



FAMILIES
OF VETERANS GUILD
Owned by Australian War Widows NSW Ltd

SUMMER 2026

THE GUILD DIGEST

WELCOMING A NEW YEAR AND LOOKING BACK AT 2025



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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THE DIGEST

ISSN 2652-8606

PUBLISHER

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you plan to visit, please call us.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

\$30 due 1 April each year

Donations to Families of Veterans Guild are tax
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The material in this
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apologise most sincerely.

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FOR YOUR DIARY

Wellbeing activities

Wellbeing walk & lunch - Canberra
6 March 2026

Wellbeing walk - Sydney
6 March 2026

Paint by numbers - online
11 March 2026

Writing through grief - online
19 March 2026

Kokedama workshop - Canberra
21 March 2026

Key dates

**Anniversary of the Commonwealth
Naval Forces and Australian Army
Formed (1901)**
1 March 2026

International Women's Day
8 March 2026

Iraq War Commenced (2003)
20 March 2026

**125th Anniversary International
Fleet Review (Royal Australian Navy)**
20 March 2026

**Formation of Royal Australian Air
Force (1921)**
31 March 2026

**Cook and connect: veteran family
dinner - online**
25 March 2026

Wellbeing hike - Canberra
26 March 2026

Writing through grief - online
6 April 2026

Movie afternoon - Sydney
10 April 2026

Wellbeing walk & lunch - Sydney
11 April 2026

**RAN Sea King Crash, Nias Island
Indonesia (2005)**
2 April 2026

Easter long weekend
3-6 April 2026

**Siege of Tobruk Commenced,
North Africa (1941)**
10 April 2026

ANZAC Field of Remembrance
23 April 2026

ANZAC Day
25 April 2026

**Battle of Kapyong Commences,
Korea (1951)**
23 April 2026

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HIGHLIGHTS





President Queen Dunbar (in red) at the NSW Association of Jewish Service & Ex-Service Men & Women (NAJEX) Remembrance Day Service in November 2025.

Welcome to a new year and thank you for the many ways you supported one another throughout 2025—at commemorative services, social clubs gatherings, wellbeing activities and the Friendship Line. Last year continued to remind us why this community exists and why its mission is important and vital: so that no war widow or veteran family faces life during and after service alone and unsupported.

Looking back on 2025, several moments stood out for me. The ANZAC Field of Remembrance brought widows and families together across NSW, and War Widows Day was once again an opportunity to share and tell the stories of war widows and their sacrifices. Days like this matter. They give us space to come together, to share our stories, and to remember our beloved veterans, side by side.

We also had some harrowing moments. I want to start by talking about the photo on this page that was

taken at the November Remembrance Day service of the NSW Association of Jewish Service & Ex-Service Men & Women (NAJEX). Our connection with this community and the tragic events at Bondi Beach really hit close to home for me. Just weeks earlier, I had stood alongside the Jewish community, laying tributes and honouring our veterans. My thoughts remain with the families and everyone affected by those attacks. On behalf of war widows and veteran families, we also paid our respects at Bondi Beach—you can read more about it on page 21 of this edition.

2026 is shaping up to be a busy year for us as this year marks an important milestone for our organisation: we are celebrating our 80th anniversary in June. Our team is dedicated to ensuring that this occasion is commemorated and saluted in a way that holds meaning and significance for our community.

As you are aware, we are also extending our support to the war widows in South Australia, following the wind up of their association

in late 2025. I look forward to welcoming them and getting to know them throughout the year as I am sure many of you do as well.

Throughout the year as well, regional visits and engagement with war widows around NSW will recommence following a pause in this activity in 2025. I look forward to meeting many more of you at these regional gatherings. Keeping connected to widows no matter where you live is a key priority for us and we cannot wait to get back out there, connect and meet more of you.

In the months ahead, one of the most meaningful ways we come together is through commemoration and helping each other through the hard days. The ANZAC Field of Remembrance is a special moment in that tradition, bringing us together to honour those we have lost. At the back of this edition of *The Guild Digest*, you will find simple instructions to register your attendance at the ANZAC Field of Remembrance. Additionally, your cross is enclosed so you can lay your cross at the Sydney service, at a regional gathering with your club, at home or a place of meaning for you. If you need help with registration or would like further support to organise a local gathering to watch the Sydney service, contact the office on (02) 9267 6577 or email us at guild@fov.org.au.

Thank you for the care and welcome you extend to one another. Your strength and generosity give me hope for the year ahead. I look forward to being with you at commemorations and gatherings as we honour those we love and continue to look after one another.

MS QUEEN DUNBAR
President



Bord Chair Tricia Hobson (middle) with Life Member Shirley McLaren OAM (left) and member Maureen Moore (right) at the War Widows Day lunch in 2025.

Welcome to a new year and the summer edition of The Guild Digest. In 2026 we will continue to deliver strong governance, implement our funding plan, develop a new strategy and continue our commitment to hearing directly from you.

2026 will see the integration of war widows from South Australia (SA) into our membership, following the wind up of their war widow's association late last year. Implementation is underway with transition information already issued to SA stakeholders and members. Renee and the team have been working closely with war widows in SA and are in the process of transitioning their membership and setting up their social club.

We will also be implementing our new membership model this year which recognises the sacrifices and decades of contribution from WWII war widows and volunteers while providing choice to all members. A new membership renewal form

is attached to this Digest; please complete it and return it to the office when you can. You can read more on page 22 of this edition.

March 2026 will mark the end of our current strategic plan and 5 years since our CEO, Renee Wilson was engaged by the organisation. Over this period, we have seen the organisation grow and strengthen considerably. We have seen it evolve to meet the needs of current and future members while also addressing broader issues affecting veteran families. We have seen our organisation change the model of care for veteran families in Australia and inspire other organisations like Legacy and RSL to expand their models of care as well. We have seen our organisation lead national conversations about the needs of war widows and veteran families, standing up for them throughout the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide and Parliamentary Inquiries. We have seen our financial position strengthen, our relevance increased and our services evolve to meet contemporary standards and ensure not only are

we delivering services of substance and tangible benefit, but we are also doing so safely. All of this work is fundamental to us taking the next steps as an organisation, to diversify our funding sources, to collaborate across our sector and others; and become a well-recognised and impactful organisation. These are the strong foundations on which we, as a Board, will build our next strategy upon. Taking our organisation to the next level and leading the way again as we did 80 years ago.

June 2026 marks our 80th anniversary as an organisation. An incredible milestone and legacy, one which we will celebrate throughout the year and as plans are developed, I encourage all of you to share with us how you'd like to see us mark this incredible milestone. Please contact Renee and the team. Renee and I meet regularly, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

For those in the regions, as Queen has mentioned, regional engagement in NSW will recommence this year and thank you for your patience during 2025. We look forward to getting back out there and hearing directly from you about the barriers you face and how we might help you to overcome them. If you would like to send us your thoughts before we visit your area, a feedback form is included with this edition of the Digest or simply call the office on (02) 9267 6577.

2026 will be a special year for us as we mark our 80th anniversary, reflect on our incredible progress over the last 5 years and develop plans to continue to strengthen our organisation. I am looking forward to another remarkable year.

MS TRICIA HOBSON
Board Chair



Welcome to the beginning of a year of great significance for the veteran community.

Throughout 2026, we will see support for veterans and the families of veterans reformed, not only through the continued implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, we will also see the new veteran legislative system come into play, simplifying and harmonising the claims process, making it much more straightforward.

At the heart of this work is a significant shift across the whole veteran ecosystem to have a deeper focus on the wellbeing of veterans and families of veterans. The Government's implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission has been continuing at pace since I last updated you, with 32 recommendations implemented by the end of 2025. We are expecting some two thirds of agreed recommendations to be implemented by the end of this year.

