upcoming budget of \$2.6 million allocates 61% to programs, 28% to enabling services, and 9% to administration. Since the strategic plan's start, equity reduced by only 6% (\$1.3 million), less than the anticipated 12%, reflecting close budget management and investment performance.

Impact and operations

Over the past year, the organisation has achieved significant progress in supporting war widows and veteran families through enhanced programs, advocacy, and communication efforts. Despite challenges such as an aging

membership base and contraction in some traditional programs, engagement has grown across digital platforms and wellbeing services. During the AGM, the CEO noted the following highlights:

- Membership trends and diversification: throughout the year Membership declined to 2018 members, mostly war widows aged over 90, but new membership growth was strong, especially among non-war widows, increasing by 83% over the previous year.
- Membership model update: in 2024, the Board approved a new membership model to distinguish services between financial and non-financial members. This model will provide members with more choice and flexibility in their membership options; the model will be implemented throughout this year.
- War Widows Engagement: more than 800 war widows were practically supported throughout the year by the war widows program, wellbeing and social work services.



- **Veteran Family Engagement:** more than 300 veteran families were engaged throughout the year through the wellbeing and social work services.
- **Media and digital engagement growth:** Although media engagements slightly decreased, key events like War Widows' Day boosted visibility, and the new website doubled visits, with social media reach expanding to 146,000 people.
- **Advocacy efforts and government relations:** The organisation actively engaged in advocacy throughout the year producing 61 advocacy products and dedicating over half of its efforts to building relationships with Government to raise the profile of the organisation and the needs of its community.

Looking ahead

Throughout the AGM, the Chair and CEO discussed the priorities for the coming year including:

- **Funding:** implementation of the organisation's new funding plan is an important focus throughout this year. Introducing greater diversity

into the organisation's revenue streams is important to ensure the organisation can continue to deliver its support and grow with the need. Key work will involve seeking funding from Government, introducing a bequest program and making connections with philanthropic organisations.

- **Member feedback:** feedback from members will continue to be a central focus of the Board and organisation to ensure that it continues to work with members to make decisions and improvements to the organisation. The Board's Member feedback initiative will continue throughout the year with the next session in October 2025.
- **Standing by our mission:** the organisation from 2026 will welcome war widows from War Widows SA Inc. into the organisation as that organisation closes. This decision drew spontaneous applause from the AGM room as members shared their pride in ensuring war widows are not being left behind.

Welcoming new Directors

During the AGM, the results of the call for directors was declared with 2 nominations received for 2 positions on the Board, no election was required. The Chair announced the reappointment of Ms Lynne Sullivan to the Board for her second term and the appointment of Ms Michelle Carr as a new director to the Board. Outgoing director Bree Till was thanked for her time on the Board.

Member recognition

The Board also recognised outstanding service with Board Commendations awarded to Marlene Sullivan, Caroline Wilkinson OAM and Jan Gorham, and Life Memberships awarded to Mary Palframan, Barbara Maladay, Heather Little and Jenny Ware, and celebrating their dedication, leadership, and the support they provide to their fellow members.

Life Membership was also awarded posthumously to Stuart Clark AM AFSM in recognition of his outstanding service, leadership, and lasting contribution to our organisation and community.





Nola Hill and her family at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance in 2024.

Nola Hill: *a journey of love & service*

Nola Hill knows well the life of military service. For 26 years, she was the partner of a serving defence member. Her husband, Allan, enlisted in the Australian Army in 1956 when he was 18 years old.

An engineer in the Army, Allan would go on to serve in the Malayan Emergency and the Vietnam War, as well as take various postings around the country and took part in Britain's nuclear weapons test at Maralinga in South Australia.

Nola met Allan at a pub in Sydney in 1960. At the time, Allan was posted to the 17th Construction Squadron in Randwick. The following year, he posted to 11 Chief Engineer Works

in Marrickville. It was during his posting in Marrickville, in 1963, that Nola and Allan married. Her first big test as a military wife came five years later when Allan left to serve in the Vietnam War.

"During Allan's time in Vietnam, there was no internet or mobile phones and it could take up to two months or more for mail to arrive," said Nola. *"You never knew where they were or if they were okay and it was always a great relief when a letter from him finally arrived."*

Nola said, on the whole, she didn't mind the Army life. But when Allan returned from Vietnam, and they packed up their lives in Sydney and moved to the other side of

the country so Allan could take a posting with 22 Construction Squadron in Perth, Nola said she found it hard to leave her family.

They would live in Western Australia for seven years and it was both a beautiful and difficult chapter of their lives. Nola was desperate to fall pregnant but it simply wasn't happening. Nola experienced a mix of emotions, which she navigated mainly alone without the support of her family and friends from back home.

Allan was also navigating complex emotions. Not long back from Vietnam, war was wreaking havoc with his wellbeing, and, in 1970, he started drinking more and had a nervous breakdown.

Allan would recover enough to return to work as a soldier and the following year, in 1971, Nola and Allan adopted a son named John. Now with a family of her own, Nola missed the support and comfort of her mother.

"We made some lovely friends in Western Australia," Nola explained. "The wife of the Officer in Charge of Allan's unit started a 'wives club'. It was great to meet the wives of other soldiers in the unit. We would meet and go to places. But it was hard not having mum there to help. We didn't have a phone to speak to each other, but we would write."

