



Greetings from the Editor.

Well, since our last newsletter we have had Victory in the Pacific and Vietnam Veteran's Day. I hope the commemorations you attended were meaningful and memorable.

At my Subbranch we are lucky enough to have a World War II veterans and she will be celebrating her 1100th birthday at the end of the year.

In this newsletter we will have extract from the DVA Latest News if you do not have access to it.

Some of you might know that I was diagnosed with Cancer in April this year but after a course of strong Chemotherapy I have been told I am in remission and so I was able to ring the bell at Chris O'Brien's Life House.

As the next newsletter is the Christmas edition, if you would like to send in Memories, Recipes or Pictures of Christmases spent whilst spent in the Army

Muriel Buckland



Hello Everyone,

I trust this September edition of our newsletter finds you well – or at least as well as Date Of Birth allows! Great to hear Muriel has received very positive medical news.

Looking forward to meeting up at Manly Wharf with those who can on Sunday 22 September to visit North Head's new whale viewing stations, lunch at the cafe and optional tour of North Fort museum, tunnels, AWAS Operations Room. I have not received any requests so far for tours which need booking.

Betty Layt organised a gathering on September 7/8 for members who served at Bardia Barracks. The Military Precinct is being redeveloped as a Veterans Hub and hopefully the Museum will reopen at some stage.

Jenny and I attended the Commemorations for Victory in the Pacific at the Cenotaph in Martin Place and at the Kokoda Track on 15 August and I know many were involved in local celebrations for Vietnam Veterans Day.

Can I recommend a search of the Anzac Memorial Hyde Park website. As part of their 90th Anniversary celebrations the Memorial is presenting a series of evening Voices From the Front programmes with readings of letters and poems from the Memorial's collection combined with an after hours exploration of the building.

On 28 August it featured an actor reading the diary of Private James Smith of life at Gallipoli and the Battle of Lone Pine. We were then guided to areas of the Memorial for readings of poems matched to particular features and had the privilege of entering the Hall of Sacrifice. It was a very moving experience to be there at night and hear why veteran guide Jim had chosen specific objects and architectural features to highlight.

On 6 November, Voices From the Front will feature the Battle of Cocos with personal accounts of the Royal Australian Navy's first victory from Stoker Stan Newton in the engine room and Captain John Glossup from the bridge. Bookings on the website.

As those who have attended Devoted Service performances and guided tours will confirm, the enthusiasm and knowledge of the guides makes for a meaningful experience.

The photographic exhibition we saw earlier this year, "HERstory : Remembering Australia's Military Women" is now available digitally on the website.

Margaret Wells confirms that the WRAAF lunch is being held on 12 October and is sending details for registering and payment by 6 October – always a day of great fellowship.

Please contact us with suggestions for face-to-face gatherings and events and news of YOUR doings so we can keep in touch.

Gai Hutchison

**Articles from DVA Latest News**

**War Widows rebranded as "Families of Veterans Guild"**



### *Members and friends of the new Families of Veterans Guild*

The Families of Veterans Guild, a new brand name for our organisation that has been known as Australian War Widows NSW, was formally launched on 23 April 2024.

The Families of Veterans Guild is an inclusive not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to provide the defence and veteran family community with a voice, facilitate access to services and entitlements, and support its social and emotional wellbeing.

With more than half a million families of veterans in Australia, and only a small segment currently eligible for support, we are filling existing gaps in the veteran support landscape. We do this by offering a place and support to those who are not eligible elsewhere: e.g. families who are not bereaved or parents of veterans.

We advocate for the inclusion of all families of veterans in the system of support and seek to ensure that, from the moment a veteran put on a uniform, they know that their families will have a home and a voice regardless of what their future holds.

We know that service in the Defence force and its impacts have changed significantly since our beginnings in 1946, and we are responding to those changes and community expectations. Our brand change is not about forgetting our war widows, it is about ensuring their legacy continues and that war widows remain seen, heard, supported, and that Australia never forgets.