The Government has allocated \$78 million to establish a new veteran and family wellbeing agency, which will be up and running in July this year. Through this new agency,

there will be a renewed focus on successful transition from military to civilian life, community connection and improving wellbeing outcomes.

As families of veterans, you would know that the time of exiting from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) can leave a member vulnerable, searching for meaning and purpose. The agency will take on transition support responsibilities that are currently shared between Defence and Veterans' Affairs to make sure no one falls through the gaps. It will focus on the overall wellbeing of veterans and families while providing wrap-around support for at risk veterans as they transition out of the ADF.

From 1 July, veteran specific mental health care plan funding will roll out to support GPs and psychiatrists providing proactive, continuous and connected care for veterans experiencing mental health conditions. We are also undertaking a review of the Coordinated Veterans Care program, which supports veterans with chronic conditions and complex care needs to access proactive care coordination.

As we introduce these life-changing, life-saving, reforms we want to ensure the veteran support system retains its

integrity, so that veterans and families receive the best possible care from those who have their wellbeing at heart.

I have been increasingly concerned by the behaviour of some advocates who are charging unreasonable fees for their services, as well as a rise in inappropriate and sometimes illegal profiteering by providers, to the detriment of veterans.

When choosing to use or recommend an advocate, veterans and families should know you do not need to pay for something you can and will get for free. I encourage you to find a qualified, free-to-use advocate to support you on the Advocacy Register at www.advocateregister.org.au.

We are providing funding to the new Institute of Veterans' Advocacy (IVA) and will also conduct public consultation regarding further reform opportunities to protect veterans and their families from poor advocate behaviour.

Thank you for the opportunity to launch your Survey in late 2025. We've made progress on some of your recommendations and are currently advertising for members of a Veterans' Affairs Ministerial Advisory Council; if you are interested in applying please visit the APS Jobs website at www.apsjobs.gov.au. In addition, we are progressing postvention initiatives and have agreed to commission an independent review of Open Arms: this is due to commence in 2027.

2026 will be a year that brings a raft of significant, positive reforms that make a real difference to the lives of veterans and veteran families. I thank you in advance for your support and the continued partnership with the Guild that makes these changes possible.

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



Minister Harris with Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of Australia, and Rear Admiral Chris Smith at the End of the Gallipoli Campaign Commemoration.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide an update on behalf of the NSW Government. I hope you all had a safe and happy festive season, and I look forward to continuing to support the veteran community and their families in 2026.

On 20 December 2025, I had the pleasure of attending a commemoration service at the Anzac Memorial to mark the 110th anniversary of the final evacuation from Gallipoli in 1915. It was a privilege to mark this special occasion with members of the Defence community and their families.

Applications are closing soon for the 2026 Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship. This year the Scholarship will give NSW Year 10 and Year 11 Modern History students the opportunity to travel to Greece and Crete on a fully funded study tour to learn about the history of Australians at war. If you know a student or parent and guardian of keen history students, please

share this link with them for further information: www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/pams

On 14 February, we commemorated National Servicemen's Day which honours the hundreds of thousands of young Australian men who served our nation through compulsory military service after the Second World War. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the commencement of the 1951 National Service Scheme, which saw some 287,000 young Australian men called up in two separate schemes for compulsory training in the Navy, Army and Air Force between 1951 and 1972.

Also in February, the Anzac Memorial commemorated the National Day for War Animals (24 February) with a piece of live theatre along with a special tour to commemorate the service and sacrifice of animals that have served in war. I hope some of you were able to attend this special event. To stay up-to-date with the Memorial's

events, I encourage you to follow the Anzac Memorial on Facebook and Instagram, and subscribe to their newsletter: <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/subscribe>

NSW Women's Week is taking place in March, and the Anzac Memorial is acknowledging the military service of Australian women who have served in the Royal Australian Navy with a special event on Wednesday 4 March. Hear from two accomplished historians, Dr Catie Gilchrist and Patricia Collins, as they explore the journey of women in the Navy from shore to sea. Visit the Anzac Memorial's website for the full details and to book:

<https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/event/shore-sea-changing-role-women-royal-australian-navy>

The Anzac Memorial's Art From Behind the Wire exhibition is back on display by popular demand. 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 in late March and I encourage you to visit if you have not already.

I look forward to working closely with the families of veterans and war widows of NSW this year.

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



Regional visit and lunch in Canberra in 2024

Regional Engagement

In 2025, some may remember, we paused our regional engagement while our team undertook a full review of the War Widows Program. That review, while still ongoing continues to make clear the value you all place in connection, strengthening regional access, and making sure our services are easy to understand and access. We are pleased to let you know that we will be resuming our regional engagement in 2026 and increasing wellbeing activities in person and online. We will also be testing the need for war widows program services in Victoria and Tasmania as well as expanding those services to South Australia this year.

In 2026, we plan to visit the following regional areas in NSW: Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Albury, the South Coast, Cooma, Central Coast, Gunnedah, Murwillumbah, Muswellbrook and the Newcastle area.

These visits give many regional war widows the chance to share a meal with each other and us, sharing thoughts and insights about their experiences, local issues and expectations, and help guide the organisation's priorities. Each conversation helps us understand what support is needed where you live, from social connections

and access to information to more targeted wellbeing support.

Funding for the testing of war widows program services beyond NSW was won by the organisation through the 2025–26 Veteran Wellbeing Grants program. We were successful in obtaining just under \$100,000 in funding to test the expansion of the war widows program and wellbeing activities in new areas. The grants will facilitate visits to Geelong, Hobart, Adelaide and Townsville.

For war widows and veteran families, this means enhanced

access to support and wellbeing activities. To keep up to date with where we are visiting and when, please subscribe to our newsletter. If you don't have email access and live in one of these areas, please let us know and we will ensure we let you know when we are visiting.

We look forward to spending time with more than 50% of you who live in regional areas, listening to what matters to you and making sure our programs continue to respond to the needs of war widows and veteran families.

Advocacy Update

2025 Veteran Families Survey

Australia has at least 737,000 veteran family members, yet only 37% currently have any representative voice in policy and service design, and about 13% (93,000) have meaningful access to support¹. The majority of Australian veteran families lack community, support networks, and accessible services, all while shouldering the unique challenges of caregiving, transition, and wellbeing needs. For most veteran families, when they do attempt to access support, they must navigate complex, restrictive, and isolating systems of care, with the vast majority ending their journey with no support.

The voices and needs of veteran families, including war widows, are often diluted within a veteran and Defence centric system, leaving them with limited support. The lack of focus on Australian veteran families has resulted in a stagnant public policy environment for the last 40 years². To begin addressing this, we conducted the first national survey of Australian veteran families (including war widows) in 2025, in partnership with YouGov, to understand experiences and needs.

The results confirm that families are impacted by the service of their loved ones and that these impacts are experienced more often—and more intensely—than the general population³. A snapshot of key results appears on the following page and demonstrates that compared with the general population, veteran families (including widows) experience higher and more complex needs.

The results of this survey, alongside other academic research, make the case for establishing a system of care in Australia for veteran families to address at minimum, the following key challenges:

- Grief and loss.
- Career and income earning limitations.



- Reduced access to services, including physical and mental health care.
- Additional care responsibilities.
- Erosion of mental health and wellbeing; and
- Erosion of social connection.

How are we using the data?

In addition to using the data and survey report to advocate for strategic policy development addressing the needs highlighted by the Survey; we are also using it to draw attention to issues and using it as an evidence base when advocating for change. Starting with requests to bring concession equality for widows in NSW.

