



Official Magazine of
**WODEN VALLEY
SUB-BRANCH R.S.L.**



The SERVICEMAN

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AUGUST 2018



The opening of the Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch & Veterans Support Centre with President Jim Gilchrist and Vice Admiral Ray Griggs AO, CSC, RAN, and later from VADM Griggs Twitter Feed: "Was good to be able to open the new Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch Premises this afternoon - great setup to support those who have served and those who still do in #YourADF"



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The SERVICEMAN

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RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

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Bob Cremer



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OFFICE BEARERS 2017-18

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The Sub-Branch meets on the last Tuesday of each month except April and December at the Canberra Southern Cross Club, Corinna Street, Phillip at 7.00PM. Membership Subscription is due on January 1st annually and should be posted to the above Sub-Branch address.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Bob Cremer



Already half-way through 2018, another AGM completed and we are off on another year of business and Sub-Branch activities. It does make you wonder where the time goes.

Our relocation to the Grant Cameron Centre at what used to be the Holder High School went off reasonably well considering all of the equipment that had to be relocated but we are now settled and fully operational.

This issue contains the Sub-Branch Annual Report, January-December 2017, OOWII Awards and 50-Year Certificate presentations to deserving members and features the Official Opening of Sub-Branch and Veterans' Support Centre held in our new premises on Friday 18th May 2018 by Vice Admiral Ray Griggs AO CSC RAN. Also an interesting speech delivered at the ANZAC Eve Commemorative Dinner by new member Kellie Dadds, National Coordinator of the 'By-the-Left' movement which aims to broaden the public's perception of what a veteran looks like.

Also details of the 2018 Eddison Park ANZAC and Peace Ceremony conducted just prior to ANZAC Day with copies of the students winning essays, the standard of which is quite outstanding considering they are Year 5-6 students, including an article by Deputy President, Brooke Thorpe and wife Jacqui about 'Visitors from the West'.

Through members Quentin & Cynthia White I met visiting UK couple Sarah and Colin Kellam. Sarah is the granddaughter of William John Symons VC, and was in Australia visiting relations and to present a British Military Medal to the Australian War Memorial to be included with her grandfather's medals currently displayed in the Hall of Valour at the AWM. Sarah's story of her grandfather is included in this issue.

It is a very good sign to see the growing number of new members welcomed into the Sub-Branch ranks shown in this issue. We need new and younger members so the good work currently conducted by our members can carry on into the future.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jim Gilchrist

Since the last edition of *The Serviceman*, we have successfully negotiated a Branch Congress, ANZAC Day Commemorations, including our ANZAC and Peace Ceremony and Schools' Essay Competition, and the Sub-Branch AGM. I am pleased to report we continue to evolve in a positive and productive way; our many clients appreciate the support we provide to them and their families; and, we are continuing our measured growth that meets our present needs and will provide for a sustainable future.



Thus, I start this report by thanking all our members and staff for the work they do to achieve these outcomes. As Mr Grace was wont to say, 'You've all done very well!'

The ANZAC and Peace Ceremony at Eddison Park was another success, albeit that various school timings meant there was a smaller gathering than we have seen in previous years. Again, the essays from Years 5 and 6 children were of a high standard and the children and teachers demonstrated enthusiasm for the ceremony and the essay competition. I thank the ACT Director of Education, Ms Natalie Howson for the Government's continued support for this event; and our guest speaker Ms Robyn Siers from the AWM. Eddison Day Club members were later regaled by three winning essayists who read their tales at one Friday gathering in the company of some very proud parents.

The Entitlements & Advocacy [E&A] and Welfare sections of the VSC continued to attract many new clients during the past few months. Particularly as some clients are presenting with complex claims and appeals, and welfare issues, and these numbers show no signs of abating, we are developing an Employees Assistance Program [EAP] to ease the inevitable strain on staff and volunteers. Unfortunately, our efforts to grow our E&A team continue to be impeded by issues with the revised system of training and accrediting of pension officers and advocates. We are working locally and nationally through the RSL to raise these matters as diplomatically as possible.

The Welfare capability also continues to grow extensively, especially in relation to our older members and resource-intensive cases. Finding providers to actually do the work remains a concern, particularly as we face cross-border issues with clients who live beyond the ACT. We look forward to building a robust system of welfare support that includes telephone calls, home and hospital visits, and *system negotiation* skills to assist clients in the coming year.

During the past six months, the gatherings at Burrangiri for our older members and others have been one of the general success stories from the Welfare Team. Please refer to the eNewsletters and flyers for more details of these popular events.

Concurrently, we continue to conduct information sessions for current and potential welfare volunteers. In addition to being informative to attendees, these sessions provide useful background knowledge to the volunteers as they set about their various tasks. >>>

Rani continues to develop our database of volunteers with a view to optimising their administration and availability, while recording their formal and informal briefing and training achievements. At the recent AGM, former Branch President, Peter Eveille, was elected to the Board and has assumed the duties of Vice President, Service Delivery. With a name change from Welfare, Peter fills a position that has been vacant for a couple of years.

Our ANZAC Eve Dinner was one of our largest dinners ever. Former Major, Kellie Dadds spoke of her association with ANZAC Day and with the *By the Left* movement and the Women Veterans Network Australia that aim to support females who served in the ADF. As a veteran of eight operational deployments, a mother of three young children and wife of a serving officer, Kellie easily linked her experiences into the work she is now doing with the veteran community generally and particularly for females; she certainly hasn't retired as such! As always, this dinner provided an opportunity to commemorate those members who had passed away in the previous year and to rededicate our members to the objects of the Sub-Branch and the League. A combination of our promotion and several ESO groups contributed to an excellent evening that was rounded off by our Patron, His Excellency, Chris Seed.

Before and during the ACT Congress, I raised concerns about some aspects of the 2018 march and the adverse publicity that had arisen from veterans and the general public. At the Congress, the President advised that the revised format had been suitably promulgated and it would not be changed; he also undertook to work with the planning team to present a public relations response to the situation. As no such media statements were evident, and following hearty discussion at the May OGM, the Sub-Branch raised the issue at the last Branch Council. Having attracted significant discussion from other delegates, I will follow up this issue in the coming weeks.

Vice Admiral Ray Griggs formally opened our new premises in the Grant Cameron Community Centre at Holder on 18 May. Some 70 dignitaries, members and guests attended a pleasant evening and suitable words spoken in support of the work we are doing and some encouraging words from the VCDF. We also took this opportunity to 'relaunch' a model of HMAS Kiama that former President Peter Dinham had carefully restored. Commander Chloe Griggs and Fiona Mower, the wife of the new NZ Defence Attaché, unveiled the model. In summary, a fine evening was had by all.

Hugh Poate addressed our mid-winter June OGM Dinner. Hugh discussed the trek that he and his wife, Janny, took across the Kokoda Track. In the company of other bereaved families and many serving and retired veterans from recent conflicts, Hugh described the trek and advised how it was the start of their journey to recovery some 12 months after the death of their son, Private Robert Poate, in Afghanistan. Hugh and Janny have become part of several informal networks that contribute immeasurably to veterans and families who have been affected by operational service. Hugh noted the support and encouragement that he and Janny had received from several serving commandos who undertook this trek and from the locals whom he likened to modern Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels.

Our coffee catch-ups for younger veterans are now an established part of each Friday, with an open invitation to all to drop-in between 1030AM and Noon for coffee and good company.

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Finally, I was heartened to meet twice with the DVA Veterans' Advocacy and Support Services Study head, Mr Robert Cornall. Having first spoken with Robert and his team to discuss our observations of the present advocacy system and to raise some of our issues with him, we attended a subsequent session in concert with other ESOs at the Page Veterans' Support Centre to discuss specific examples to demonstrate our concerns. We are in the process of developing a formal submission to this team, we will also refer our submission through Branch and the National offices to form part of a consolidated response from the RSL. I thank Peter Eveille, Ross Thomas and Warren Barsley for their contributions to these meetings. We are hopeful that Mr Cornall's report will result in the continued enhancement of veterans' advocacy services in the relatively near future.

In closing, I again thank our staff, volunteers and other members for their efforts to support veterans in the ACT and beyond. I look forward to working with the Board and others to ensure this support will continue to be available well into the future.

The Agnostic

(From 'The Serviceman' Christmas edition 1999)

It was time for the first Padre's hour at recruit training. The flight was drawn up in a square in the middle of the parade ground, and the Drill Instructor gave his orders.

“Church of England, one pace forward, MARCH. Move to the left, LEFT TURN. By the Right, QUICK MARCH... HALT”.

In a similar way he sorted out the Jews, Roman Catholics and Other Denominations to the other three points of the compass. Only O'Connell was left in the centre of the parade ground.

“Why haven't you got fell in for Padre's hour, airman?”

“I'm not any of those, Corporal. I'm an agnostic”.

“Are you C of E?”

“No, Corporal”.

“Are you Catholic?”

“No, Corporal”.

“Are you Jewish?”

“No, Corporal”.

“Then, you are Other Denominations. Get fell in”.

FALL IN

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members.