As our founder Ms Jessie Vasey CBE OBE said almost 70 years ago: We are now becoming an older women's group and I feel that if we remain as such the organisation will die. We must become an inclusive group... It takes a village to provide holistic and quality support to the families of our veterans throughout their entire life journey. It is only when we as a community work together that we can fill existing gaps and improve the lives of the families of our veterans.

We all have a role to play in supporting those who stand behind those who stand for us.

Are you a veteran's family? A defence family? A war widow? Do you want to help, support or learn more?

Visit our new website ([www.familiesofveterans.org.au](http://www.familiesofveterans.org.au)) or email us at [guild@fov.org.au](mailto:guild@fov.org.au) and join our movement today.

## Women's Service Recognised with Mural in Violet Town, Victoria



### *A message from the Violet Town RSL Sub-Branch*

An impressive mural representing women who served in, or supported, Australia's and allied defence forces in times of war has been unveiled at the Violet Town RSL Sub-branch in North East Victoria.

It is the largest mural in Australia dedicated to honouring all women's contribution to war. Painted by recognised mural artist Tim Bowtell, the largely black and white artwork tells the story of local women from the Violet Town area who served but set in the context of Australian women's service in all military conflicts.

## **Plaque unveiled for former Commandos**

15 July 2024

*Courtesy of the Department of Defence*

Sixty-one years after he first walked through the gates of 1 Commando Company, Allan Miles trod the familiar path to mark the place of his former unit.

A heritage marker commemorating the former site of 1 Commando Company barracks was dedicated by veterans and families at Georges Heights, Mosman, on 23 June.



*Former members of 1 Commando Company:(from left) National Secretary Airborne and Special Forces Association Pat Doherty; President, 1 Commando Association Merv Liddell; and Chairman of Operation Pilgrimage Group Allan Miles, at the unveiling of the new heritage marker at the company barracks, Georges Heights, Sydney.*

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### **Nurse and rescued orphan meet 50 years on**

After decades of war and with the imminent fall of Saigon in 1975, a humanitarian crisis was unfolding in South Vietnam.

As Communist tanks neared the borders, Australians and Americans were called on to evacuate thousands of South Vietnamese, including many war orphans.

A humanitarian mission named Operation Babylift was launched to take orphans to Australia and the United States.

During the refugee evacuation, eight RAAF C-130 Hercules and two C-47 Dakotas were dispatched.

Among the hundreds of orphaned children was a 5-month-old, 4-kilo malnourished baby who was adopted by a family in Berri, South Australia. He is now Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1) Darren Wasley.

Today, the actions of those during Operation Babylift are not lost on him, knowing the airlift gave him a new lease of life.

Almost 50 years later, on 3 July, WO1 Wasley met 87-year-old Val Lawrence, an Air Force nurse who was aboard one of the RAAF aircraft headed for Saigon, at an RSL-run nursing home in Adelaide.

‘Meeting RAAF nurse Val Lawrence was surreal; it was like meeting your midwife,’ WO1 Wasley said.

‘There were so many children, but we now know she was on my flight.’

Ms Lawrence said she was elated when she first found out one of the orphans was coming to meet her. She had never had the opportunity to see any of the rescued children.

She said her actions on the mission were only a small part of a bigger picture.

'I always find myself wondering where the kids are today and what they're doing,' Ms Lawrence said.

'These days my memories of it all are kind of sketchy; it was 50 years ago. It all happened so quickly. I was one of the four nurses and there were so many children.

'I am so grateful that Darren came to meet me and I will cherish this moment.'

About 200 orphans were evacuated to Australia. It was not long after the last flight on 17 April 1975, that North Vietnamese Army tanks rolled into Saigon.

Growing up, WO1 Wasley always knew he was different because he did not look like his parents.

'They were white Aussies, I was not,' he said.

In his teens, WO1 Wasley was an Army cadet with an interest in war history, so he joined the Army in 1994 as a reserve rifleman.