Data on the economic vulnerability being experienced by widows coupled with DVA population data has underpinned our current advocacy campaign. You can view the report on our website or by scanning the QR code below.

View the
report



¹ Calculation is based on numbers of ADF members (permanent and reserves) 62,000 plus numbers of veteran families accessing their entitlements, 31,000 (total of 93,000 of a total support population of 737,000) 12.6%.

² Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide: Final Report (2024) Vol 6; p 3; 27.1 para 6 p 4.

³ 2025 Veteran Families Survey: Understanding the experiences of Australian veteran families (2025); pp 12-27

2025 Veteran Families Survey - Key Findings

Understanding the experiences of Australian veteran families

The survey asked veteran family members* to answer questions reflecting on the past 12 months. Key results include the below.

Employment

A third | 34%

say their household has one or more adults who have experienced **unemployment** and/or **underemployment**



Healthcare

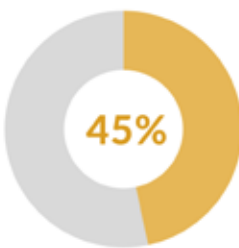
A third | 33%

say they or their family have experienced **difficulties** accessing **disability** or **specialist healthcare services**



Just under half

say they or their family have experienced **difficulties** accessing **general healthcare services**



A third

say they or their family have experienced **difficulties** accessing **mental healthcare services**



Mental Health



More than half | 52%

say they or their family have experienced **mental health challenges**

Only a third | 36%

agree that **mental health services** in Australia are **tailored** to the **needs** of **veteran families**



Children

Nearly three-quarters | 70%



say **children** in their household have experienced one or more **personal challenges** in the past 12 months

More than half

52%

are **concerned** about their/their family's current **financial situation**



Three-fifths

considering their experiences, would **still recommend** a career in the ADF, while a quarter (23%) would not



* Veteran family members include war widows with over 70 war widows responding to the survey.

Advocacy Update

Restoring concession equality for NSW war widows

In December 2025, we launched an advocacy campaign aimed at bringing equality in rate concessions to widows of veterans in NSW.

During December we wrote to 89 State and Local Council representatives seeking their support to amend Section 134 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 (NSW). Presently, section 134 limits eligibility for full Local Government rate concessions to war widows/widowers who would qualify for a Pensioner Concession Card (PCC). In practice, this income and assets test means many widows lose a concession they previously received as a household once their veteran spouse dies.



Department of Veterans' Affairs' latest data indicates that this restriction disadvantages approximately 35% of NSW widows—more than 3,000 women. Many of these women are elderly, on fixed incomes, and already navigating the practical and emotional impacts of bereavement.

The change we are seeking is targeted and simple: remove the income/assets sentence from Section 134 so that eligibility is not contingent on PCC status. Specifically, we would like the following sentence deleted wherever it appears in s134 of the Local Government Regulation:

"..and not have income and assets that would prevent them from being granted a Pensioner Concession Card (assuming they would be eligible for such a card)."

This reform would restore fairness for widows who had the concession while caring for their veteran, have minimal fiscal impact, and send a strong signal of respect and compassion to the veteran community.

It has been pleasing to see many widows in NSW join the campaign calls and writing to their local members and state representatives requesting this change. We have heard back from some representatives already and are gathering more information to strengthen the case for change.

It isn't too late to join the campaign.

How you can help:

- Write to your local NSW Member of Parliament using our template letter.

- Share your personal story, if you feel comfortable, to help MPs understand the real impact of this issue.
- Encourage other widows and supporters to get involved.

Template letters are available on our website. If you would like these posted to you, don't hesitate to call us on (02) 9267 6577 or email guild@fov.org.au. If you would like to share your thoughts on this issue, call us (02) 9267 6577 or email ceo@fov.org.au.

Get
involved



South Australia update

What is happening and what's next

In September 2025, our sister organisation in South Australia made the tough decision to wind up its association following almost 80 years of operations. The association approached us to see if we could continue to support the war widows in South Australia in its absence. The Board considered this proposal from every angle and wanted to ensure the war widows in South Australia are not forgotten, and that their support is not diminished.

On that basis, the members of Australian War Widows (SA) Inc. unanimously voted to wind up the association and hand over their assets to us to manage and use to provide services to them. By the end of 2025, the wind-up was completed and we began the process of engaging with the war widows in South Australia. We started by visiting in late November to meet members in person and hear about the incredible history and legacy they have stewarded in South Australia. We heard remarkable stories — from war widows and mothers who played a key role in establishing the first cenotaph in Australia, just 135 days after the start of WWI, creating

a place to honour the young Australian lives lost at Gallipoli, to the reflections of war widows over 100 who remember the foundation of the organisation. It was also an opportunity to listen and learn about what matters most to local war widows and their families.

In December, we wrote to all members of the South Australian association and invited them to join us. We are already seeing those membership forms come in and have started to set our new members up in our systems. To our new widows in South Australia, a warm and sincere welcome. We look forward to getting to know you, supporting you and advocating with you.

We have also commenced writing to stakeholders and the veteran community in South Australia to let them know about the changes taking place to war widows' support locally, and meetings with these stakeholders will begin shortly.

By April 2026, we plan to be 'operational' in South Australia, which means having a war widows social club established and functioning, in addition to facilitating access to wellbeing activities and the Friendship Line.

If you are in South Australia, please visit our web page to see what services are currently available to you by scanning the QR code on this page. If you prefer to talk to us, call 02 9267 6577 or email guild@fov.org.au and we will direct your request to the right team member.

Ensuring the widows in South Australia continue to have a voice, a place to belong, and support in the veteran community is what the Vasey legacy is all about, and it is our privilege to keep that going.



Meeting war widows in South Australia during our visit to Adelaide in November 2025.

Visit our **SA**
web page





Regional member Marjorie Cameron OAM from Laurieton receiving her OAM from Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW at Government House, Sydney in September 2025.

Marjorie Cameron OAM *Still making a difference at 100*

At a peaceful retirement village in Laurieton lives war widow Marjorie Cameron. At 100 years old, she is one of the last known widows of a First World War veteran in Australia and has been a member of the Guild for 42 years. We were honoured to talk with Marjorie and hear her story firsthand. It was a rare privilege to hear directly from a WWI war widow and the memories she carries.

Marjorie and her first husband, Ern, married in 1950 and raised two sons and a daughter. After moving back to Marjorie's hometown of Glen Innes, the couple established a small nursing home which was the start of Marjorie's long career as a nurse. When they later relocated to Gosford, Marjorie took up

a nursing position at the local hospital, working to help others until her retirement at 67.

Marjorie's journey as a war widow began following Ern's passing in 1984. It wasn't until then that she became aware of the organisation and the local support provided by the Guild "I didn't know about the

Guild until I became a war widow," she says.

Marjorie relocated to Laurieton after marrying her second husband, Alan, also a returned serviceman. It was during her years in Laurieton after the passing of Alan in 2001, that Marjorie became more actively involved

with the Guild. She maintained a committed presence within the organisation by joining the Laurieton War Widows Social Club and becoming Coordinator shortly after. *"I developed quite a few friends there. They've been a big part of my life. Helping people is good for me, I'm not sitting at home thinking about myself and stay active."* For Marjorie, regional living never stopped her from feeling part of her community of widows around the state.

Marjorie speaks of close friendships forged through the organisation, particularly with June, a widow and member of the Laurieton Social Club who has been her friend for over 20 years, and who happens to live in the same retirement village. Marjorie mentions how living so close together allows them to build a strong bond through attending activities and outings together, grab a coffee, and travelling to their social club meetings. Her connection with June is just one of the many impactful friendships she stumbled upon during her decades as a part of the Guild, with Marjorie describing their bond as sisterly.