Russell Walls, Katherine Gilchrist, Daniel Applebee,
David Bermingham, Christian Bahnerth, Donald Skinner,
Kenneth Paratt, Ethel Muller, Lynette Le Lievre-Healy,
Dorothy Seedsman, Robert Mouatt, Robert Knight,
Lloyd Streeting, John David Ramadge,
Sashika Maddock, Geoff Curnow

Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch - Annual Report January - December 2017

The Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch enjoyed another exciting and productive year in 2017, the highlights of which were the continued evolution of the Veterans' Support Centre (VSC) and the re-location of the Sub-Branch from Yamba Sports Club, Phillip, to the Grant Cameron Community Centre (GCCC) at Holder. The Sub-Branch also conducted another successful ANZAC and Peace Ceremony at Eddison Park, with its associated essay competition for local school children; and the Eddison Day Club continued to entertain our older members and others in the community. We also managed to organise, support or otherwise engage with various organisations and activities in the ACT; and conduct several dinners including a flagship event on ANZAC eve.

As the primary means of supporting veterans and their families, the VSC maintained an extraordinary workload in both preparing and submitting claims and appeals, and on delivering welfare services to our members and others in the ACT and region. We also continued to build a Transition capability that focusses on younger veterans with the intention of enhancing their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

In leaving the Yamba Club, we ended an association of nearly 50 years during which the Sub-Branch had built and owned a club, then sold it and its associated licences to the Canberra Southern Cross Club (CSCC), and continued the normal business required by our Constitution and the objects of the League. We should all be grateful to our forebears who ensured that the proceeds of the original sale some 30 years ago were invested and managed wisely as they ensured a financial position that allows us to continue their good work. While this move meant that we ceased to be a tenant of the CSCC, we will retain our special bond with the Club.

Deputy President, Brooke Thorpe and a small but willing group of members planned and facilitated the relocation to the GCCC. In doing so, they identified potential treasures from various storage areas and, where possible, will display these in the new facility. I look forward to an official opening early in 2018 and welcoming members and others to the new 'digs'. In anticipation of the move, Brooke also coordinated the relocation of the Sub-Branch Memorial Stone from the Yamba site to the Obelisk at Eddison Park.

During the year, the Branch Executive also moved from the Yamba Club to alternative accommodation. While the Sub-Branch had enjoyed the co-location, it apparently did not meet the expectations of the Branch. However, it was worth a try!

The Entitlements & Advocacy (E&A) and Welfare section of the VSC continued to attract many new clients, with many being referrals from previous clients and family, and others having found us through a variety of means. As this part of our business grew markedly through the year, it strained staff and volunteers alike, particularly as we faced the challenges of a new accreditation system that aimed at ensuring all volunteers are suitable trained. In 2017, the E&A team received some 335 new cases, nearly all of whom presented with multiple conditions, each of which is a separate element in the overall claim.

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While many of these claim were determined, others required an appeal and others still remain open. While it is hard to measure success in relation to claims, this data reflects the overall system and we have many more happy clients than disgruntled ones; the latter tending to be cross with the system rather than our pension officers and advocates!

The Welfare capability also grew extensively, especially in relation to older members and others who sought our help. Again, most of these cases came from referrals, most required extensive research and networking as government policies and processes evolved, and many were resource intensive. In relation to the last point, most welfare cases require people to assist our clients access the services they need and to which they are entitled, and to generally work their way through what is an increasingly complex set of systems. Finding providers to actually do the work is also a concern, particularly as we face the cross-border issues associated with clients who live beyond the ACT.

In thanking a small but dedicated group of volunteers who assist in this critical service, I particularly thank Florence Sofield who worked well above her paid hours and responsibilities to make much of it happen. I also welcome Rani Kalimeris who assisted Florence in the delivery of services and coordinated the engagement with, accreditation of and the tasking of our welfare volunteers. We look forward to building a robust system of welfare support that includes telephone calls, home and hospital visits, and *system negotiation* skills to assist clients in the coming year. Rani also coordinated the delivery of the Over-80s, widows and widowers Christmas cards, and the feedback that these visits provided to the welfare team. In 2018, we will build on the volunteer training and briefing sessions we conducted during 2017 and record attendances, content and other relevant issues as we build our database of welfare volunteers.

I also acknowledge the advice and effort that the former Branch President, Peter Eveille made to this team. Peter is an experienced and committed welfare volunteer whose contribution was most welcome. We look forward to seeing more of Peter in the coming year.

The Transition team arranged for several younger veterans to attend a weekend course with the Remount Horsemanship Program at Bowring and facilitated some follow-up visits during the year. In addition to welcoming two key members of the Remount team to the February OGM Dinner, the Sub-Branch consolidated its relationship with this group and we look forward to further engagement with them during 2018. Remount's efforts were in part recognised in a ceremony at the Australian War Memorial when Lockheed Martin provided some funds that will offset the costs Remount provided previously from its own means. The Transition team also conducted a video gaming activity session. Alex Meiliunas arranged this activity through a US company, *Stack-Up*, that he learned about while deployed to Afghanistan last year.

Having celebrated its 13th birthday in February, the Eddison Day Club continued to support our older members and others from the general community who might otherwise be socially isolated. Peter Sutton and Gina Bowers coordinated the team effort from a small group of stalwart volunteers, many of whom have been involved from the beginning. Sadly, some of the longstanding members of this group either passed away or could no longer attend the meetings. >>>

Similarly, some volunteers had to deal with illnesses and other personal issues during the year. In thanking all those involved in the Day Club, I thank the Canberra Irish Club for the support it has provided since the Club started.

The ANZAC and Peace Ceremony, and the associated Essay competition, was again well supported by local schools, parents and supporters. Again, the essays were of a high standard and continued to amaze those privileged to read or hear them. Our Patron, His Excellency, Mr Chris Seed, the New Zealand High Commissioner, was the guest speaker, while Ms Natalie Howson, the Director-General of ACT Education, gave the opening address and presented the prizes. Mrs Pam Yonge and her daughter Sue Sarantos represented the Eddison family; the ACT Combined Schools Band provided musical support. Andre Bobets coordinated the event, Mike Taylor was the Master of Ceremonies and Greg Kennett coordinated the essay competition. The RSL's National President, Mr Robert Dick, attended the ceremony and was one of many who listened to Shiori Ishikawa from Farrer Primary School read her winning essay.

The CEO of the RSL National Office, Ms Georgie Macris addressed members and guests at the ANZAC Eve Dinner. Georgie spoke of her association with ANZAC Day and related some of these issues to her role with the RSL and her previous work with DVA. Chris Seed thanked Georgie for her presentation and added his insight into the ANZAC tradition. As always, this dinner provided an opportunity to commemorate those members who had passed away in the previous year and to rededicate our members to the objectives of the Sub-Branch and the League.

Members and guests supported three OGM Dinners, each of which attracted speakers who entertained and informed their audiences. As noted previously, Ben Maguire from Remount spoke of the Remount Horsemanship Program in February. In June, the principal of *Wholistic Financial Management*, Catherine Smith, raised some financial management issues that could affect our members and clients. And in October, Jane Hiatt provided her reasons for *running seven marathons in seven days in seven different cities*. Jane had participated in our rowing program in 2016 and has engaged with her fellow oarsmen as they supported each other since. While providing social interaction for members, these dinners are opportunities to welcome visitors. They are run on a cost-recovery basis and are available to all members of the ACT RSL, others in the veteran community and their guests.

Many members attended the Christmas party that provided well-deserved social interaction and an opportunity to thank our volunteers. It was a pleasure to inaugurate Jacqui Thorpe, Florence Sofield and Joyce O'Brien into the *Order-Of-Whatever-It-Is*: Jacqui had been very active in telephoning our older members, visiting people in hospital, assisting at the Day Club and generally being an excellent citizen; Florence worked like a Trojan in the welfare area; and Joyce provided excellent support to our members and coordinated many of our dinners and other events in her role as the Office Administrator.

At the Branch Congress, Jan Ormerod, Reg Gillard and Peter Sutton were awarded Life Memberships of the RSL. Jan recently transferred her membership from Barton Capital Sub-Branch when it folded, and has been employed at the National Office for more than 20 years. >>>

Reg and Peter have both been outstanding members of the Sub-Branch for many years and have contributed to many of the services we provided; Reg was a foundation member of the Day Club and Peter joined soon after; both continue to contribute each week. Ray Aitcheson, Reg Andrew (in absentia), Don Cameron, Everard Cotterill, Murray Crawford, Kevin Cremen (in absentia) and Fred Dewhurst all received 50 Year Certificates at Congress; the Secretary Greg Kennett and I had presented Len Rich with his Certificate just prior to Congress. In January, Florence Sofield was awarded an Australia Day Medallion in recognition of her work as the Community Support Coordinator.

While the ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day appeals in 2017 again generated less income than they had in previous years, volunteers engaged with the community and outlined the services the Sub-Branch provides. Having learned in December that sub-branches could apply for a full payment of the moneys they had collected at the Poppy Appeal, we are in the process of doing so now. Some of the appeal shortfall was offset by a BEST Grant allocation of more than \$27,000.