As fate would have, after adopting John in 1971, Nola fell pregnant in 1974 and her daughter Kerryn was born in June 1975. She would go on to have another daughter, Kylie, in January 1978.

As Nola speaks of her experience as the wife of a soldier, she is stoic and speaks positively of their life as a military family. She even said she missed the Army life after Allan retired. She missed the social aspect and meeting other wives.

But being the partner of a serving defence member is not without challenge. Nola said it is essential to learn how to cope without your partner, as well as take support from others.

"I think defence spouses become great at managing the bills, home maintenance, getting repairs, mowing the lawns – doing whatever needs to be done," said Nola.

She recalled a couple of stories when Allan was away with the Army and Nola was left to navigate

the ups and downs of life on her own. Like when John had to be rushed to the hospital in the middle of the night when he was 18 months old. Or when she gave birth to Kerryn and Allan was away assisting with the reconstruction of Darwin following the destruction of Cyclone Tracy.

Or the time when Kerryn broke her leg at 5-years-old while Allan was away. Nola remembers trying to be with her at the hospital, while trying to look after Kylie who was a toddler and see John off to school.

"I had good neighbours who came to my rescue at the time," said Nola.

Following their posting in Perth, Allan, Nola and their children spent two years in Seymour, Victoria, where Allan was posted to 21 Construction Squadron at Puckapunyal, before returning to Sydney in late 1977 to 19 Chief Engineer Works. They would spend six years living in Ryde before posting back to Perth for two years. Allan's next posting, to Holsworthy Army Barracks in Sydney, would be his last. After 30 years in the Australian Army, Allan retired from military service at 48 years old.

During his military career in the engineer corps, he was a driver, a field engineer and eventually a clerk. For his last posting in Perth, Allan was the Chief Clerk of the Squadron. Upon his retirement from the Army, he took up a role with TAFE NSW, as a Purchasing Officer where he bought all the equipment for the TAFE. He would perform this role for 17 years, until his retirement at 65 years old.


Allan's military career took its toll on him, Nola and their children. It wasn't just the moving around and having to put down new roots, find new schools and make new friends. Allan also experienced anxiety and post traumatic stress disorder. Nola explained how when the children were little, things were hard.

"It was like walking on eggshells, at times," said Nola, which is a phrase we often hear war widows use. "The sound of children fighting, screaming or crying would set him off. I had to settle the kids to make sure they were quiet when he was due home."

"Even in later years, adults being angry or yelling would upset him. He didn't like any kind of violence and would get upset, at times, watching the news."

In 2016, after battling fibrosis of the lungs for more than six years, Allan passed away aged 78. They had been married for 53 years.

Having been a defence spouse for more than two-and-a-half decades, Nola has the following advice to the partners of current defence members: *"When you find yourself in a new environment, join organisations or sport teams to get to know new people and make friends. If you have children, get involved in the school groups."*

Nola also went on to say: *"If you sadly become a widow, definitely join war widows. It is a great support as everyone has gone through the same loss. It's the best thing I did. I have made many lovely friends. I now coordinate the North Ryde Social Club and, when I can, I attend two other social clubs as well."* 



Lynne Sullivan representing war widows and veteran families at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Victory in the Pacific Service on 15 August 2025.

Lynne Sullivan: *a journey with the Guild*

Lynne Sullivan, a member of the Board of Directors for the Families of Veterans Guild, recently shared her story with us. She was widowed ten years ago, after the passing of her husband Patrick, who had served 25 years in the Royal Australian Engineers.

Lynne spoke of the long and difficult years supporting her partner as he struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder. *“While I was not married to my husband during his years of active service, I lived with him and the impact of that service for 24 years,”* she said. The weight of his service was carried home and into their family life, affecting them all.

Lynne described the experience of living each day with the uncertainty of what might unfold: *“Losing a life partner in battle would be devastating. However, living with a veteran who bares the scars—physical and/or mental—of their service could be traumatic for their partner and family, creating tensions that are rarely understood by those outside the defence community, which could lead to social alienation. This could manifest in the stress of family members never knowing what they would encounter when they come home.”*

It was a constant struggle navigating the complex demands

of parenting, work and study while supporting a partner whose moods and involvement in family life were unpredictable. It placed a heavy toll on the emotional wellbeing of the family. Like many, Lynne didn’t know about the Guild until well after Patrick’s passing. Back then, it was a place for widows. But as she reflected on those earlier years of navigating the impact of service on family life, it was clear how much that kind of support would have mattered, even then.

Lynne was introduced to the Guild by her close friend Nola, also a war widow. At first, she hesitated. *“Most of the people already knew each other,”* she recalled, and it

was easy to feel unsure of her place. The idea of joining something unfamiliar—especially in a space where long-standing friendships already existed—brought mixed emotions. But over time, Lynne found connection in the company of women who simply understood; women who didn't need things explained. Their shared experience created a solidarity that helped her feel less alone.

There was no need to downplay emotions, explain trauma, or prove that she belonged. Being part of the Guild helped Lynne build lasting friendships and find a support network she hadn't realised she needed. She felt seen and understood in a way that was rare outside the defence community.

What started with hesitation turned into so much more. Through social events, shared conversations, and simply being among peers, Lynne gradually began to feel a sense of belonging. Meeting other women who had walked similar paths allowed her to move forward, not by forgetting the past, but by being understood within it.