Marjorie's time with her social club went beyond coordinating meetings. Marjorie kept in touch with local widows who couldn't easily attend meetings and made sure no one felt left behind. Knowing that her fellow widows were going through what she had more than once, Marjorie knew how far the smallest gifts we can give one another can go, and how those small gestures like a

smile can sometimes be exactly the support someone needs. *"It doesn't take much for you to give a person a smile or good morning."*

Now aged 100, Marjorie still attends social club meetings and supports those around her in any way she can. *"I'm still involved. Maybe not to the extent I did a few years ago, but I do what I can."*

Having been a part of the Guild since the 1980s, Marjorie has seen its evolution first-hand, noting changes in services to support all families, expressing her empathy for families of modern-day veterans, especially young mothers raising children while their partners serve. *"The needs of families now are different to what they were when the Guild was first established. We need to support the children, and the mothers, they need a lot of help."*

Through her time of selfless volunteering, attending social club meetings, and expanding her relationships with fellow war widows, Marjorie could not deny that even today, the heart and purpose of the organisation remain. *"If you are having a storm, they get behind you."*

In 2025, Marjorie was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to the community of Port Macquarie. Receiving the OAM was both a surprise and an immense honour for Marjorie. But from other perspectives, it was no surprise that Marjorie was acknowledged for her acts throughout her community and her years of supporting others. It came

unexpectedly with Marjorie first finding out via a text message informing her that she had been nominated to receive the OAM.

True to her humble nature, she refrained from telling anyone until the honour was officially announced. Despite being the awardee, Marjorie insists the OAM is not just for her, it's for all war widows and volunteers who, like her, give their time and care to others.

"It's not just for me, it's for all the other war widows and volunteers who do what they can to make other people's day a little better. We owe it to all the people who have gone before us doing wonderful things to help those who are not as fortunate as us to make their lives a little bit easier. There are lots of other people doing wonderful things. I am just a representative of all of them. The OAM is not just for me, it's for them too."

For someone who has spent her life putting others first, the idea of being singled out still feels strange. What matters to Marjorie is that others like her feel less alone, less burdened, more cared for. After decades of being a war widow, Marjorie remains clear-eyed about what matters: helping people and being a part of a community that flourishes in supporting each other, because as she says, at the end of the day, helping others helps her too.



From right to left: our Patron, the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC Governor of NSW, Life Member Mary Palframan, member Betty Bull, and former Board Director Lynne Boyd at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Victory in the Pacific commemoration in August 2025.

Mary Palframan ‘I do it my way’

“I do it my way.” A phrase that speaks to living honestly, guided by one’s own values rather than others’ expectations. A phrase spoken by 98-year-old war widow, Mary Palframan. Mary became a war widow in 1993 after losing her husband, Albert, who had been suffering from bronchial asthma for a long period of time. His passing was not unexpected, yet the transition to widowhood was confronting. Mary recalled being with him in his final moments, experiencing one of her first major losses. “I just had to manage, that was all there was to it.”

Not long after his passing, Mary was introduced to the Guild by a fellow war widow. Mary noticed her strength and resilience: *“I used to think, if she can manage, I’m as strong as her. I can manage too.”* Mary stood by this motto herself as she adjusted to life without Albert. Mary knew she

would find her way, and she did her best to remain strong.

Mary began attending social clubs meetings. This decision, unbeknownst to Mary at that time, would provide her with decades of connection, love, and friendship from women sharing

that same resilience. *“Everyone is there for the one purpose.”*

She joined the City Saturday Club over 30 years ago. What Mary found in the club was something special. Unlike more formal settings she had experienced elsewhere, this group felt

right for her from the moment she walked in. *"Everyone's so friendly."* She said.

Over the years, Mary formed deep friendships within the Guild and her social club, built on common experience, kindness, and showing up for one another, something many other war widows resonate with. She speaks fondly of many of those who support her, particularly Lynne Boyd, the City Saturday Social Club Coordinator. *"I can always rely on Lynne. She's very faithful."* Lynne and Mary's relationship is certainly something to behold and something very special, demonstrating the power of intergenerational friendship. Their shifts between playful banter and genuine care for each other makes it clear these ladies share a friendship that will last a lifetime, with already two decades of connection proving just how strong their bond is.

When they first met years ago, Lynne was instantly drawn to Mary's spirit; a sentiment often shared by all who get to meet her: *"everyone that meets Mary falls in love with her."* Lynne is also deeply moved by Mary's ability to remain strong and see the humour in life despite the amount of loss she has endured.

In 2018, Mary tragically lost her only son, John. *"He was 57. I miss him terribly,"* she reflects. Soon afterwards she lost her beloved cat, Max, who wandered into her life 15 years prior and stayed, as if he was always meant to be. *"He adopted me,"* she says. Mary does not deny how hard these losses

have been, nor how deeply she misses Albert, John and Max. But she refuses to let grief and loss get the best of her. She remains authentically herself, grateful and compassionate. Many in our community have fond memories of Mary. Whether it's becoming great friends with a war widow the minute they meet, charming the Governor of NSW, or being seen by the ladies as the heart of her club, Mary has a way of leaving a lasting impression. She repeatedly forms friendships on the spot, especially with newcomers to the City Saturday Social Club. As she puts it, *"some people you know for a lifetime and still don't know. Others, you just connect."*

True to who she is, Mary has never allowed age, fear, or circumstance to shrink her world. At 98, she lives independently in her home while remaining deeply connected to her community. She takes advantage of community transport to get out and about, attends club meetings and the occasional gathering Lynne organises, plays Scrabble and Bingo with friends, and actively contributes to the Guild.

Mary also embraces challenges that take her beyond her comfort zone. In 2024, she faced a great fear when asked to participate in a video project sharing the stories of war widows. Initially terrified, she was reluctantly persuaded by Lynne. *"That frightened the hell out of me. After that, I could face anything,"* she laughs. Completing the project left her feeling empowered, embodying

the mindset she has always lived by: *"if they can do it, so can I".*

To this day, when others try to influence her, Mary continues to do it her way. She always speaks honestly without hesitation which can be confronting to some people. Her straightforwardness is received with warmth, earning her a reputation of being cheeky rather than confrontational, and often being described as an incredibly selfless and strong woman. When another member once affectionately called her *"the naughty one,"* Mary laughed and replied, *"I'm the eldest, I'm allowed to be."*

Choosing your own path — standing firm, speaking honestly, and not being swayed by others — can sometimes be mistaken for selfishness and misunderstood. Yet Mary embodies an independence that is not about defiance or putting oneself above others, but standing strong for herself. It is a form of resilience familiar to many war widows.

When asked what she hopes for the future of the Guild, Mary's answer is simple and applies to everyone: *"Just continue as we do. Keep together like we do."* Because whilst resilience and strength are needed during difficult times, there will never be regret or shame in seeking the comfort of others and forming bonds that last forever. Mary has lived life her way, never compromising her honesty or her joy, and it has carried her to where she is today. *"That's just me. I'm 98, I say what I think. I do it my way."*

War widows social clubs

Christmas Gatherings

Last year's end brought a season of connection and Christmas gatherings for War Widows Social Clubs across NSW. These lunches and get-togethers are a festive opportunity for members to catch up, share familiar company and ease into the holidays together. Many clubs took the opportunity to recognise long-standing friendships and achievements, celebrating community in ways that matter most to those who attend. Below are highlights from several of these gatherings.

Bay and Basin Christmas Lunch

On 9 December, the Bay and Basin War Widows Social Club met at Pelican Rocks for a relaxed lunch by the water. Ten ladies enjoyed seafood and good conversation, and the day took on extra warmth with a surprise early birthday celebration for one of their members, Nancy.