For yet another year, Bob Cremer edited and produced four editions of *The Serviceman*. Bob continues to do an outstanding job as he also canvasses for articles and attends many events and functions from which he provides reports and photographs. The new printer has now been accepted as the printer-of-choice for *The Serviceman* as it operates at a reduced cost while retaining a suitable quality. The office staff and Secretary kept members informed of events, news and general issues through eNewsletters, emails and standard mail. Member feedback on these services has been positive.

At the Branch Congress in March, the Sub-Branch presented a motion for the Sub-Branch to retain responsibility for the management and operational control of the VSC. The motion aimed to secure the Sub-Branch a sustainable future and measured development of the VSC as it has done since its inception nearly four years ago; the draft MOA had implications for funding and for the Sub-Branch to represent the ACT Branch in matters relating to service delivery through the VSC. The Sub-Branch Board and membership agreed to this approach in anticipation of a change in leadership in the Branch Executive. This decision was vindicated as Branch reset its priorities as it faced stringent compliance issues and modified its overheads and expenditures. Disappointingly, Branch reduced its financial commitment to the VSC during this process. However, after several discussions on options for the Sub-Branch to fund the VSC, the membership agreed to a Board recommendation to draw down on its managed fund to support the operations of the VSC for at least the next two years. With some internal controls in place, the Board will seek support from beyond the League, as it is unlikely the NSW Branch will support the VSC as had been expected.

Throughout the year, the Sub-Branch Board continued to manage the Sub-Branch's business operations and governance requirements. Having already noted several members for specific efforts and tasks, I acknowledge the support of each director. I also note Frank Poole's contribution to the Board during part of the year. Having become an Associate Member in early 2017, Frank retained Service membership of Campbell-Russell and, until illness forced him to stand aside, he contributed significantly to Board debate as an Associate Member of our Sub-Branch.

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On a sad note, the Sub-Branch farewelled many members during the year, with these being listed in various editions of *The Serviceman* and elsewhere.

As noted previously, we welcomed Rani Kalimeris to the Welfare team, primarily as the volunteer coordinator. Alex Solecka joined Lynnda Liversey in the reception role, where both provide the voice of the Sub-Branch as well as contributing to general office tasks. Andrew Properjohn continued to do a great job in the E&A team, particularly as he greeted and briefed new clients, managed the expectations and frustrations of some clients, did his best to control the flow of paper through the office and helped our volunteers. Renee Mills accepted a position with Branch in February where she followed in the footsteps of the long-serving Dave Mills, albeit in a modified role.

In closing this report, I thank our members, our staff, the Executive and Board for their efforts in planning, implementing and doing much of the work noted in this report. I also acknowledge the financial and other support that Branch, some sub-branches and other ESOs provided to us during the past 12 months.

OOWII Presentations

At the AGM/OGM held at the Southern Cross Club on Tuesday 29th May 2018, *Order-Of-whatever-It-Is* awards were presented to two of our long serving members. President Jim Gilchrist welcomed husband and wife, Alan and Sandra (Sandy) Spencer into the OOWII membership. Alan and Sandy are very active members and regular volunteers for a range of Sub-Branch activities, especially during our appeals periods and are regular hospital visitors.

Alan has been awarded the *Model Membership Medal* and Sandy the *Mighty Mateship Medal* and were presented with their individual medals by the Sub-Branch President.



Members can name someone who they think should be considered for an OOWII award and their name should be given to any members of the Executive or the Board for consideration.

Congratulations to Alan and Sandy on their elevation to OOWII list from all of us.

*Opening of the RSL Woden Valley Sub-Branch
and Veterans Support Centre
at the Grant Cameron Community Centre,
Mulley Street, Holder on Friday 18th May 2018*

Attended by about 100 invited guests and Sub-Branch members the occasion got underway with an address by President Jim Gilchrist and then officially opened by guest speaker, Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, AO, CSC, RAN, Vice Chief of the Australian Defence Force. Also attending were MLAs Jeremy Hanson, Alistar Coe and Chris Steel.





A selection of photos from the day which also included the unveiling of the restored model of HMAS KIAMA, lovingly restored by past President Peter Dinham, and Vice Admiral Griggs signing the Sub-Branch Guest Book.

The Dedication after the official opening

By Reverend Mick O'Donnell

Almighty GOD, on this day of dedication of the Sub-Branch offices and Veterans' Support Centre we confidently acknowledge your presence with us. We remember with thanksgiving those who have served in so many conflicts into which our country has been drawn, and in the Peacekeeping missions throughout the World where we attempt to negate conflict and maintain peace.

May those who currently serve continue in the traditions established by those who went before them. Guard them and bless them, and defend them in danger, and give them courage to meet all occasions with discipline and loyalty. We pray that their offerings of service to our country have not been in vain as we write the history of our nation.

Almighty GOD, we dedicate this building as a place where vital and critical decisions will be made, that will affect those who seek our guidance and advice. Give inspiration to those who work here, that they will be inspired in their deliberations by love, by mercy, and by compassion. Bless the political efforts being made to seek and bring peace and understanding to the world.

We fervently offer these prayers in your name, Almighty GOD, AMEN

ANZAC Day — It's not a celebration.
Woden-Valley RSL Sub-Branch
ANZAC Eve Commemorative Dinner
Southern Cross Club, Canberra 24th April 2018
Address by Mrs Kellie Dadds, Army Veteran

The Melbourne Cricket Ground is an iconic landmark to all Australians. It is the home of our National Game, Australian Rules Football, and has seen the demise of many English cricket teams during the infamous Boxing Day test. The structure's current capacity is a massive 100,024; a deafening roar when the siren sounds on the opening bounce of Grand Final Day. During the ANZAC Day match between Essendon and Collingwood, the ground is filled to capacity, yet during the Last Post there is not a single sound. It is like the spirit of those 102,000 Australian servicemen and women who died serving our country, who would fill every one of those seats and more, is present. Each one of those people had a family, someone who loved them, who was also impacted by their sacrifice.

As mentioned in the introduction, I am the National Coordinator for a veteran's initiative called 'By the Left' which aims to broaden the public's perception of what a veteran looks like. Like a number of people here tonight it is not a paid position, it is something that I have found the time to do between transitioning from Army, my other volunteer commitments, raising my three young kids, and supporting my husband who is a full time Army officer. The Woden-Valley RSL Sub-Branch has been very supportive of the initiative, and I would like to thank you for helping spread the word that Veterans are young, old, male, female, current and ex-serving who have served at home and overseas.

On the eve of ANZAC Day, I could not think of a more suitable place to be - in a room full of veterans, accompanied by Defence families and friends. We are one big, supportive community who understand the commitment of service. As well as distinguished guests, we are honoured to be in the company of Jan-Maree Ball the founder of AHQ and Kev Forster, the President of the Army Apprentices Association. Kev, we wish to congratulate the apprentices who are leading tomorrow's National March for their 70th Anniversary Reunion. I was always amazed at the ingenuity of the Apprentices and will never forget seeing a flushing toilet that just magically appeared in the middle of a quadrangle one morning, and the door they conveniently built into the 10ft wall on the obstacle course.

What is your initial reaction when you hear ANZAC Day referred to as a celebration? How is it possible that such tragedy has somehow manifested into a celebration? I would like to very briefly discuss five thought bubbles to spur discussion at a later stage. Could it be that subliminally, commercialism is having an effect? Just the other day I googled ANZAC Day Celebrations. So why do people misinterpret commemoration with celebration? To us, the difference in the definitions is stark.

Celebrate - to show happiness that something good or special has happened; or to mark a special occasion or day by ceremonies or festivities. Could the confusion be the result of a few words used to describe celebrate? Could it be that the idea of what a public holiday is has caused the confusion?

Let us think about it, most public holidays are a celebration. We celebrate Easter, Christmas, Australia Day, The Queen's Birthday - without even thinking about it, the words of public holiday and celebration subconsciously go hand in hand.

Perhaps the increasing focus on post commemoration activities could be blurring the lines between commemoration and celebration? I apologise to those from the Navy, but there is a very good reason why Army personnel are no longer allowed to wear their uniform on ANZAC Day while consuming alcohol. During my time in service, I certainly noticed a shift in focus among younger veterans towards the 'fun' aspects of ANZAC Day. And finally, perhaps the confusion stems from our cultural identity, and the way we deal with adversity. Australians and Kiwis generally consider themselves to be a pretty laid-back culture where humour is often used to soften tragedy and adversity. As an Australian, even on the eve of our National day of commemoration I still think it appropriate to have a friendly dig at our brothers and sisters across the ditch. For example - what is the difference between Cinderella and the NZ rugby team? Cinderella wanted to get to the ball. If only that were true - Australian rugby still has some work ahead of them to be on an even par with our Kiwi brethren.

We are the custodians of the Anzac Spirit, and have been entrusted to keep its memory and true meaning alive. Let us ensure that the true purpose of ANZAC Day is never diluted by growing commercialism, and a desire to downplay the significance of such an occasion through humour.