As her involvement grew, Lynne eventually nominated for the Guild's Board of Directors. While she admits the role has required far more than *"just a few meetings a year,"* she finds the work rewarding and important. It has given her the opportunity to meet members through social clubs and regional visits; what she describes as vital connection points, particularly for older members. For some, it is their only outing for the month. *"I love seeing how it allows some ladies to have a day to themselves and get dolled up."*

She has seen firsthand how something that might have appeared small—a lunch, a conversation, a visit—could have a lasting impact. These moments provide structure, purpose, and a sense of normality, particularly for those who are feeling isolated. As Lynne often says, these aren't just social groups, they are a lifeline.

Over the years, Lynne has witnessed the organisation evolve into a flexible and inclusive organisation. *"There was a very strong point in getting change in the name from war widows, because a lot of the people that are needing help now are probably in younger sort of cohorts, and they may not even be widows; they might be divorced, they've got families, all sorts of things."* She acknowledges the transition hasn't been easy for everyone, especially as definitions of 'war widow' and 'veteran' continue to shift. But she sees value in adapting to the needs of younger generations, and

in sharing with them the stories of strength and resilience that war widows have long carried. Lynne hopes their stories offer guidance and courage to those navigating defence life today.

Serving on the Board has given Lynne an even deeper understanding of how diverse members' experiences can be. While everyone's story is different, there are familiar threads that run through each one: grief, perseverance, responsibility and strength. These are not always visible from the outside, but within the Guild, they are known, acknowledged, and shared.

Lynne reflected humbly on whether she had made an impact. But her steady presence, her advocacy, and her willingness to listen speak volumes. Her story shows that the need for support often begins well before widowhood, and that the Guild's broader focus on veteran families today is not just a change, but a long-overdue step forward. 💙



Lynne Sullivan (middle in white), with fellow war widows at the 2022 Kokoda Day.



A thank you lunch *for our Sydney-based volunteers*

On Tuesday 10 June, we held a thank you lunch at Club Parramatta for some of our Sydney-based volunteers. It was an opportunity to acknowledge the time and effort they give to support war widows through phone calls, handwritten cards, social clubs, and other forms of peer connection.

Our CEO, Renee Wilson, opened the event with a message of thanks.

She spoke about the value of time, and how giving time to others is one of the most meaningful forms of support.

"Time is the most precious thing we have," Renee said. "In giving this gift, others feel valued, cared for and supported."

Renee also provided an update on recent staff changes and developments in the War Widows Program. She introduced the new

Operations Manager and Social Worker, and outlined how these roles will strengthen the program and better support volunteers. She acknowledged past gaps in volunteer support and shared that improving this is a key focus for the team.

Some of the improvements in progress include updated guidelines for social club coordinators, a new media engagement kit for

local clubs, clearer guidance for Friendship Line volunteers, a peer-to-peer support framework and upcoming review of the transport program.

Renee also shared feedback from members who have experienced the impact of volunteer support in different ways. One war widow, after receiving a handwritten Christmas card, said, *"I was so happy to receive the card ... I have been very ill for 2 years, and it brought me to tears."*

Another shared the comfort she found in the Friendship Line, saying, *"It has been a great source of comfort to me knowing other war widows are there."*

A third spoke about the importance of staying connected through her local social club, reflecting, *"It's helped me get out once a month to chat with other ladies, instead of staying home, except for doctor appointments."*

One of our volunteers, Di, reflected on the value of hearing this kind of feedback. Volunteers don't always get to see the outcomes of their work, so hearing directly from members helped highlight the difference they're making.

The lunch also gave volunteers a chance to reconnect with one another and with the team. Wendy, a Friendship Line volunteer, shared a story from Diedre, a war widow living in the small town of Mandurama, and spoke about the strong conversations and trust that have formed through their regular calls.

Norma commented on the Autumn edition of *The Guild Digest*, describing it as *"one of the best"* and noting how pleased she was to see familiar faces featured in the ANZAC Field of Remembrance photo spread.

We are grateful to all volunteers across the state who continue to give their time and experience to support their peers. Your contribution has helped keep thousands of war widows connected for nearly 80 years.

We will continue working to make sure you are supported in return. Thank you to all our volunteers, wherever you are.



Social clubs news

As our last edition of the Guild Digest was a special ANZAC Field of Remembrance edition, we didn't get a chance to share highlights from recent social club gatherings and regional visits. In this edition, we're pleased to revisit those moments, recognising the value of war widows connecting with their peers and building communities across the state and beyond.

Parramatta War Widows Social Club 70th anniversary

In March, members of the Parramatta War Widows Social Club gathered to celebrate the club's 70th anniversary. Coordinated by Brenda Morrison, the celebration was held at Club Parramatta and brought together 30 attendees.

Guests were welcomed with tea and coffee before enjoying speeches from Brenda and our President Queen Dunbar, who also shared the International Women's Day tribute video. Simon Lovell from the Parramatta RSL Sub-Branch led the Ode.

Following lunch, former State and National President, Rhondra Vanzella OAM, gave a special presentation before Brenda, Queen and long-time member Norma Potter cut the anniversary cake. The afternoon closed with group photos and continued conversation.



Ballina war widows regional visit

In February, we welcomed 100 attendees to a regional visit lunch at Ballina RSL, including war widows and carers. The gathering aimed to reconnect members and share key updates.