Homemade Christmas-themed cake slices added a personal touch, courtesy of the group's Coordinator Maureen, who's known for thoughtful gestures like this. These regular gatherings are intentional moments of connection and shared support before clubs take a break for the holidays.



City Saturday Social Club Celebration

The City Saturday Social Club's Christmas luncheon this year was another fine example of community spirit. Hosted by Coordinator Lynne, it welcomed members from various social groups to celebrate the Life Membership of long time member Mary.

The look on Mary's face captured what these events are about: recognition, gratitude and quiet joy among people who genuinely care for one another.



Muswellbrook Christmas Lunch

In Muswellbrook, local members met at the Workers Club for a simple and joyful lunch of baked dinner and sticky date pudding. Tables were lightly decorated with Santa figures and candles, and personal mementos from club members who had recently passed were placed lovingly to keep their presence felt. The easy flow of conversation turned into hours of laughter and connection — a gentle reminder of why these local meetings matter so much as the year wraps up.



The Entrance and Long Jetty Gathering

One of the largest seasonal events was at The Entrance and Long Jetty, with 31 attendees including members from Toukley, Woy Woy, Swansea and Ettalong. Board Director Lyn Bye and representatives from the RSL joined members for lunch, and the gathering included speeches, recitations of the Ode and the Guild's motto, and the cracking of bon bons. For many, this was a chance to reconnect with old friends, welcome new faces, and acknowledge the shared experience that binds these clubs together year after year.



Younger Members Christmas Lunch

The War Widows Younger Members Social Club's Christmas lunch at Mazzaro Restaurant on 25 November brought together familiar faces for an end of year meal that felt relaxed and genuinely cheerful. Members Frances Goddard and Lynne Sullivan were warmly thanked for organising the day, which stood out for excellent food, attentive service and a venue that made attending easy for all. Pictured below, their last social gathering for 2025 on 13 December, which was very well attended, with much laughter and a buzz of excitement as the ladies prepared to celebrate Christmas with families and loved ones. It was a wonderful gathering to end the year.





Looking back *on a year of wellbeing*

Across the past year, our Wellbeing Program has offered a diverse range of activities designed to support the wellbeing of war widows and veteran families. These activities focus on connection, peer support, self-care and shared experiences, giving families a chance to pause and connect with others who understand the unique life connected to defence service. From nature walks and creative sessions to communal meals and festive workshops, the program balances tried-and-true favourites with new opportunities based on member feedback.

Getting outdoors: wellbeing walks and nature connection

One of the most popular activities over the past year has been wellbeing walks — gentle, social strolls that get widows and families out among nature, reduce stress and provide a safe space for conversation.

These walks have taken place at several scenic locations, including Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Canberra's Botanic Gardens with shaded paths and peaceful views.

Earlier in the year, walks along the Parramatta River gave widows and families a relaxing way to connect over movement and fresh air before coffee together,

while another walk through Sydney's Botanical Gardens invited families to enjoy harbour views and each other's company.

These outdoor activities are simple in concept but meaningful in impact, offering time away from routine, a connection to others and nature, and the physical benefits of gentle exercise.

Creative expression: arts, mindfulness practices, writing and craft workshops

Creativity has also been a key part of the wellbeing mix. Across the year, the program has featured a variety of arts-based sessions that invite participants to make, reflect and connect through hands-on activities.

Workshops have included watercolour painting, Kokodama, candle making, and terrarium building, giving families the chance to mindfully focus on process and play rather than performance. Small group candle making sessions were noted for their relaxed pace and the natural conversations that flow from conscious, shared activity.

Creative writing sessions focused on themes such as grief, and reflection brought a different texture to connection. These online workshops encouraged expression through writing, allowing widows and families to explore personal experiences in a supportive space.

Even sound healing and yoga sessions formed part of the creative wellbeing selection, blending mindful movement with peaceful soundscapes to help participants regulate stress and relax body and mind.

Shared moments around tables: meals, movies & social connection

Another theme that continues to grow is connection through shared meals and social outings. We have hosted both in-person dinners and online cooking activities that centre on doing something together.

Dinner activities — whether an evening out at Caribou in Kingston or a 'Cook and Connect' taco night online — offer an easy way for our community to gather, share food, and build connections across generations and life stages.

A relaxed family movie afternoon at the National Film

and Sound Archive provided a different flavour of shared time, one that didn't depend on conversation but simply being present with each other. These kinds of gatherings are proof that wellbeing is also about creating shared space for families to be together.

Seasonal & special events: festive workshops and themed activities

Our wellbeing offering has also responded to the seasons and community moments with themed activities that bring people together for celebration and creativity.

Christmas-themed sessions included a baubles workshop in Canberra where families could create decorations together and a holiday crafting session in Sydney that paired creativity with lunch. These small seasonal events offered festive connection without pressure and a chance to simply be with others.

Other seasonal highlights have included private tours, community walks during local festivals, and nature walks at times of the year when the environment itself adds to the wellbeing experience. Each brings a rhythm to the calendar that families can look forward to and plan around.

Support beyond activities: ongoing wellbeing services

Alongside activities, our wellbeing activities support families with peer connection and practical assistance throughout the year. This includes war widows social clubs, a closed online wellbeing community, newsletters, practical resources and trauma-informed social work support to help families navigate transitions, access services and feel supported.

As we reflect on the past year, the focus now turns to what's ahead. Our wellbeing activities will continue to grow in response to your feedback, offering a mix of in-person and online opportunities designed to support connection, creativity and everyday wellbeing.

If you would like to stay informed on ways you can support your wellbeing or join one of our groups or activities, please contact us on 02 9267 6577 or email guild@fov.org.au and request to be subscribed to our Newsletters.



Writing Through Grief

A war widow's idea *that brought us together*

When you spoke, we listened. In your feedback about our wellbeing activities, you told us what mattered most: activities that feel meaningful, spaces that feel safe, and opportunities to connect in ways that honour your experience. From those conversations came an idea that has grown into a member-led initiative — shaped by war widows, embraced by families, and helping guide the future of our community.

We heard you – and here's what happened

One war widow's idea for creative writing sessions quickly grew into something more and very special. What began as a trial has grown into Writing Through Grief, a regular wellbeing activity that invites war widows, partners of veterans and family members to gather in the safety of their homes and put words to what's often left unsaid and unexpressed. Finding new connections and support among each other in an understanding and judgement free environment.

Writing Through Grief is facilitated by our social work

team and uses different forms of writing—poetry, letters, short stories and reflective journalling—as a therapeutic tool to express that which is often hard to find the words to express.

Writing Through Grief: a shared journey

In the first sessions, war widows sat alongside partners and other family members of veterans, writing words that carried love, loss and hope. Families spoke about the power of hearing war widows' stories — the insight, resilience and strength behind them. And war widows shared how meaningful it was to hear the many shapes

of loss across defence life: deployment, transition, relocation, illness and bereavement.

Different paths, shared pain, and a common thread of understanding. Listening to one another brought perspective and comfort, reminding all that grief takes many forms and that healing is not a solitary road.

"I really appreciated listening to other's experiences of grief. I had a lightbulb moment where I realised that working so much has not enabled me to focus enough on me—almost like bypassing grief."

Both widows and veteran family members described the sessions as honest, authentic and healing. Several shared that writing helped bring long-ignored emotions to the surface and give them shape on the page. Many valued the chance to connect with others on a similar path, to try something new, and to gently stretch themselves. The dedicated time to write, without interruption, offered space to pause, reflect and continue.