On this ANZAC Eve, I also feel it appropriate to focus on the importance of service. ANZAC Day is an important time to commemorate, but it is also a time where veterans often reflect on their own service. Some of us were privileged to have the opportunity to serve and deploy. However, many younger veterans do not understand what the long period of peacetime between Vietnam and East Timor was like because our Government has heavily committed our Defence Force to operations since 1999. An important change occurred last year when Federal and State Veterans' Ministers agreed to a change in the definition of a veteran. A veteran is now defined as 'a current or ex-serving member of the ADF'. This change is important because it now recognises service and an individual's commitment to serve as well as returned service.

A very good friend of mine, Jan-Maree Ball served for over 15 years during the early eighties to mid-nineties in the Navy and RAAF. Between her and her husband, they served for over 30 years and like many others of their era, neither had the opportunity to deploy during their period of service. Because she did not deploy, Jan-Maree undervalued her service. By the Left has encouraged Jan-Maree to reflect and value her contribution. In a recent blog she wrote, 'if you took everyone our of service who did not, or has not deployed you would not have a functioning service'. Jan-Maree is exactly right - whether you deployed or not, does not, and should not, define your service.

Why did you join? For many service is about altruism, nationalism, adventure or a combination thereof. I remember making the phone call to Mum from an old Telstra phone box as a 17-year-old informing her that I had signed on for four years while only intending to sign on for twelve months full-time under the Ready Reserve scheme. I will never forget the silence on the other end of the phone, which was eventually followed by a "can you get out of it?"

Of course, I could have said yes because as a minor she had to approve me signing on, but I said no. It is wonderful to have my Mum and Dad present this evening who have since forgiven me for my exuberance of youth.

Back to service. There is one item, more than any other that represents our commitment to serve. It goes by many unofficial names such as the coca cola medal, the turn up medal or the Manly medal and I am sure you know of many more. For some reason, it is undervalued by many but it should be considered as the most important as it is the one thing that distinguishes our commitment to serve. There are many veterans in this room who have been awarded an Australian Defence Medal, in fact I would be so bold as to say that nearly every veteran in this room has been awarded one. It was gazetted in March 2006 by the Governor General of Australia. When you turn it over, it tells you exactly why you have been awarded it - it says FOR SERVICE.

The design of the medal also tells us a lot about its purpose. The ribbon is red with black edges, the colours of the Flanders poppy that represent the ANZAC spirit of the Australian armed forces. The white stripes divide the ribbon into three, to denote the three Services and also represent service contributing to the peace of Australia. On the reverse side is a wattle wreath which is used to acknowledge the sacrifice of those who have died in service or been discharged due to injury resulting from service.

The Australian Defence Medal is undervalued because nearly every veteran who served since 1945 has been awarded one. But as soon as you leave this room, you suddenly become part of a special minority. A minority who the Australian public recognise and respect for the commitment you made to serve your country.

Let me prove it mathematically. The Australian Defence Medal is awarded to eligible service personnel who served for a period between September 1945 to the current day (usually for a minimum period of four years). According to the Australian Institute, Australia's population in 1945 was approx 7.5 million. As of late last year, the Australian Bureau of Statistics advised that our population is about 24.7 million. That is a difference of 17.5 million people. Yet over 300,000 Australian Defence Medals have been awarded. That means that statistically, veterans - you, are less than one percent of the population. While I hope you do not, you may undervalue what you have done, but Australia does not. Your medal is unique, because when you turn it on its side your service number and name have been engraved. No one else can ever wear your medal on the left side.

We are bonded together by our service, and tomorrow we will gather together as mates, to march towards the cenotaph to commemorate those who gave their lives, those whose lives were changed through injury or illness and to thank those who have defended our country. I will be marching for the first time out of uniform and for the first time where I have not been 'volun-told'. We must also remember the families as they still grieve for their loved ones killed during war, at home during training, or since discharge due to the overwhelming pain they experienced from their time in service. To the many veterans who are present tonight I would like to conclude by saying "thank-you" for your service. Please march with a group that best represents your service; while we are united, we still have own own tribes based on our roles and experience in the military. >>>

I would like to leave you with something that I learned whilst I was in the Army. The five most dangerous things about being in the Army.

1. A PTE saying “I learned this in recruit training”.
2. A SGT saying “trust me Ma’am”.
3. A LT saying “based on my experience”.
4. A CAPT saying “I was thinking”.
5. And a Warrant Officer chuckling “watch this”.



Lest We Forget

Presentation of 50 Year Certificates

During May this year, two of our members received their 50-year Certificates of RSL membership.



On the 16th May, Kevin Cremen was presented with his 50-year Certificate from Greg. Kevin served in the Army from 1942-1946 and joined the RSL in 1961. We wish Kevin well as he approaches his 97th birthday.

80-year old John Burrell dropped into the office and received his Certificate from Secretary, Greg Kennett. John served in the Army from 1958-1980 serving in Papua New Guinea and in Vietnam.



INVICTUS GAMES

*Invictus Games - Sydney
20-27 October 2018
Pre-sale offer.*

As a proud supporter and key Games stakeholder, the Australian War Memorial has been given access to discounted, pre-sale tickets for the Invictus Games, Sydney 2018. They would like to extend this offer to you!

Limited early bird tickets are now on sale at invictusgames2018.org. When booking use our unique code **AWM18** to access the pre-sale tickets selected.

ANZAC & Peace Ceremony — Eddison Park 2018

This year the weather on Wednesday 11th April was perfect (although very hot) for our ANZAC & Peace Ceremony. Although a couple of schools did not participate in this year's event, we still had a good roll-up to an excellent ceremony.

Sub-Branch Patron, the New Zealand High Commissioner was represented by First Secretary, Mr Andy White accompanied by Warrant Officer Gary Clark, RNZAF. The Director-General of ACT Education Directorate, Ms Natalie Howson gave the opening address and the Guest Speaker was Robyn Siers, Education Manager at the Australian War Memorial, who provided an excellent talk on Charles Bean and the Eddison family. Also attending was Mrs Pam Yonge, the only surviving member of the Eddison family with her daughter Susan and Gai Brodtmann MP and representatives of the Light Horse Brigade. Musical entertainment was provided by the ACT Combined Schools Band who did an excellent job on the day.

MC Jack Aaron announced our essay competition winners, with First Place winner Amelia Pucci from St. Bede's Primary School reading her essay to the assembled guests. Equal second places were awarded to Omkar Gilkam, Marish College Junior School and Samantha Cook, St. John Vianney. As we have come to expect, the standard of the submitted essays from all the schools that entered the competition was outstanding. 224 Army Cadet Unit (Canberra) provided the Catafalque Party.



Nicole Howson with the Opening Address - Amelia Pucci with Nicole Howson and Sub-Branch Deputy President Brooke Thorpe at presentation of awards.





Canberra Southern Cross Club



WODEN

92-96 Corinna St
Phillip ACT 2606
6283 7200



TUGGERANONG

Cnr Howell & Pitman Sts
Tuggeranong ACT 2900
6293 7200



YAMBA SPORTS CLUB

Irving St
Phillip ACT 2606
6283 7300



YACHT CLUB & CRUISES

Mariner Place
Yarralumla ACT 2600
6273 1784

www.csc.com.au

For the information of members and guests

Visitors from the West

Brooke & Jacqui Thorpe

It is not often that one meets people with whom you have an instant rapport. However, this was the case when Jacqueline and I met Janet and Amy Riddiough from Denmark, Western Australia.



Janet and Amy Riddiough

The meeting happened as a result of an email from Wayne Banks of the Denmark RSL Sub-Branch. The Sub-Branch annually sponsors a trip for a student of the Denmark High School. The award is given to the best presentation of the Denmark RSL ANZAC Award for year 9 students on their “thoughts on the ANZAC Spirit” - much like our own Essay Prizes on similar ANZAC related topics.

This year’s winner was the quietly spoken, intensely intelligent Amy and the prize trip was to Canberra (with Mum), specifically to the War Memorial where a formal tour and a meeting with Dr Brendan Nelson, the Memorial’s Director, had been organised. As part of her prize Amy was required to deliver a speech to the Denmark Community on ANZAC Day 2018 in which she must describe her feelings when visiting Canberra and the Memorial.

As Amy and Janet had not travelled ‘East’ before, Wayne had asked, through the Scheyville OTU old boys network, for someone to meet and greet the Riddioughs and if possible show them around. Jacqui and I decided, between us, to set the week aside to allow Amy plenty of time at the AWM and to give them a look around Canberra and environs - noting as this was their first trip we determined to give them as much variety as possible.



Dr Nelson, Amy & Minister Chester

The ‘Official’ day was Monday 5th March when her appointment with Dr Nelson was arranged to follow a tour of the Commemorative Area to begin at 3:00PM. The meeting was prior to the nightly Last Post Ceremony at which Amy was to lay a wreath. As with all things at the AWM, the ceremony was slick and reflective. Amy was given star treatment and formally introduced to the crowd; along with the newly minted Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, the Hon Darren Chester MP. As we were walking to the car park, the Minister’s PA rushed up calling Amy back for a photograph with the Minister and Dr Nelson.