After he decided to go full-time, a knee injury during training at Kapooka shifted his career to a role in the Armoured Corps, where he spent the majority of his time at 3/4 Cav Regt in Townsville.

Today, he is the Honours and Awards secretary for Army Headquarters and is studying at the Australian War College.

WO1 Wasley plans to visit Ms Lawrence again and is hoping to meet some of her family.



## Olympic Torch visits Australian National Memorial in France



*Olympic Torch runners, DVA staff and local officials attended the Australian National Memorial stop of the relay.*

As part of its long journey around France, the Olympic Torch Relay has visited the Somme. Its first stop in the region was the Australian National Memorial and the Sir John Monash Centre near the village of Villers-Bretonneux.

More than 1,000 schoolchildren and other spectators lined the route from the village to the Sir John Monash Centre, as the Torch arrived at around 9am. The runner carrying the Torch then proceeded through the neighbouring Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, past the graves of some 2,100 Commonwealth soldiers from the First World War.

Overlooking the cemetery is the Australian National Memorial, the walls of which bear the names of nearly 11,000 Australian soldiers who died on the Western Front and who have no known grave. The runner carried the torch along the front of the Memorial before ascending to the very top of its tower.

Ben Daetwyler is the new Director of the Sir John Monash Centre and a descendant of one of the soldiers whose names are inscribed on the Memorial's walls.

'The fact that the Memorial and the Sir John Monash Centre were chosen as the first stop for the Olympic Torch says a great deal about how the sacrifice made by Australian troops over 100 years ago is still fresh in the region's collective consciousness,' Mr Daetwyler said.

The first torch for the Paris 2024 Olympic Torch Relay was lit by the sun's rays on 16 April during a ceremony in Olympia, Greece, where the ancient Olympics were once held.

After criss-crossing France, there lay will end on 26 July when the games begin.

The [Sir John Monash Centre](#) is one of three interpretative centres DVA maintains overseas. This cutting-edge multimedia Centre reveals the Australian Western Front experience through a series of interactive media installations and immersive experiences.

The SJMC App, downloaded on each visitor's personal mobile device, acts as a 'virtual tour guide' to the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, the Australian National Memorial and the Sir John Monash Centre.

*Local sportswoman Floraine Borman carried the flame to the top of the Memorial*



The experience is designed so visitors gain a better understanding of the journey of ordinary Australians –told in their own voices through letters, diaries and life-size images – and connect with the places they fought and died. A visit to the Sir John Monash Centre is a moving experience that leaves a lasting impression.

If you would like to see more news from the Centre, please visit [the website](#) and register for regular Updates





# Eating in the 50s

1. Pasta was not eaten
2. Curry was a surname.
3. A takeaway was a mathematical problem.
4. A pizza was something to do with a leaning tower.
5. Crisps were plain; the only choice we had was whether to put the salt on or not.
6. Rice was only eaten as a milk pudding.
7. A Big Mac was what we wore when it was raining.
8. Brown bread was something only poor people ate.
9. Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking.
10. Tea was made in a teapot using tea leaves and never green.
11. Sugar enjoyed a good press in those days, and was regarded as being white gold. Cubed sugar was regarded as posh.
12. Fish didn't have fingers.
13. Eating raw fish was called poverty, not sushi.
14. None of us had ever heard of yoghurt.
15. Healthy food consisted of anything edible.
16. People who didn't peel potatoes were regarded as lazy.
17. Indian restaurants were only found in India.
18. Cooking outside was called camping.
19. Seaweed was not a recognised food.
20. "Kebab" was not even a word, never mind a food.
21. Prunes were medicinal.
22. Surprisingly, muesli was readily available, it was called cattle feed.
23. Water came out of the tap. If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than petrol for it, they would have become a laughing stock!
24. And the things that we never ever had on our table in the 50s and 60s: elbows or phones!

WRAAF Lunch on Saturday 12 October

Please contact Margaret Wells (02) 4758 7153 as soon as possible to book in.



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