Distinguished guests included our President Queen Dunbar, Clarence Valley Club Coordinator Margaret Bailey, former Ballina Coordinator Lorraine Whiteman, Ballina Mayor Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Narelle Scott from Legacy Far North Coast, and Colleen Wills from the Ballina & District Ex-Service Women's Association. Ballina RSL generously supported the day with an in-kind grant.

Guests enjoyed a two-course meal while watching a tribute to war widows who passed. Attendees received updates on our Wellbeing Program and the new Facebook social group, exclusive to war widows.

Mayor Cadwallader shared a few words and her personal connection to defence. Open Arms representative Maureen Gill provided information on regional services. Two centenarian members, both 101, brought many stories to the table. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to reconnect in person and reflect on shared experiences: *"I don't get out much, but I'm so glad I attended. The food was great and the company even better."*

Kiama war widows regional visit

In March, 48 members gathered at Kiama Leagues Club for a regional lunch. Coordinators and volunteers from nearby clubs joined the day, including Bay & Basin, Nowra and Northern Beaches. The Club supported the gathering through in-kind contributions.

Guests enjoyed a two-course meal and the first showing of *A Story of Women Empowering Women*, a short tribute to Jessie Vasey and the legacy of war widows, released ahead of International Women's Day.

Our President Queen Dunbar shared updates, followed by the War Widows Program team who outlined benefits of membership, the war widows Facebook social club, and our in-person and online wellbeing programs. DVA resources on aged care and scams were distributed, and guests were encouraged to view the new Community Services Guide online.

A war widow who will turn 105 this year was a highlight of the day, with her stories drawing smiles from all who sat with her. Guests formed new friendships, reconnected with old ones and discussed plans for future gatherings. Attendees said, *"I will definitely make a bigger effort to go to more meetings. It was lovely to meet some of the local ladies."* *"The Kiama Social Club had a lovely time meeting members from nearby clubs."*



Bay & Basin Social Club lunch

11 members from the Bay & Basin Social Club also met in March for lunch at Pelican Rocks Seafood Restaurant & Cafe in Greenwell Point. The outing was designed to give members a fresh setting to connect and share a relaxed afternoon together.

Sam, the restaurant owner, was praised for his attentive hospitality. Members selected their own meals from the menu and shared stories over lunch.



Queanbeyan & ACT region outing

Also in March, 10 members from Queanbeyan, ACT and surrounding regions visited Lanyon Homestead, one of the oldest properties in the area.

Those who attended shared stories and reflected on the local history. Although a few members were unable to make it on the day, the outing marked a continued increase in participation and interest across the region.



Connected through experience

Wellbeing and peer support

Over the last few months, our Wellbeing Program has offered a variety of activities to bring war widows, defence and veteran families together. Whether it's a creative workshop, a walk, or a shared meal, each activity focuses on what matters most: connection, support and understanding from those who share similar experiences.



Each wellbeing activity provides a chance to try something new, have a conversation, and feel less alone. From craft to baking, yoga to journaling, the focus remains the same: peer support, empowerment and shared experiences.

The power of a shared meal

We hosted a Veteran Partner Dinner in Canberra. War widows and partners of current and former serving members came together for an evening meal, some meeting for the first time, others reconnecting. This dinner was about sitting beside someone who understands service life and

its impact, and feeling less alone in the process.

Our *Cook & Connect Veteran Family Dinner* was held online, where participants made chipotle tacos together from their own kitchens. Guided by our team, the experience offered space to slow down and share stories across screens. One participant shared, “*I would have eaten toast instead if I didn’t sign up.*” Another described it as “*calming, inviting, and warm.*” That sense of ease and togetherness is what we aim for with every session.

Connecting over a meal, whether in person or online, is an age old tradition and our organisation is built on providing a familiar

structure, a sense of purpose, and the opportunity to build a village.

Relaxing and recharging together

Our popular sound healing sessions continued, with war widows and families gathering in Canberra for a calming session at Balanced Yoga in Kingston. Guided by Alisha from Isha Bae, the experience used sound and stillness to help participants rest and recharge, reminding us that self-care is not a luxury, but a necessity.

Another creative and reflective activity also took place in June at Kissing Point Cottage, where widows and veteran families came together for a candle making workshop. Participants were able to make their own personalised candle before sitting down to share a meal. It was a relaxed afternoon filled with conversation, connection and simple creativity, reminding us that the smallest acts can have the biggest impact when done together.

Getting outdoors and moving together

We also hosted a series of wellbeing walks across NSW and the ACT, including stops in Coffs

Harbour, Canberra, Sydney's Botanic Gardens and the wetlands of Jerrabomberra. These gentle walks offer a way to unwind in nature and talk alongside others. Each one ends with a coffee or lunch, offering space for conversations to continue and new friendships to form.

Creativity and expression

Our online creative workshops continued over recent months, including watercolour painting and clay canvas art. All participants received their kits by post, allowing them to take part from home with everything they needed on hand. The focus isn't on artistic skill, it

is on expression, enjoyment, and creating community.

Another standout moment was a creative writing session exploring grief through poetry. War widows and families joined in for a morning of reflection and storytelling, working with haiku and free-form writing styles. The session created a safe space for sharing and understanding, with participants finding new ways to give voice to their experiences.

More ways to engage

Our program offers regular online and in-person sessions to suit different needs and schedules. For example, wellbeing walks have

been giving families time outdoors to relax and connect. Yoga sessions help participants improve physical and mental wellbeing.