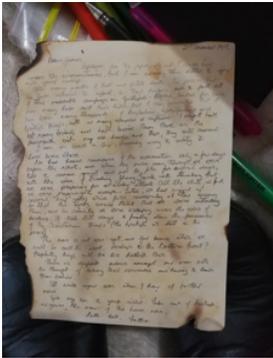
The remainder of the week we escorted Janet and Amy around all the major attractions unique to Canberra and the local area; Cotter, the Space Complex, the Arboretum, lookouts and local restaurants. >>>

Given they lived on the coast and Sydney was too far, on their last full day we took them up to Charlotte's Pass to see Mount Kosciuszko and Thredbo, the ski lift was a special favourite. None of this would have been possible without Amy winning the prize for her thoughts on the ANZAC Spirit. Her submission was a chest of items and memorabilia collected locally and researched through the AWM and Internet. The theme was nursing on the Greek island of Lemnos collected from patients during the Gallipoli campaign.



The contents of the chest were strikingly personal, not necessarily to Janet and Amy, but in their content. The 'letters' are particularly moving and in some cases harrowing - I have attached some transcripts.

Janet and Amy, such lovely people with a real sense of the history of Gallipoli, World War I and its impacts.



Dear James,

I apologise for the paper but I am writing this letter to you with great relief.

After many months of hell and ... death the powers that be have decided to (??) their failure and to pull out of the miserable campaign in Gallipoli. No-one knows for sure how many have lost their lives but I can guarantee that is has been many thousands of Australian, New Zealand and British troops, with as many captured. I myself have lost many friends and buried them on the peninsula with my own hands and there they will remain. I am on board a ship steaming to safety to Lord knows where.

We had heard rumours of the evacuation only a few days before the event, and when the orders came through, we were told to remain quiet and not to fire for several days with the idea of

tricking Johnny Turk into thinking that we were preparing for another attack. All the while in fact, we were preparing to escape. Later we rigged up several 'drip' rifles which fired randomly so that the Turks would think that we were attacking them, and in reality we were escaping under the cover of darkness. It took two days to finally clear the peninsula of Australian troops. (The British are still in the process). The war is not over yet and God knows where we will be sent to next. Perhaps the Western Front? There is desperate sadness amongst our men with the thought of losing their comrades and having to leave them behind. I'll write again soon when I hear further news. Give my love to your sister and take care of mother as you are the man of the house now.

With love, Father.



Dear Mrs Gardiner,

I fought next to your son during the landing on ANZAC Cove, Gallipoli, Turkey on 25th April 1915. It is with terrible sadness that I send this parcel with some of his personal effects that he wanted you to have. He fought with such bravery and courage, you would be truly proud of him.

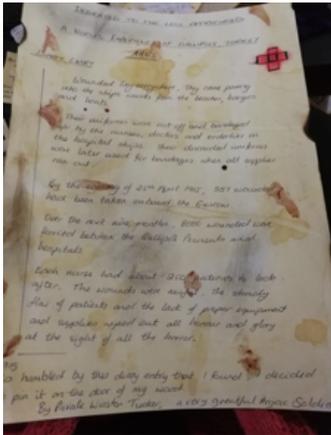
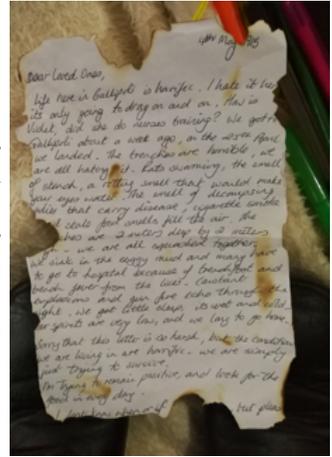
Yours truly, Private Herbert W. Madein?

Dear Loved Ones,

Life here on Gallipoli is horrific. I hate it here..(?).. its only going to drag on and on. How is Violet, did she do her nurses training. We got to Gallipoli about a week ago, and on the 25th April we landed. The trenches are horrible, we are all hating it. Rats swarming, the smell of stench, a rotting smell that would make your eyes water. The smell of decomposing bodies that carry disease, cigarette smoke and stale food smells fill the air. The trenches are two meters [sic] high - we are all squashed together. We sink in the soggy mud and many have gone to hospital because of trench foot and trench fever from the lice. Constant explosions and gunfire echo throughout the night. We get little sleep, it's wet and cold and our spirits are very low, and we long to go home.

Sorry that this letter is so harsh, but the conditions we are living in are horrific, we are simply just trying to survive.

I'm trying to remain positive and look for the good in every day. I don't know when, or if (missing text) but please....(rest lost).



A Nurses Experience of Gallipoli (Diary Entry)

Wounded lay everywhere, they came pouring into ships wards from the beaches, barges and boats. Their uniforms were cut off and bandaged up by the nurses, doctors and orderlies on the hospital ships. Their discarded uniforms were later used for bandages when all supplies ran out.

By the evening of the 25th April 1915, 557 wounded had been taken aboard the Gascon. Over the next nine months, 8,000 wounded were ferried between the Gallipoli Peninsula and hospitals.

Each nurse had about 250 patients to look after. The wounds were awful. The steady flow of patients and the lack of proper equipment and supplies wiped out all honour and glory at the sight of all the horror.

I was so humbled by this diary entry I found, I decided to pin it on the door of my ward. By Private Winston Tucker, a very grateful [sic] ANZAC Soldier.

ANZAC & Peace Schools Ceremony Essay Competition 2018

Winning Essay — 2018
Amelia Pucci - Year 6 St Bede's

The Consequences of War

Introduction:

In 1914 the World was at war. Australia was a young nation who relied heavily on agriculture and natural resources as its primary source of income. During 1915 Australia's history turned a significant page through the combined campaign at Gallipoli, in Turkey. As history will tell us the allied invasion failed in military terms, but many people in Australia saw Gallipoli as proof that Australia had passed the 'test' of nationhood.

Like most international events, war disrupts all aspects of a nation, these disruptions are both positive and negative on a nation. The following brief looks at some of the impacts of World War I. These include:

- Social impacts;
- Physical impacts;
- Psychological impacts; and
- Economic impacts.

Social Impacts:

Whether it's a partner, child, parent or siblings, there is always a family network affected by the departure of a soldier who is called to fight abroad. Partners and families of soldiers had limited communication with their loved ones during World War I. Letters were the primary means of sending ones love and letting the soldiers know that they were being missed. Often some letters would come too late as the men were already gone before they got a chance to read them. Friendships were formed on the front line as soldiers found the special bond of mateship which was a symbol of the true ANZAC spirit. Games such as two-up were made international by Australian soldiers. Upon their return soldiers were reunited with their families who often became both physical and emotional carers for them.

Physical Impacts:

The physical impacts of World War I were significant; soldiers had missing limbs as a result of their involvement on the front line. Due to the limited medical resources and level of medical science at the time the soldiers who were injured in World War I suffered more than their counterparts in subsequent wars. The war also had an impact on many nurses and doctors who had to treat injured men in very difficult conditions. What World War I showed us is that the human spirit is stronger than medicine.

Psychological Impacts:

Mental illness from memories of war manifest in multiple ways. Nightmares, bad memories and flash backs, as seeing your mates falling victim to the enemy. This results in sleepless nights, being scared easily and anxious. It is difficult to understand what is going on in a soldiers mind. The problem is not only for the soldiers, but for their partners and families too. When incorrectly diagnosed, psychological trauma was often characterised as weakness, partners and families were left on their own to care for returned service people. Among the consequences of war, the impact on the mental health of the population is one of the most significant scars of war. >>>

The psychological impact of war in the form of shell shock and other illness that has prompted medical science to improve the effectiveness of psychological interventions post war.

Economic Impact:

National economies slow down to focus on war efforts. The war had a mixed effect on the Australian economy. A positive consequence was the expansion of manufacturing industries such as steel production which was focused in Newcastle (New South Wales). The contrast to this was the hardship and suffering faced due to food rations and limited job opportunities had a very depressing impact. The war disrupted international shipping and the channeling of materials to war production meant that many imports to Australia were reduced or no longer available.

Conclusion:

The impact of war was felt by all Australians at the time. While it is easy to reflect and look back in hindsight at the difficult decisions that had to be made and ask were they the right choices. The legacy that lives on is the Australian spirit that lives with us all today. Today, Australia is a nation who is proud, and enjoys the benefits of being a free democracy where all can have their say. The character of Australia, created by its soldiers continues to live with us today. On the 25th April every year the spirit of war continues in the tradition of ANZAC Day. As a nation we all stop and come together to remember the true impact of war.

Gone but not forgotten

Old Records returned to Sub-Branch

Greg Kennett

On 24th April, 2018, some old Sub-Branch records were returned to the Sub-Branch by Michele Barker. Michele is the daughter of the late Bill O'Brien who was Secretary of the Sub-Branch from 1989-1993 and a Committee member before and after that period; he was a great stalwart of the Sub-Branch.

Bill passed away on 12th November 2010 and, while going through his papers, Michele found the records which comprise some handwritten and typewritten minutes of meetings and annual reports of the Yarralumla, West Canberra and Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branched from 1955-1971. There is also a copy of the first annual report of the Woden Valley RSL Bowling and Recreation Club (Inc) from 1968-69 - flashbacks to the early beginnings of our Sub-Branch.