A movement born from your voice

This is what leadership looks like. A war widow raised an idea grounded in experience, and together we

made it into something. Writing Through Grief now sits within our Wellbeing Program alongside other initiatives shaped by the ideas of members.

It reflects the same spirit as the Rise Together Initiative that grew from one war widow's will to provide career support to partners of veterans. Across our organisation, war widows continue to shape direction by identifying need, testing ideas, guiding what comes next and supporting others navigating the challenges of defence life.

As one family member said:

"I feel participating in these activities has helped me to discover my creative side. This has helped me to feel more positive. It is helping me to challenge myself in little ways. In time I am hopeful I will be able to tackle bigger things."

War widows have always led this organisation. From the earliest days to now, your voice drives meaningful change for each other and those that come after. They are showing the way—not just for us, but for the wider community. Each idea shared and each story told strengthens our community.

From our community to another

In December, we joined Australians across the country in mourning following the events at Bondi Beach. Our thoughts were with those who lost their lives, those who were injured, and with their families, loved ones, first responders and community members affected. Given our close relationship with the NSW Association of Jewish Service & Ex-Service Men & Women (NAJEX), we also held their community in our thoughts.

After the events, our team gathered at the Bondi Pavilion to lay a wreath they made together that day, adorned with 15 poppies hand-crocheted by war widows. The tribute was laid on behalf of our community among the sea of tributes left by people from across the country. It was a simple act of care and solidarity, and a way for us to stand together in a moment that has shaken us all.

In response to the incident, Lifeline has shared a wellbeing support guide for anyone who may be feeling affected, even indirectly. If you would like a copy, visit www.lifeline.org.au or call 13 11 14.



Membership update

Changes to membership model

In the spring edition of The Guild Digest, we shared information on our new membership model that will take effect from April 2026. With membership renewal time underway, we wanted to remind you about those important changes for the coming membership year, and provide further information about options and what it means for you. From 1 April 2026, we will offer two membership options — Community Member (free) and Guild Member (\$30 a year or \$85 for three years). Life Members, WWII widows and volunteers will receive Guild Membership at no cost.

Why are there new choices in membership?

As a charity, we cannot, and do not restrict our services to financial members; we must service the community through our core services: social work, welfare, case management and wellbeing services. In delivering these services, it is essential for us to know and understand the people we are servicing. The changes to the membership model ensure that all of those receiving our support can be registered on our system. It also ensures that we know who we are servicing and how, in addition to providing long time members with choice in how they want to engage with us.

What do Community Members receive?

Access to all core services and peer connection as outlined in the table on page 23. It includes social work support, most wellbeing activities, newsletters, resources, online groups, Friendship Line and access to social clubs.

What do Guild Members receive?

Guild Members (previously known as financial members) will receive all core services outlined above, plus voting rights at Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and in Board elections, subscription to *The Guild Digest*, access to member lunches, transport assistance (where eligible) and unlimited access to wellbeing activities. This category of membership is for widows and veteran families who want to actively support the Guild, help shape our direction and deepen their involvement.

Who receives Guild Membership at no cost?

Life Members, WWII widows and volunteers receive the full Guild Membership at no cost in recognition of their long-standing support and service to the organisation.

When do the changes take effect?

From the new membership year, commencing 1 April 2026.

I have already sent in my membership form; how will the changes impact me?

Each form will be reviewed against the new model, and we will contact you to confirm your membership preferences and the cost (or lack thereof) of the membership option that suits you best.

I am already a financial member and have renewed beyond 1 April 2026, what happens to my membership?

All current financial members whose membership does not expire on 31 March 2026 will automatically move to the Guild Member category for the remainder of their membership period. If you are not sure when your membership expires, please contact us.

If your membership does expire on 31 March 2026 and you choose not to pay for the coming year, you will automatically become a Community Member.

If you are a Life Member, WWII widow, or volunteer, your membership will automatically move to an annual Guild Member category at no cost. If you are transitioning your membership from South Australia, you will be set up as a Guild Membership for the 2026-2027 membership year at no cost to you.

Prefer a chat? Give us a call to discuss this new option. We are here to support you every step of the way. Call us on (02) 9267 6577 or email guild@fov.org.au.

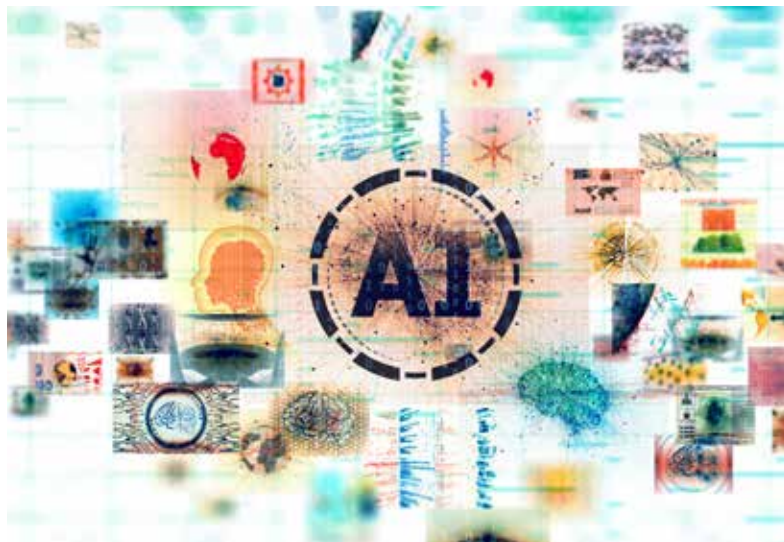
Membership options comparison table

Member Benefit	Community Member	Guild Member
Cost	\$0	\$30 - 1 year; or \$85 - 3 years
War Widows Social Clubs	✓	✓
War Widows Friendship Line	✓	✓
Social Work Service	✓	✓
Rise Together Initiative	✓	✓
Webinars	✓	✓
Online Resource Hub	✓	✓
Monthly Newsletters	✓	✓
Wellbeing Activities (in person)	✓	✓
Wellbeing Activities (online)	Limited	✓
War Widows Transport Assistance		✓
Digital Literacy Program		✓
Quarterly Journal		✓
Free access to organisation luncheons		✓
Eligible for Life Membership		✓
AGM Invitations and votes		✓
Can nominate Board Directors		✓
Eligible for consideration as organisational representative		✓
Participation in Governance and Strategic Direction of organisation		✓

INTRODUCTION TO A.I.

WHAT IS IT, WHAT'S CHANGED FOR YOU AND BASIC SAFETY

Artificial intelligence—often shortened to “AI”—is a way of getting computers to do tasks that normally need human intelligence. That includes understanding language, recognising faces in photos, spotting patterns in large sets of numbers, and making suggestions or predictions. Modern AI systems are usually built using “machine learning”, which means the system learns from lots of examples rather than being programmed step-by-step. You will also hear “natural language processing” (AI that works with human language) and “computer vision” (AI that works with images and video).



AI is everywhere today, in the news and when interacting online. What has changed for everyday Australians is access. AI used to sit quietly inside specialist softwares. Today, AI features are everywhere the internet is. It helps to find answers quickly, explain information, and can help you navigate toward support and information. It can also be fun to play with and talk to. AI tools like Chat GPT, Gemini, Meta AI and Microsoft Copilot, to name a few, can bring many benefits, helping you save time, find or organise information and explain how complex information can apply to you.

For example, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), has just introduced an AI tool on their website called CLIKChat. You can use this to ask what support is available to you, check pension rates and entitlements, and even DVA research and statistics.

As with anything online however, it is important to be careful with the information you put into it, and to think about the answers it provides you. Asking AI for references, or the sources it is relying on to answer your questions, is a good way to check the reliability and AI's interpretation of the information it is providing to you. You will find some important safety tips when using AI tools below.