Many have enjoyed making candles, clay canvas art and terrariums, activities that encourage creativity while building friendships. All our wellbeing activities focus on creating connection. Whether you want to try something new or find a community, there is a place for you.

Are you looking to enhance your overall wellbeing? Sign up to our Wellbeing Newsletter and be the first to know about free activities near you. Call us to sign up on (02) 9267 6577.



Understanding *entitlements*

A webinar for war widows

On 31 July, we hosted a dedicated online webinar for war widows, developed in collaboration with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). The webinar was attended by 102 people with an additional 21 linking in from our Chatswood office.

This webinar was delivered in direct response to regular questions and conversations raised by our war widows regarding understanding and accessing DVA services. Our team worked closely with DVA to ensure the content was specific and relevant to the war widow community.

Our Communications and Events Manager, Caroline, facilitated the webinar. Each of the four DVA representatives gave a short presentation on their area of responsibility, followed by a Q&A segment where participants were encouraged to send in questions or comments, allowing them to ask questions and seek clarification in real time.

Panellists included Sharon Wardle who spoke about income support available to war widows, Jonathan Levy, who explained transport-related entitlements and supports, Melanie Kilborn, who presented an overview of the Veterans' Home Care Program and Carolyn Lees, who provided information about the Community Nursing Program.

For those who were unable to attend, we have listed the key takeaways

below. The webinar was also recorded and you can access the full session by scanning the QR code on this page.

War Widow's Pension & Income Support Supplement (ISS)

- The War Widow's Pension is not means-tested.
- Widows may also be eligible for the Income Support Supplement (ISS) – a tax-free, means-tested payment that 'tops up' your income.
- ISS brings extra benefits like a Pensioner Concession Card and possible rent assistance.

Transport Support (DVA)

- If you hold a Gold Card, DVA can arrange or reimburse travel to medical appointments.
- Travel options include booked taxis, reimbursement for car/public transport costs, and even flights and accommodation if treatment requires travel.
- Ambulance services are fully covered for Gold Card holders.

Veterans' Home Care (VHC)

- Provides help at home so you can stay independent for longer. Services include house cleaning, gardening, personal care, and respite.
- Very low co-payments and fee waivers are possible for those experiencing financial challenges.
- Available to all Gold Card holders. No age limit or means test.

Community Nursing Program

- Free, in-home nursing care for clinical needs such as wound care, medications, palliative support, or nursing-related personal care that are accessible with a Gold Card
- Services are based on assessed clinical needs. There are no caps or co-payments.

Information, forms, and phone numbers are on the DVA website, or you can call **1800 VETERAN**. Every situation is different, and DVA staff encouraged widows to reach out and ask questions.

This webinar forms part of our ongoing commitment to ensure war widows are informed, included, and supported. We thank the Department of Veterans' Affairs for their collaboration and the generosity of their representatives in taking the time to be part of this webinar.

If you would like more information or help accessing the recording, please get in touch with our team on **(02) 9267 6577**.

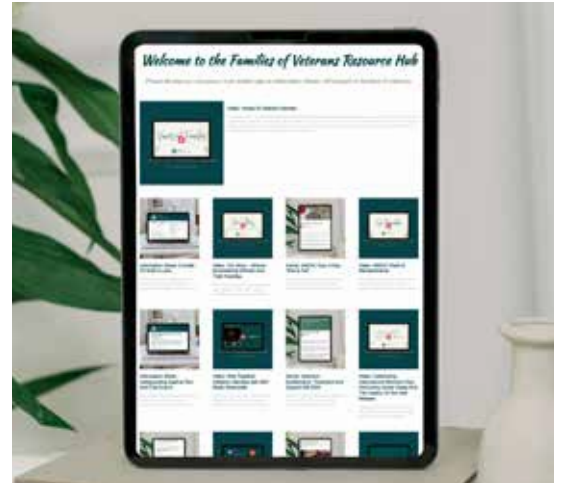
Watch the
webinar here



DISCOVER OUR RESOURCE HUB

EMPOWERING WAR WIDOWS AND FAMILIES
WITH THE RESOURCES THEY NEED

We are proud to announce the launch of our Resource Hub, a living library built to empower war widows, defence and veteran families through information sheets, webinar recordings, articles, videos and media interviews.



This Hub is a great place for all in our community to find the information they need, when they need it. Whether it's a practical guide to support physical and emotional wellbeing, information on entitlements and the services available, or important updates in an article or an interview, the Resource Hub is here to empower war widows and veteran families.

We understand that war widows and veteran families often have to navigate incredibly complex systems, where finding the information they need is difficult.

The Resource Hub is accessible on our website. All information is

located in the one place and easy to use. It contains practical information on entitlements, services, as well as tips on how to manage different situations war widows and veteran families may be exposed to along the way.

For members who have difficulties accessing the Resource Hub online, please contact us and let us know the information you would like to receive from the topics listed below and we will send you printed versions to your home.

Information Sheets

- Understanding grief and loss.
- Closing the digital divide: information on technology and online safety.
- Skills building: information to support you in caring for and supporting yourself and others.
- Wellbeing tips: recommendations to support your wellbeing.

Guides

- Community Services Guide: a simple guide to a wide range of services available in our community.

- Guide to Carer Gateway services: a comprehensive resource covering services available to carers through Carer Gateway.