There is also a collection of newspaper clippings concerning a proposal in 1990-91 by the then Commonwealth Government to introduce an entry fee to the Australian War Memorial. Many of our members will remember that issue being very contentious and emotion ran high during its debate. As we know, the proposal was eventually unsuccessful but the clippings clearly show the depth of feeling that prevailed at the time.

We thank Michele and her husband Geoff for contacting us and returning such a valuable part of our history. Any members interested in reading the records are welcome to visit the office and read them. Analysis of old records to extend our 50-year history book would also be appreciated.



LEST WE FORGET

“The price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance”

*“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning
We will remember them.”*



Frank Poole, St. John Morris,
Edmund Jones, William (Bill) Schleiger,
Ralph Sullivan, Donald Balfour

Westfield 2018 POPPY APPEAL



**VOLUNTEER SELLERS ARE NEEDED AT
WODEN PLAZA AND COOLEMAN COURT
from Mon 5th to Fri 16th November.**

We seek volunteers, members and/or their family, who can give a few hours of their time to assist in this worthy cause. Please leave your name and contact details at the Sub-Branch office, phone: 6285 1931, or email: admin@rslwoden.org.au.

Our pool of volunteers is dwindling and we would greatly appreciate any additional assistance in either of the above centres during the periods indicated above.



ANZAC & Peace Ceremony 2018
Equal 2nd Place Essay Competition

Omkar Gilkam
Year 6P - Marist College Junior School

In World War I, it was really upsetting to see so many ANZACs die. It was heartbreaking for some families to lose their loved ones. I feel very bad for the diggers who sustained injuries. World War I is the most deadliest conflict because there were more than 41 million casualties. About two thirds of military deaths were in battle and one third died due to diseases including the 1918 flu pandemic. Over 60,000 Australian soldiers lost their lives and over 156,000 soldiers were injured in World War I. The impact of these deaths and injuries was significant.

Many Australian soldiers suffered terrible physical wounds, including the loss of limbs and were unable to work due to the nature of their injuries. Some contracted respiratory diseases and a variety of eye problems due to the effects of gas. Several soldiers had to experience awful conditions in the trenches where they picked up diseases like influenza, typhus, dysentery and skin diseases from lice. This was commonly called 'trench fever'. All these horrific war experiences also caused significant mental health issues and in those days it was called 'shell shock'. There were limited services and facilities in Australia to support the soldiers with psychological anguish. The grief and sorrow suffered by their families lasted for generations.

The Australian Government set up hospitals to care for the returning men with both physical and mental injuries. However, many families had to take the burden of caring for their loved ones. The war had a great effect on the Australian economy. The scale of costs required to care for the soldiers was huge. Many soldiers received artificial limbs and some had to be cared for in special hostels because they were completely incapacitated. Diggers and their families suffered a lifetime of pain. They had limited job opportunities and were unable to earn a living. Their lives were never the same. The financial costs to the impacted families was also great.

Even though nobody in my family served in the war, I am inspired by reading stories of soldiers who served our nation. Albert Jacka was a soldier who fought for Australia in World War I. He got many awards and recognitions but his best award was the Victoria Cross. He demonstrated that one should never give up no matter what happens. He sustained both physical and psychological injuries however he went on to fight in the war. He has inspired me to never give up and always give my best especially when I represent my school.

Veterans who returned from the terrible conditions of the trench warfare struggled with lifelong disabilities both physical and mental. This put a lot of strain on their families. Post World War I the social landscape of Australia changed forever. The hidden costs of war due to physical and psychological injuries was felt by many veterans and their families for many years to come.

ANZAC & Peace Ceremony 2018
Equal 2nd Place Essay Competition

Samantha Cook
Year 5 - St John Vianney's Primary School

The consequences of war - what were the impacts on Australian veterans, and the families of the fallen and injured after the end of World War I?

Australians who fought in World War I not only suffered terrible mental and physical wounds, many never returned. Some physical injuries included limb amputation, bullet wounds, scratches and scrapes, eye problems, lice, skin disease, foot problems, bomb wounds, shattered bones, torn muscles, damaged nerves and paralysis. Many returned soldiers also suffered mentally, with mental torment, shell shock, hysterical blindness, mental disorders and diseases.

170,000 soldiers returned from World War I sick and wounded. When they returned, if they had lost a limb, they would receive an artificial limb. Military hospitals in Australia were changed to Repatriation hospitals and by July 1921, due to high demand, every capital city in Australia had a Repatriation hospital.

The children of the soldiers who did not return never got to say goodbye. Their fathers' bodies were left overseas which meant that they could never visit their graves. When their fathers left to go to war, they did not think that they would never see them again. With no husband, the wives and mothers had to find a way to provide for their families.

For the children of the soldiers who did return, they were filled with joy, but their fathers were never the same. Some from physical injuries and some because of mental issues that could not be seen. If it was a mental wound the fathers might not play games with their children anymore or even hold down a job. There was little to no help for mental disorders and limited community understanding. Severe physical injuries like amputated arms or legs, might also have made it impossible to work anymore which meant not only was the mother caring for an invalid, she had to also provide for their family.

It was not just men that went to war, it was also women. There were 2,139 Australian women who served as nurses and 29 died while serving in battle. The nurses were treated differently when they returned home. They had to go back to their old lives with their own physical and mental wounds and received a lack of support and understanding. The nurses watched so many soldiers suffer and die, endure great pain both physically and mentally as they saw their mates die in battle. These memories they would never forget.

The men and women that fought in World War I suffered mentally and physically and they did not wish their children to ever have to witness what they did.

Lest We Forget

William John SYMONS VC

An address by Mrs Sarah Kellam, granddaughter of William John Symons VC to the Bendigo RSL, Victoria, April 2018.



As a young girl growing up in rural South West England in the sixties with parents who were both artists, we were a family who just got on with life; never discussing what had gone on before and what was to come. I got on with the general task of growing up with frequent visits to see my grandmother who lived on the coast in Dartmouth, Devon. She had an old cottage looking out to sea where, during World War II, a Hungarian chap who she had taken in went through a morning routine of exercises at the window. He was subsequently spotted by the village policeman who was wheeling his bike up the hill. It was so strange to see anyone exercising in those days and a foreigner to boot, that the policeman promptly arrested him for signalling to the enemy out at sea! This was, for years, the only War story handed down to me.

There was a little dining room in the cottage, where, above the window, hung a profile portrait of a young man in a military uniform. I was told that it was my grandfather, William John Symons VC, with no further information offered. He had died eleven months before I was born.

The Internet enabled me to do my own research, and it was easy to find out more about this enigmatic grandfather who had captured my imagination. Over the years, my mother and my aunt shared little snippets as to who he was, what he had done and what he was like as a father. I treated these personal recollections with great respect as it was clearly difficult for his daughters to talk about him as they loved him fairly and squarely and he had died too soon. My biggest regret is that I never knew him; this young man from the other side of the world.

William John Symons was born in Eaglehawk, Victoria, the eldest of five sons, their father dying prematurely due to breathing in quartz dust in the mines. Due to this, William took on the mantle of man of the house, getting jobs where he could and joining the local militia. As soon as war broke out, he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force at Carlton on 17th Aug 1914 and was posted to 'A' Company 7th Battalion at Broadmeadows. From then on, the course of his life changed forever - and all of our lives too.

He was described as 5'9" tall, weighing 11st, with fair complexion, grey eyes, brown hair and his religious denomination was Protestant. He was known as "Curly" Symons because of his curly hair. He became a Colour Sergeant on 19th Aug 1914 and embarked for the Middle East with the 7th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Division from Melbourne on the SS 'Hororata' on 18th Oct, 1914 eventually arriving in Mena, Egypt where he was appointed Temporary Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant. The company sailed for Gallipoli and landed at dawn on that historic day 103 years ago. William was immediately commissioned Second Lieutenant on 26th Apr 1915 to compensate for Lieutenant Leslie Blick, from 'C' Company, who had been killed in action.

>>>

Symons took part in the second Battle of Krithia with hardly any experience in warfare - the savagery must have been shocking to the extreme. He was promoted Lieutenant on 2nd Jul 1915 at Lemnos, his rapid promotions being testament to the terrible loss of life in all ranks.

When you think of what was to follow - both at Gallipoli and on the Western Front - it's remarkable that my grandfather was spared - his Guardian Angel must have been working overtime. I often reflect that one bullet at this time came between me and my entire existence. As it happened, an enemy bullet struck his rifle butt, shattering it and causing wood splinters to penetrate his hand.

There was an unsuccessful attempt to blow a mine at Tunnel D21 on 12th Jul 1915. Symons moved into the tunnel to assist, together with four machine gunners, but owing to a kink in the tunnel near the forward end, the gun tripod was mounted at the bend whilst the gun and one belt were taken forward into the crater. It was decided that a soldier would move forward, following a protective burst from the machine gun with a prepared explosive to be lodged just inside the Turkish entrance. The plan, after deposit of the explosive, was for all to withdraw, mount the gun on its tripod and hold this position against any enemy penetration after the explosion. Strict silence was imposed, any orders transmitted by whispering. When all was nearly ready, Symons was seen shaking violently. A soldier, with explosive charge in his hands, was ready, and the machine gunner, Harold Barker was alongside the gun waiting to give the fire order. Suddenly, Symons whispered into Barker's ear, "Don't fire", and grabbed the explosive from the soldier, jumped over and lodged it at the enemy entrance and rushed back again. Not a shot was fired by the Turks, and Symons and his crew withdrew to their holding position. However, Symons's audacious action went unrewarded as the explosive charge failed to detonate.