Above: example of a question answered by DVA's CLIKChat

Be careful with what you type in or upload

Treat public AI tools as you would any public website. Don't provide AI tools with any information that can personally identify you eg full name, home address, date of birth, Medicare or driver's licence numbers, bank details, or private health or family information.

Check the output before you act on it

Crosscheck important facts with trusted Australian sources (government websites, your bank, your health provider) and ask AI to provide you with its references/sources Don't take health advice from AI and AI tools, ask it questions but always talk to your doctor or health care provider before acting on any information AI tools provide you.

Watch out for misinformation and AI influencers

Watching out for misinformation and AI-generated influencers is also important to understand. AI content has become increasingly difficult to distinguish from reality. To protect yourself, first stop, investigate the source, find better coverage and trace the original source of the information and ensure it has been accurately reported. AI can also generate videos and images that can appear real to influence or spread misinformation. AI content often leaves traces of unnatural perfection. To spot AI generated videos or images, check for distorted backgrounds, for anything that feels 'off', for small details that are not right and keep in mind that if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Check the privacy settings of the AI tool you are using

If you are using an AI tool, it is important to check how they are using the information you are putting into it before you start using it. To do this, first ensure you have created an account to use the AI tool so you can set privacy settings. In the application or website you are using, look for settings or privacy settings and look for an option called *"training on your data/input"* and ensure the option is turned off. The option's name might be slightly different depending on which AI tool you are using.

To conclude

As a demonstration, we asked AI to write a conclusion for this article and the below is what AI wrote:

AI is becoming part of everyday life, and when used thoughtfully, it can be a helpful tool for finding information, understanding options, and saving time. Like any online technology, the key is balance: curiosity paired with caution. By staying aware of what AI can and can't do, protecting your personal information, and checking important details with trusted sources, you can use these tools with greater confidence. AI should support your decisions, not replace human judgement or professional advice. With a few sensible safeguards in place, you can explore what AI has to offer while keeping yourself safe and informed.

Useful websites

If you wish to find more information on safety and what to be aware of, feel free to visit one of the below Government websites:

-  **Australian Cyber Security Centre** — <https://www.cyber.gov.au>
-  **Office of the Australian Information Commissioner** — <https://www.oaic.gov.au>
-  **Scamwatch (National Anti Scam Centre, ACCC)** — <https://www.scamwatch.gov.au>
-  **eSafety Commissioner** — <https://www.esafety.gov.au>
-  **Department of Industry, Science and Resources** — <https://www.industry.gov.au>

In good company: caring for ourselves as we care for others



We are a community that looks after one another each day. We volunteer, share rides, make meals, and check in after long nights. We notice when someone seems tired, and we show up. Over time, many of us walk alongside friends who are growing frail or have passed away. These goodbyes can feel heavy, stirring emotions alongside losses you may already carry. The sadness is real, valid, and reflects the deep bonds formed through peer support.

In these moments, be gentle with yourself. Care asks much of the heart, and it asks for steadiness and rest so you can keep going. Taking time to rest, sharing memories, or finding small ways to honour those who have passed can ease the weight. Simple acts—a short walk, a cup of tea, morning light, breathing slowly—can soften the edges. Small rituals like

lighting a candle, tucking a note into a card, or keeping a memory notebook carry meaning.

Boundaries are another act of care for you and those you support. If visits feel intense, rotate, shorten, or offer phone calls instead. Before a difficult visit, plan a small anchor for afterwards; watering the garden, a call with a friend, or a moment of reflection. Your body and mind learn that effort will be followed by ease. After funerals or hospital appointments, prioritise extra care for yourself: eat, rest, and postpone tasks if needed.

Debriefing can help you process emotions. Pair with another volunteer or your coordinator for brief check-ins: ten minutes is enough to share one challenge and one bright moment. Persistent signs of grief—poor sleep, irritability, headaches, or a foggy mind—are cues to reach out to a GP, counsellor, or psychologist.

Professional support is ordinary health care and a way to sustain your strength and compassion.

Anniversaries and special dates may surprise you with their weight. Mark them on a calendar and plan what feels right—visiting a favourite place, baking a shared recipe, attending a service, or pausing to reflect. Give yourself permission to feel as you do. There is no correct way to remember, only what nourishes your heart.

Grief can pull you toward solitude, but maintaining small threads of connection steadies body and mind. Attend craft groups, choir, gardening, or morning tea. Move your body—stretch, walk, sway to music. Action can carry the feeling with it, easing its intensity. Consider small legacy acts after a friend passes—sharing a saying she loved, teaching her recipe, donating in her name, or writing to her family. Even tiny acts carry weight and honour memory.

You do not have to carry this alone. Our social work team is here to listen, connect you with support, and help you protect your wellbeing. Asking for help is not weakness, it is steadiness. It ensures you can continue to give without giving yourself away.

We see the heart, care, and compassion you bring to this community. Your presence matters—the meals you make, the hands you hold, the attention you give. Your wellbeing matters just as much. As you care for others, let us walk alongside you. You are not alone.



Thanks to *our war widows*

Our organisation's story is the story of women supporting women—a story that began almost 80 years ago and continues today.

Through our work with the Guild, we are privileged every day to meet the women who have built this organisation and continue to guide us: our war widows.

We are honoured when you share your experience with us, and when you offer your thoughts on how we can better support you and veteran families. Your voices have shaped the organisation we are today and continue to shape the work we do, and the organisation we will become in the future. Your

legacy lives on as we grow, as we continue telling your stories, and build on the foundation you have created.

It is a privilege to hear and share your wisdom, and to see you at events like the ANZAC Field of Remembrance, across the state, as you honour your loved ones.

On behalf of our community—war widows, defence, and veteran families—thank you for your guidance and the inspiration you provide. We are committed to ensuring the legacy of our war widows, and all the work you have done, continues for another 80 years and beyond.

Summer *recipe*

One-pot sticky coconut chicken rice

Picture and recipe: Centr.com



INGREDIENTS - FOR 2

Olive oil
 700g skinless chicken thighs (fully trimmed)
 2 tbs red curry paste
 6 sprigs of fresh coriander stalks & leaves chopped separately
 2/3 cup (130g) jasmine rice
 1 tbs fish sauce
 1/2 cup (125ml) reduced-fat coconut milk (tinned)
 3/4 cup (200ml) water boiling
 2 bunches of choy sum (150g bunch) cut into 6cm lengths/pieces
 2 tbs unsalted peanuts dry roasted
 1 lime cut in wedges

METHOD

1. Heat a medium-large heavy-based saucepan or pot (with a tight-fitting lid) over medium-high heat.
2. Spray with oil and add chicken. Cook for 2 minutes each side or until lightly golden brown, and set aside in a warm place.
3. In the same pan, add curry paste and coriander stalks and cook for 1-2 minutes or until fragrant.
4. Add rice and stir to coat. Add the fish sauce, coconut milk and just boiled water and stir until combined.
5. Add chicken in a single layer on top of the rice in the pan. Bring to the boil, reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook for 20-25 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through and rice just tender, with a crust forming on the bottom of the pan.
6. Gently fork through the rice, add the choy sum to the pan, cover and set aside for 5 minutes for the rice to cook through completely and the choy sum to steam.
7. Slice the chicken and serve with rice and choy sum topped with coriander leaves, peanuts, and lime.