The Resource Hub will continue to expand, with new content and media being uploaded on a regular basis.

You can explore all this at familiesofveterans.org.au/resource-hub or by scanning the QR code on this page.

Something isn't there? We encourage you to share what you'd like to see in the Resource Hub by emailing guild@fov.org.au.

Scan to visit the
Resource Hub



WHERE TO GET HELP WITH TECHNOLOGY

COMMUNITY TECH HELP, LIBRARIES, GRANDKIDS – AND MORE

Learning how to use a smartphone, tablet or computer can be challenging—but you're not alone. Across Australia, there are free and friendly places to get help with technology, from local libraries and neighbourhood centres to grandkids and government programs.

This guide outlines where to find reliable tech help to build your skills and confidence, based on information from the Be Connected Program, Australian public libraries, and digital inclusion initiatives like Tech Savvy Seniors.

Public libraries

Libraries across Australia are a fantastic starting point for free digital help. Many offer:

- Tech Savvy Seniors sessions – A program delivered in partnership with Telstra and state governments (like NSW and QLD) to help older Australians get online.
- One-on-one help – Book a session with a librarian or trained volunteer.
- Tech drop-in days – Bring your phone, tablet or laptop and ask questions in a relaxed environment.

Tip: Contact your local library or visit their website to see what's on offer—many services are free and designed for seniors.

Be Connected Program

Be Connected is a national government initiative helping older Australians thrive in the digital world. It includes:

- Free online courses – Clear, step-by-step lessons on using the internet, emails, video calling, smartphones, staying safe online and more.
- In-person support through local community partners – Found at libraries, neighbourhood centres, RSLs, Men's Sheds, and other familiar places.

Find help near you: www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au

Be Connected is managed by the eSafety Commissioner and delivered in partnership with Good Things Foundation Australia.

Tech help in the community

Other great places to find support:

- Community centres and neighbourhood houses – Many offer tech help workshops or drop-ins.
- U3A (University of the Third Age) – Offers peer-led tech learning for older adults across Australia.
- Men's Sheds and local senior groups – Increasingly include digital skills sessions or support as part of wellbeing programs.
- Local council programs – Some councils offer free tech help or digital mentors for residents aged 60+.

Ask your local council or community centre what's available in your area.

Friends, family, grandkids

Sometimes the best support is personal:

- Grandkids and younger relatives are often very happy to help with tech—setting up a device, showing you how to use apps, or explaining how to join a video call.
- Take notes in your own words so you can refer back later. Make it an enjoyable activity—a cuppa and a chat can go a long way.

Tip: Let them teach one thing at a time. It helps to focus on one small task, like sending a message or using Google.

Retailers and providers

Some tech retailers and providers offer free or low-cost learning support:

- Telstra offers Tech Savvy Seniors workshops in partnership with state libraries.
- Optus, JB Hi-Fi, The Good Guys and Officeworks may assist with device setup—ask at the time of purchase.
- Many devices (especially Apple and Samsung) come with access to free support tutorials or live help.

Important: Avoid anyone who asks for remote access to your device unless it's an official, trusted provider. Never give out passwords or banking details to someone who contacts you unexpectedly.

Tech help checklist

- Start small—one new skill at a time.
- Write down the steps in your own words.
- Don't worry about asking "silly" questions—there's no such thing.
- Be patient with yourself. Everyone learns at their own pace.

About this information

This article draws on trusted Australian sources, including the Be Connected program ([becconnected.esafety.gov.au](https://www.becconnected.esafety.gov.au)), Telstra Tech Savvy Seniors, public library services, and digital inclusion initiatives from community organisations. All information is current and applicable across Australia to help older Australians build their digital confidence safely.

Our latest project: digital literacy for war widows

We're excited to share the launch of a new project focused on building digital literacy skills for war widows, particularly those living in regional and remote areas with limited experience using technology.

Currently in its early stages, the project involves the development of easy-to-follow written guides that cover the basics of using email, Zoom, Facebook, WhatsApp, and more. These step-by-step resources are designed to support older war widows in navigating everyday digital tools with confidence. A series of video tutorials will also be available.

We look forward to sharing more updates as the project progresses.

Twelve women's shared journey

Rise Together wraps up

In early June, twelve women from across Australia came together in Sydney for a five-day leadership and career confidence workshop, the final stage of our Rise Together Initiative. This program was developed to support defence and veteran partners, including war widows, to build confidence, develop leadership skills, and connect with others who share similar experiences.



Rise Together was officially launched in March 2025 at Parliament House, with support from the Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, and funded through the Department of Veterans' Affairs Veteran Wellbeing Grants Program and a generous private donor. But the story behind the initiative began well before this.

Over the past three years, one war widow and her family generously funded six veteran partners to complete the *Women in Leadership Development (WILD)* Program. She wanted to give others the opportunities she never had; a simple but powerful act of solidarity that became the foundation of *Rise Together Initiative*. Her vision and

generosity paved the way for us to expand the program nationally and support twelve women this year.

The WILD Program provides practical tools in personal leadership, communication, resilience, and purpose-driven action. Through this framework, our participants explored their leadership style, reconnected with their strengths, and reflected on what comes next, both personally and professionally. The week-long workshop in Sydney offered space to do this with support, structure and peer connection.