In the lead up to the VC action, Symons was positioned on the parapet taking shots at the Turks with his pistol. His men were imbued with the offensive spirit after that announcing that if it was good enough for Curly then it was good enough for them! They obviously had great admiration for him and he most definitely led from the front.

He took part in the fighting at Lone Pine on 8-9th Aug 1915 when in command of the right section, and successfully repelled counter-attacks in Jacob's Trench by throwing improvised grenades made of slabs of gun-cotton attached to small wooden boards holding his position until 5AM the following day when the enemy again attacked and recaptured the post, a vulnerable section of trench known as No.1 Post. Six officers were killed or severely wounded in succession. The Commanding Officer of the 7th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Harold Edward 'Pompey' Elliott, recalled Symons and in a theatrical gesture withdrew his own revolver and handed it to him, sending him to try again to take back Jacob's Trench. Elliott explained the situation to Symons and provided him with a party of ten men. "Goodbye Symons", Elliott concluded, "I don't expect to see you again, but we must not lose that post", effectively sending Symons to his death. Symons shook hands, saluted and led his men away. He was immediately bowled over by an exploding bomb, which would have maimed him if a comrade had not curbed its impact by flinging sandbags on it. Symons picked himself up and led a charge, retaking the lost sap under heavy fire and withdrawing to a position some 15 yards away. There was fierce hand to hand combat which haunted Symons for the rest of his life but the enemy eventually gave up their attack. >>>

He was evacuated very sick with gastro enteritis and admitted to the 3rd London General Hospital on 12th Sep 1915 in an enfeebled state and spent two months recovering from this sickness where he learned of his recommendation for the Victoria Cross by his Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Elliott for conspicuous gallantry.

He received the honour from King George V at Buckingham Palace on 4th Dec, and as the King pinned it on his chest, he remarked to Symons that the intrinsic value of the medal was very small but it was what it stood for and he hoped that Symons would live long enough to enjoy wearing it. Symons said that he was immediately sending it to his mother in Australia as he wanted her to be the second person to pin it on his chest.

After this he was sent to Egypt, arriving at Tel el Kebir Station on 7th Jan 1916. He embarked for Australia on the 'Arama' and arrived on 12th Mar 1916 for a much needed rest, reunions with his friends and family and civic receptions at Eaglehawk, Brunswick and Bendigo. He was promoted Captain on 1st May 1916.

Then followed the second phase of his military career which is often overlooked. William embarked on 3rd Jun 1916 on HMAT 'Persic' for the UK as Company Commander, 'A' Company, 37th Battalion, 10th Brigade, 3rd Division, arriving at Plymouth, Devon and then on to Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire for military manoeuvres. On 22nd Nov 1916, the Battalion embarked at Southampton, Hampshire for Le Havre, France. They must have had huge private misgivings as they would have known what to expect and the horrors they had to face. They saw action at, amongst other places, Armentières where William was mentioned in Despatches for his participation in the Big Raid by the 10th Brigade on 27th Feb 1917. One of the Big Raid's objectives was to capture a German medic for his equipment hopefully containing gas gangrene serum. Medics were easy to spot in the field as they carried big first aid boxes with them. Unfortunately, a medic who was captured was carrying to wrong type of serum.

Symons and his men were unfortunately caught up in uncut barbed wire entanglements in front of German trenches near Pont Ballot, Houplines. The wire had previously been cut but the Germans repaired it prior to the main assault and many of Symons's men were killed or wounded. He was slightly wounded and because of growing casualties in the Company decided to withdraw. However, a group eventually fought their way through the wire and made it to the first line of German trenches.

On 7th Jun 1917, he was gassed near Messines and evacuated to England for hospitalization. It was while recuperating that he met his future wife - a local girl who had cycled past the rehabilitation unit. He said to a friend that he "wanted to marry that girl", and this he did, just before the end of the war - strange things happen at times of war that probably wouldn't happen at any other time!

Eventually he rejoined his unit on 18th Jan 1918 at Aldershot Camp, Neuve Eglise and took part in operations on The Somme and Ribemont. This was the last of his active service. He was granted leave in Paris in March 1918 and posted to the School of Musketry, England. On the 16th Aug he embarked for Australia at his own expense with his new bride to connect with the SS 'Makura' at Vancouver, Canada.

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This dangerous trip was conducted during war time and there was the ever present danger of attack by German U-boats.

His appointment with the AIF was terminated on 17th Dec 1918. Symons saw service as a Captain in the 2nd Battalion, 59th Infantry Regiment (later the 59th Battalion) prior to being transferred to the Reserve of Officers on 1st Jul 1922.

During the Second World War, he served in the British Home Guard as Commander of the 12th Battalion, Leicestershire Home Guard, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel; an appointment he held for four years.

It is the British Defence Medal relating to this service that I am donating to the Australian War Memorial which will be mounted with his Victoria Cross and other medals currently on display in the Hall of Valour at the AWM. This will make his medal group complete and my mission will be accomplished.

Sarah Kellam 2018

Sarah recently returned to the UK, but during her Australian visit she gave speeches at Eaglehawk State School where her grandfather attended, and to present the 'William John Symons Memorial Award' . Each year the school awards one student who has shown the qualities of courage and leadership, attributes similar to that of Victoria Cross recipients and this year, Sarah presented student Chloe Trewin with the award. She also gave a 'Speech for the Eaglehawk community' about her grandfather's Cornish Heritage, and later came to Canberra to the Australian War Memorial for the British Defence Medal presentation.... an excellent accomplishment all round... Ed

Sarah with student Chloe Trewin after the presentation of the 'William John Symons Award'



ANZAC Eve Dinner 2018

ANZAC Eve 2018 and an attendance of 99 guests resulted in a very pleasant evening and social event. The Sub-Branch Patron, New Zealand High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr Chris Seed attended and our Guest speaker, former Army officer Kellie Dadds spoke on the subject **ANZAC DAY - It's Not a Celebration**. Kellie spent 22 years as an Intelligence Officer and was deployed eight times. She is a member of the ACT Veterans' Advisory Council, a committee member with the Women Veteran's Network Australia and National coordinator of the female veteran initiative 'By the Left' which aims to broaden the public's perception of what a veteran looks like.





A few photos from the various tables at the ANZAC Eve dinner with MC Jack Aaron OAM presiding and assisted by Sub-Branch Office Manager, Joyce O'Brien, and Kay Gilchrist with Patron, Chris Seed and the five ladies representing the 'By the Left' group. They are Ledy Rowe CSM, Lucy Wong, Allison Gillam, Kellie Dadds and Jan-Maree Ball OAM.

Sub-Branch ANZAC Day 8:00AM Service - Eddison Park

Our early Service at Eddison Park went well apart from a minor hiccup with the sound system. This will be rectified for future events. Unlike last year the weather was fine so all went as planned for this service prior to the march in ANZAC Parade.



MC was past President Peter MacFetters officiated for the event and we were privileged to have Jen Hamer attending as our Ceremonial Piper.

Evacuation of Australian Sisters & Nurses from Sumatra

Haydon Leonard, Senior War Correspondent in WWII.

Haydon Leonard, Senior War Correspondent in WWII for the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the BBC London, in New Guinea, the Pacific, China, India and Burma war theatres... and later a United Nations War Correspondent in Korea. For his work as a correspondent in WWII, Leonard was awarded the US Pacific Asiatic Medal by General Douglas MacArthur.

“At the end of WWII war correspondents in Singapore filed details of one of the worst atrocities of the war ... the massacre of 21 Australian nursing sisters on a beach in Banka Strait, Sumatra.

The sisters had been ordered out of Singapore as Japanese invaded the island. One group of 65 left on 12th Feb 1942 in the ‘Vyner Brooke’, which was bombed and sunk two days later. Of the 53 who got ashore, 21 were massacred by the Japanese, the remainder taken prisoner. Those murdered were ordered to walk into the sea and machine-gunned. Only one of the 22 survived ... Sister Vivian Bullwinkel. She was hit in the thigh, pretended to be dead, and floated ashore after the Japanese had gone. There she found a badly wounded British sergeant who had survived a similar massacre of male prisoners further down the beach. Realising he was dying, she took him into a native village for help, well-knowing that once again she would be in the hands of those who had murdered her friends. Weeks later she joined other nursing sisters at Muntok, Sumatra, and the story she told became one of the most closely guarded secrets of the war. It was taboo, not only amongst the sisters, but also among the male POWs who had learned of the events ... otherwise Bullwinkel certainly would not have survived.