MEMBER NOTICES

VALE

- Audrey Simpson GLENBROOK
 - Bessie Roots NORTH EPPING
 - Betty Miller WEST GOSFORD
 - Dawn Moulang NEWPORT
 - Ellen Watson N. PARRAMATTA
 - Fay Garland ULLADULLA
 - Isabel Stogdale S. YARRA
 - Joyce Sutherland MUDGEE
 - June Vaughan MOSS VALE
 - Kathleen Winters BLACKTOWN
- Lorna Hansen TALLONG
 - Margaret Bradford CROMER
 - Marie Searson WOONONA EAST
 - Maureen McDonald MACQUARIE PARK
 - Miriam Arthur SKENNARS HEAD
 - Mona Sense KANAHOOKA
 - Norma Slater MARSFIELD
 - Norma Wilson MARSDEN PARK
 - Patricia Delany MIRANDA
- Patricia Trethewey ENMORE
 - Ruth Shand YAGOONA
 - Valma Cantrill ORANGE
 - Yvonne Willis ORANGE
- We extend our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of these members ❤️

Welcome to our new members!

- Alison Craig LINDEN PARK
 - Anne McInerney WATERLOO
 - Barbara Morris KAMBAH
 - Danuta Anna Langston LAKEWOOD
- Jacqueline Buckley GLENHAVEN
 - Karoline McBurney SUMMERLANDPT
 - Leanne Callaghan HALEKULANI
 - Maria Grant NORTH NOWRA
- Maria Barclay ALLENBY GARDENS
 - Maureen Anne Coleman TALLWOOD
 - Noelene Birt WAUCHOPE
 - Wendy Ann Mulholland BALLINA

Members who recently turned 100 - Happy Birthday!

- Beryl McKillop GOSFORD
 - Dorothy Bussell CRONULLA
 - Dulcie Coles ARMIDALE
 - Elsie Alford ETTALONG BEACH
 - Gladys Edwards LAKE HAVEN
 - Hazel Cohen BONVILLE
- Janet Jobson WYOMING
 - Joan Bourke TOUKLEY
 - Kathleen Florence ASHFIELD
 - Lillian Pomfrett GEORGETOWN
 - Lorna Mason WARATAH WEST
 - Lorna Priddis GILGANDRA
- Lorna Smith KEMPS CREEK
 - Melva Job PARKES
 - Noni Hainsworth WINSTON HILLS
 - Roberta Carroll WEST ALBURY
 - Ursula Thompson BIRRONG

Celebrating some very special birthdays!



In October 2025, Member Coral Isaacs – pictured above with her great grandchildren – turned 107 years old!



Member Alisa Harvey celebrated her 105th birthday in September last year!

A simple guide to grief & loss

What is grief and how to support grief

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

What does it feel like?

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

How long does it last?

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

When should I seek help?

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

How can I help myself?

- Cry - crying is a normal and natural way to express intense sadness – it is okay to let it out.
- Write – write down how you are feeling, how it feels in your body, what thoughts you are having, what you are worried about, what you miss and what you are grateful for.
- Stay connected – spend time with friends and family. Share stories, talk about how you are feeling, share a hug.
- Honour – what has been lost, what you are

grieving through the sharing of memories and photos, lighting candles, writing letters or celebrating a legacy.

Importantly, don't pressure yourself. Instead, take it one day at a time. Try to schedule at least one self care action each day eg. eat a healthy meal, meditate, exercise, read a book, enjoy a massage, listen to music.

How can I support others?

Get in touch. Don't wait for them to contact you and "let you know." Know that they might need you to simply be there.

Try not to fix them or the situation – you can't. Instead, simply practice active listening, really listen to them, their feelings and needs. Don't be scared to talk about the cause of the grief, particularly when someone has passed. Say their name rather than avoid talking about the person who has passed.

Offer practical help; help with lawn and garden care, meal preparation, childcare, school drop off and packed lunches, laundry, and tidying the home. Reach out and connect on key dates and anniversaries, knowing that grief can last a long time and the best thing you can do is let them know they are supported.

Where to find peers

You can find peers who have or who are experiencing similar thoughts and feelings. People who have been where you might find yourself or those you care about at any point throughout this journey. You can connect with them in person or online. Please give us a call on 02 9267 6577. You might also like to connect to our Wellbeing Program at wellbeing@fov.org.au.

Important numbers

- Open Arms: 1800 011 046
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Griefline: 1300 845 745
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Digital Literacy: guides and videos to help you stay connected

Do you want to feel more confident using email, booking events online, or keeping in touch through Facebook?

Our Resource Hub now has simple guides and short videos designed for beginners. Each guide walks you through the basics step by step, and the videos show you exactly what to do on screen.

Topics include setting up an email account, using Eventbrite for bookings, and joining Facebook groups safely. These resources are free and created with older members in mind.

Included in this edition of *The Guild Digest* are seven printed guides for you to use or share with others in your community.

Explore the Digital Literacy page at www.familiesofveterans.org.au/digital-literacy-war-widows/ or call us on (02) 9267 6577.

In-home help through DVA's Home Care

For widows with a DVA Gold Card, you may qualify for Veterans' Home Care (VHC).

This program helps widows and veterans stay independent at home by providing domestic assistance, personal care, respite for carers, and minor home and garden maintenance.

Services are tailored to needs and can make daily life easier and safer. To apply, contact the VHC Assessment Agency on 1300 550 450. They will guide you through eligibility and arrange an assessment. For more details, visit dva.gov.au and search "Veterans' Home Care" or scan the QR code below.



For ANZAC Day, lay a tribute in our virtual Field of Remembrance

The Virtual Field of Remembrance offers a meaningful way for anyone, anywhere, to honour the service and sacrifice of someone they love.

It keeps their name and story alive beyond a single day or place, and ensures that remembrance is accessible to all. By placing a cross, you help affirm the ongoing legacy of veterans and their families, and ensure their sacrifice is recognised and remembered by others.

Visit familiesofveterans.org.au/virtual-field-remembrance to place a tribute.

What is multifactor authentication

Multi-Factor Authentication, or MFA, is an extra layer of security for your online accounts. It means you need more than just a password to log in.

How does it work?

After entering your password, you will be asked for a second step — for example a code sent to your phone or a prompt in an app. This helps protect your account even if someone else knows your password. MFA makes it much harder for scammers or hackers to access your information.

How to use it

If you are prompted to do so when logging into your account, follow the prompts to setup MFA and select how you want to receive your MFA code (usually by text message or using an app). You can also turn on MFA in your account's security or privacy settings.

New membership year: when will memberships be processed?

You can return your renewal form at any time, however all membership renewals will be processed after 1 April.

If you phone us about renewing before 1 April, our team will take your details and call you after 1 April to complete your renewal over the phone. Please note that due to the high volume of renewals, processing can take up to 6 weeks.

Getting to your social club – transport options

If travelling to meetings or outings has become difficult, there are options to help.

Our war widows transport support can reduce costs and make trips more manageable.

We can provide information on eligibility and help you apply. This service is designed to keep you active in your community and attending the events you enjoy.

Call us on (02) 9267 6577 for details or email us at warwidows@fov.org.au.

Our latest guide to empower you: support & services guide for ageing veteran families

Discover our Support and Services for Ageing Veteran Families Guide, your essential resource for understanding the range of benefits, concessions, and support available to war widows and older veteran families.

From financial assistance and healthcare to transport, aged care, and community programmes, this guide connects you with the services and networks that help you stay independent, supported, and informed at every stage.

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



FAMILIES
OF VETERANS GUILD

Register now for the

A N Z A C

Field of Remembrance

THURSDAY 23 APRIL 2026 AT 10:30AM
ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL, SYDNEY

Registrations are now open - close 9 April 2026

If you have mobility limitations, please register prior to 31 March 2026

To register:

Scan the QR code on this flyer with your phone

or

Email us on guild@fov.org.au

or

Call us on 02 9267 6577

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

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