The 2025 participants were a mix of widows, current serving partners and veteran spouses, from every state and territory. For many, this was the first time they had stepped

away from caring responsibilities to focus on their own growth. For others, it was a chance to pause, reflect, and plan their next move. One participant shared: *"This reminded me that I still have things to offer. That I am more than what I've sacrificed."*

Feedback from the group highlighted the quality of the facilitation and the safe, supportive space that was created. Participants valued the professional delivery, the opportunity to share experiences with like-minded peers, and the genuine care that went into the planning and logistics.

We designed *Rise Together* to respond to the long-standing challenges faced by defence and veteran partners: career disruption, relocation, and the often invisible load of supporting someone who serves. This initiative isn't just about professional development. It's about recognition, connection, and creating pathways forward.

At its heart, *Rise Together* is a story of one generation supporting the next. What began with the generosity of one woman has now grown into a national program. And the twelve women who came together in Sydney will carry that legacy with them into their families, workplaces and communities.



Thanks to our community

In this edition of *The Guild Digest*, we want to thank our community for the support shown since the start of the year.

In particular, we acknowledge the organisations and individuals who organised community fundraisers, directing proceeds to essential services for war widows and veteran families in regional areas, Sydney, and Canberra.

We are also deeply grateful to members who included an additional donation with their membership renewal. These contributions, whether

large or small, form the foundation of our work. Donating in addition to your memberships supports war widows in staying connected, remaining visible and maintaining their emotional and physical wellbeing.

Finally, to those who give regularly through our campaigns or on an ad-hoc basis, thank you. Your generosity strengthens our advocacy, sustains our services, and ensures war widows and veteran families receive the support they deserve.

Thank you for being part of this community.

Winter recipe

Minestrone with broken pasta



Picture and recipe: *Centr.com*

INGREDIENTS - FOR 2

- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 onion diced
- 1 carrot (medium) diced
- 1 garlic clove finely chopped
- 1 tin of diced tomatoes (400g tin)
- 3 cups (750ml) vegetable stock
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 80g spaghetti, dried broken
- 1 tin of cannellini beans (400g tin) drained & rinsed
- 1 cup (100g) frozen spinach defrosted
- salt & pepper, to taste
- 2 tbs parmesan finely grated

METHOD

1. Heat oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Cook onion and carrot for 5 minutes until soft.
2. Add garlic and cook for another minute until fragrant.
3. Add tomatoes, stock and bay leaf, cover and simmer for 10 minutes or until vegetables are beginning to soften.
4. Add pasta and cook according to packet instructions.
5. Add beans and spinach and cook for another 2 minutes until warmed through. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
6. Divide soup between serving bowls and scatter over cheese.

VALE

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

Alma Homer TAREN POINT	Florence Armstrong CANNINGVALE	Marie Tristram MARRICKVILLE Sth
Amy Wells WINSTON HILLS	Florence Webster E. GRESFORD	Marjorie Ragen SPRINGWOOD
Annette Milliss MINTO	Gloria Phair WYOMING	Marjorie McKimm BELFIELD
Barbara Jones KARIONG	Grace Fowkes PENDLE HILL	Mary McAuliffe GOLDEN PT
Beryl Masters FERNHILL	Gwendoline Doel GLEDSDOOD HILLS	Mary Wilkinson KANWAL
Beryl Pugh GRAFTON	Gwendoline Grew CAMPBELLTOWN	Merle Follett KIRRAWEE
Betty Budden MUSWELLBROOK	Gweneth Drake LAPSTONE	Mona Benney BASIN VIEW
Betty Morgan PT MACQUARIE	Hazel Joyce CLONTARF	Norma Baillie LISAROW
Betty Lapin BEVERLY HILLS	Hazel Durkin BELROSE	Olga Anderson OAM QUEANBEYAN
Beverley O'Keefe SPRINGWOOD	Hazel McNamara WESTMEAD	Patricia Curtin JERILDERIE
Carmen Hunter BRONTE	Hazel Slaney CASINO	Penelope Wood SPRINGWOOD
Carolyn Barnes DARLINGHURST	Joan Borstel BUDERIM	Penelope Hendy MORUYA
Catherine Tolmie CANLEY HEIGHTS	Joan Fuller KYOGLE	Rhonda Harrington MARGATE
Catherine Allen BAULKHAM HILLS	Joyce Peters MACQUARIE PARK	Ruby Lamb LAURIETON
Dorothy Stevenson ARMIDALE	June Comins OAM YASS	Ruth Logan QUAKERS HILL
Dulcie Pitman NORTH BOAMBEE VALLEY	June Oswald LANE COVE Nth	Sandra Wilson CAMERON PARK
Elizabeth Williams HECKENBERG	June Stockton CATHERINE FIELD	Sheila Hall UMINA BEACH
Elizabeth Wright CHATSWOOD	Kathleen Reay RYDE	Sybil Porter KILLARA
Eva Clyburn COLLAROY PLATEAU	Margaret Christensen NARRABEEN	Una Thompson TAREE
Evelyn Shorter PT MACQUARIE	Margaret Ryan WELLINGTON	Valerie Thompson WOOLLOOWARE
Fay Kenney LEICHHARDT	Marie McCarthy CAVES BEACH	Violet Griffin SEVEN HILLS
		Wendy Loader CROMER

Correction & apology

It was brought to our attention that the Vale section of the Autumn 2025 edition of *The Guild Digest* included members who have not passed away. Mrs Cicily Atton was incorrectly listed due to an error during our data transfer as well as Mrs Marlene Shields due to incorrect information provided to us. Our sincere apologies have been provided to Mrs Atton and Mrs Shields and their families for inadvertently including their names in the Vale section of the Autumn 2025 edition of *The Guild Digest*.

Welcome to our new members!

☀️ Amanda McMillan ORANGE	☀️ Jocelyn King MOSS VALE	☀️ Valerie Blundell KARABAR
☀️ Anne Jarvis FRENCHS FOREST	☀️ Karen Mansour ELIZABETH BAY	☀️ Valerie Mackay HURSTVILLE GROVE
☀️ Barbara Patricia Daley W. NOWRA	☀️ Maria Norris NORTH ROCKS	☀️ Valerie Newman NARRABEEN
☀️ Jaslyn Perlitz WORRIGEE	☀️ Phuangphen Sapbanyat BALMAIN	

Members who recently turned 100 - Happy Birthday!

🎂 Blanche Brentnall DALMENY	🎂 Helene Rendall GORDON	🎂 June Vaughan MOSS VALE
🎂 Elizabeth Bull BELMORE	🎂 Ila Harvey MEDOWIE	🎂 Miriam Collison JUNCTION HILL
🎂 Ellen Earsman TURVEY PARK	🎂 Isabel Pedlow NAMBUCCA HEADS	🎂 Muriel McCabe OAM DAVIDSON
🎂 Elsie Jones CURLEWIS	🎂 Joan Cairns BELCONNEN	🎂 Patricia Delany MIRANDA
🎂 Enid Carmichael LAVINGTON	🎂 June Falkenmire PT MACQUARIE	🎂 Vera Chapman GULGONG



Vale Stuart Clark AM AFSM, Board Director

We acknowledge the passing of long-standing Board Director and Deputy Chair – Stuart Clark AM AFSM a few months ago. Stuart was also a member of our organisation—drawn to it and to our work as the son of a war widow.

He served our organisation selflessly, compassionately, and with unwavering integrity. Stuart was a man of both heart and intellect, who gave so much of himself to making Australia a better place.

Through his work with us, the Volunteer Rescue Association, the Rural Fire Service, and his long-standing and distinguished career in law, giving back was simply part of who he was.

Stuart was a remarkable man whose legacy will live on through all of the people he inspired. His life of service to his community and causes bigger than himself is one that stands as a shining example of what is possible when you use the gifts you have for a greater purpose.

At the Guild, our lives are richer for having known him, worked with him, and learned from him. To Stuart's family, we extend our deepest, heartfelt sympathy—and want you to know we are always here. To Stuart, thank you for all you gave to us. We hope we continue to make you proud.



Vale Elizabeth Wright, Life Member

We are saddened to advise members of the passing of Elizabeth Wright, aged 104.

Elizabeth joined the Guild in 2005, following the death of her husband, Reg, a veteran who served as a Spitfire pilot during the Second World War. She became an active and dedicated member, making a significant contribution to our community over many years.

In 2014, at the age of 93, Elizabeth volunteered to take on the role of Coordinator for the Chatswood Social Club when no one else was able to. She led the group for a decade, continuing in the role until stepping down at 103, and remained a regular attendee at monthly meetings.

Elizabeth's commitment to fostering connection and friendship within the Guild was evident in her willingness to serve, well into her later years.

Elizabeth's contribution reflect the spirit of the Guild: members supporting one another, building strong networks of care, and preserving the traditions of our community.

We extend our deepest condolences to Elizabeth's family and friends, and acknowledge with gratitude her many years of service to the Guild and its members.

Free safety visits by Fire & Rescue NSW

Fire & Rescue NSW offers free Safety Visits at your home to help reduce the risk of accidental fires and prepare for how to escape safely.

What happens during a visit?

- Firefighters will check whether your smoke alarms are working and fitted correctly on each level of your home.
- They will install a long-life battery smoke alarm, or replace batteries, free of charge if needed.
- With your permission, they'll tour your home to offer personalised fire safety advice.

Who benefits most?

People at higher risk—including those over 65, living alone, with limited mobility, hearing or vision impairments, those supported by carers, or anyone for whom English is a second language.

Special measures:

Safety visits are conducted in line with current health requirements—firefighters can use masks or physical distancing. If you have special health needs, you're encouraged to mention these when booking.

To request a visit:

Use the online form at fire.nsw.gov.au/visits or scan the QR code below. If you need help filling it out, you can contact your local fire station by phone.



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, however, 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 September and October open for registering interest:

- Understanding anxiety
- Sleeping better
- Managing pain
- Recovery from trauma



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, maintenance and repairs, replacement aids, no out-of-pocket costs.

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
- e-mail Hearing@dva.gov.au.

Our latest guide to empower you: a guide to Carer Gateway

Caring for a loved one can be rewarding, but also overwhelming. The Carer Gateway Guide explains the free services available to support war widows, veteran carers, and their families. From counselling and peer groups, to respite care, financial assistance, and practical help at home, Carer Gateway is here to make the caring journey a little easier. This guide shows how to access tailored supports, including programs for young carers and emergency respite, so families never feel alone.

Find it in our resource hub on familiesofveterans.org.au/resource-hub or scan the QR code to download the guide.



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



80 years anniversary of Victory in the Pacific Day & the end of World War II
15.08.2025