I first learned the details of the massacre from a group of POW officers (Australian) in Changi Prison after the re-occupation of Singapore. The group included Captain Sir Adrian Curlewis, Sydney judge and high executive of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia; ‘Huck’ Finlay, Union footballer and ABC executive from Queensland; Bob Skene, from the famous Polo playing family; and Bill Tebbut, Sydney solicitor and legal adviser to Lt. General Gordon Bennett, the Australian Commander in Singapore. Curlewis told how Finlay and Tebbut arrived in the Changi prison in May 1945 with the Bullwinkel story. They had come from Sumatra and were so emaciated, said Curlewis, that I feared they would not last the night. I went outside and scraped together some rice that had been discarded by other prisoners. There was no other food. ‘Huck’ described it as the best meal he’d had for months. I wasn’t game, said Curlewis, to tell him how I got it. Curlewis wrote the details of the massacre in his diary, and was then warned by Finlay that even recording it in a private diary was too dangerous. Curlewis still has the diary at his Mosman home - with the name Bullwinkel completely erased by scouring out with a heavy pencil.

It was at this Changi conference that I learned that Bullwinkel might still be alive. She had been seen, said Finlay, going down the river from Palembang, Sumatra, with a small group of nurses some two years before. This surprised me, because I had attended Chief of Staff conferences in Ceylon at the invitation of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, while the re-occupation of Singapore was planned, and no mention had been made - no hint even - that Bullwinkel or any of the sisters, may still be alive.

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I left Changi, debating what to do about Bullwinkel, and ran into Eddie Dunstan, war correspondent for the Sydney Daily Telegraph, who also had the Bullwinkel story. In fact, that night it was being freely debated in the correspondent's mess and Dunstan and I decided to do something about it. We would try and get into Sumatra, before it was too late.

I approached Mountbatten's headquarters, told them what was happening and asked that a blanket censorship be placed on the whole story. Headquarters agreed. In fact, Lord Mountbatten took a personal interest and approved when he learned that we proposed asking the RAAF to fly us into Sumatra. Dunstan and I approached Squadron Leader Fred Madsen, OC of some 25 Australian Dakotas in Singapore for the rescue of POWs. There was no hesitation when he learned the nature of the mission. Sure, he'd make a Dakota available, in fact he'd fly it himself and have everything tied up by morning. That night I addressed some 100 war correspondents assembled for briefings in Singapore's Cathay building and told them of the rescue mission. It was vital that even at this late stage details of the massacre should not leak out. Not one correspondent objected and all agreed on a hold the Bullwinkel story.

That night I asked Mountbatten's intelligence for a report on the Palembang airstrip. It came back 'Badly cratered, mined and definitely unfit to land on'. The news didn't seem to upset Madsen unduly ... we'd have a look. We came into Palembang at 20,000ft, or somewhere near that - if a Dakota can get that high. We were the first contact with the Japanese since war's end and since Hirohito had ordered them to lay down their arms so could only guess the reception we'd get. No-one fired as we came over the strip and no fighters picked us up on the way in .. although there were plenty down below, including 12 US built Hurricanes apparently captured from the Dutch. As we circled I kept up a running commentary with Madsen; "It doesn't look too bad to me. Maybe they had filled in the craters. How about landing on the apron?, we might miss any mines that way". And that is what Madsen did as we came down on the side of the strip and pulled up 100 yards from the Japanese control tower.

We got out and Madsen and I walked to the tower. The others remained in the aircraft. There was plenty of Japanese high brass there and they offered us scones and a vile brew of coffee, thick like treacle. We pretended to drink it and began a long interrogation with minimum results. If the Japanese knew anything about the nursing sisters they weren't going to tell us, except one officer, who spoke English. He advised us to go to Lahat as there was a Japanese headquarters there, and they would know where the nurses were, but we could not land there as the strip had been bombed by Allied air forces. An hour later I was in Palembang proper, seeking more information about Lahat and how to get there, when an Australian Navy officer approached; a Lt Bull, who told me he was in charge of the Palembang POW prison and who had a list of those still surviving. I told him, in confidence, of the mission we were on - that we only had one aircraft and the last thing we wanted would be a break-out from the prison camp which could trigger a revolt from the Indonesians. Lt Bull agreed to quieten down his POWs and for my part I informed the Japanese that I had a full list of POWs in the camp. If any needed medical assistance now was the time to give it, as I'd expect them all to be alive when I returned in a few days. (The list of POWs was sent off that night to Eddie Dunstan, who had remained in Singapore to cover us from there).

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I had arranged for a Japanese interpreter and a car in Lahat when an urgent message arrived from Madsen to return to the airfield immediately to find a heated argument between Madsen and two other officers who had come with us from Singapore; an Australian Wing Commander medico and a British Army Captain, who was supposed to be an expert in POW recovery. They were arguing that we were on a wild-goose chase, that the aircraft was in danger, and that it certainly should not stay on the strip overnight, but return to Singapore. I told Madsen that I would continue the search alone, and prepared to leave for Palembang again when Madsen called me back. "Brown", he said, (Sergeant Kenneth Brown, Madsen's co-pilot) "is going with you". As Brown got out of the cock-pit, Madsen handed him his service revolver, the only weapon we had. War correspondents don't carry arms. I was glad to have Brown with me, and one service revolver.

We got away from Palembang for Lahat that afternoon, with a promise from Madsen that he would fly over Lahat strip the next afternoon and the afternoon after that, and the next, until he received a message that we had found, or failed to find the nurses. He told me later that he didn't really expect to see us. "I thought you were both goners", he said. We got to Lahat about ten that night, and a new batch of Japanese officers, and news that the nurses were at Loebok Linggau, about a hundred miles away. You could get there by train or road but the Japanese couldn't say whether either track was open as they hadn't been used for months. We arranged a train and a fleet of 12 cars; I became OC of the train and Brown of the cars. The train arrived at Loebok Linggau about 5AM and were met by a group of Indonesians and two Japanese officers. The Indonesians seemed most unfriendly and just stared at us and the interpreter we'd brought from Palembang began a heated argument with the two officers. When asked what was the problem, he wouldn't reply, so I left him standing on the station, commandeered a car and set out for the camp, 12 miles away. There was no sign of Sergeant Brown, and I was worried about him.

Halfway to the camp I met the first group of sisters, making for the station in a dilapidated open truck, cold and drenched. I spoke to them briefly, asked the whereabouts of Bullwinkel and told she was still back in the camp. I told them to keep going as there were carriages at the station with mattresses and blankets. You will be safe there. I tried to sound confident, but wasn't. I entered the camp through the main entrance, a Japanese guard standing at attention and dressed in an immaculate silk shirt. I ignored his bowing, but somehow remembered the shirt. Inside I was met by a group of excited nurses, including Bullwinkel, who I told to stay with me as we walked around the mud-heap on which they'd lived for years. By the side of a small hut there were eight small wooden crosses, a reminder of eight Australian nursing sisters; Sister W M Davis (2/10 AGH), Sister P Mittelheuser (2/10 AGH), Sister R D Freeman (2/10 AGH), Sister G Hughes (2/13 AGH), Sister S Gardham (2/4th CCS), Sister B Hempsted (2/13 AGH), Sister I Singleton (2/10 AGH) and Sister W R Raymond (2/4th CCS). That small clearing and its eight wooden crosses were hallowed ground indeed.

As we talked, a tall elderly woman approached and introduced herself as Matron Hinch, in charge of the camp. "You are taking the nurses", she said, "I have a lot more sick women and children and they can't last much longer. Surely you will take them". "What could I say?" I expected six to ten nurses, and here I was with thirty or forty more - the final count 60, comprising 24 Australian sisters and 36 others, mostly British nurses.

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As I watched them assemble, Matron Hinch said, “You notice Mr Lennard, some of them are not quite white”, and I replied; “Matron, the colour doesn’t matter, if you say so, they go”, and as I left she said, “God bless you, Mr Lennard”.

By the time we left the camp the rain had stopped and halfway back to the station Sergeant Brown turned up. It was good to see him. He’d had a fairly rough time, with trees across the jungle road and bad washaways. Now he could help getting the nurses settled on the train, a pretty rough affair, but the mattresses and blankets were a blessing. Some of the nurses were so weak they had trouble in even getting up the small step from the platform to the carriage. You started to go forward to help them, and then stopped. Even that small assistance might be resented, they could manage. Hadn’t they done so for four years, in filthy POW camps?

We pulled into Lahat about noon with an impressive line-up of Japanese high-ranking officers to greet us. I didn’t mince words in telling them what I thought of their treatment of the nurses and ordered them to have 60 beds available in case we had to stay overnight, and to provide supplies of the Red Cross food parcels that had been dropped for months but had not gone to the POWs. We took 30 nurses to the airport, all that the Dakota could handle, and it seemed hours before the drone of Madsen’s aircraft was heard coming up the valley.

Madsen, a DFC winner, had built up a reputation in the Middle East as a pilot, on Hudsons. On one occasion, with 2500-lb of depth charges on board, he attacked a warship at zero level, flipped his bomber sideways, and shot at 300kph an hour between the stack and mast. From then on he was known as “Masthead” Madsen. It was this type of flying skill that Madsen needed in getting down on the Lahat strip. Fortunately, Sergeant Brown had found a narrow path between bomb craters and Madsen did the rest.

It was late afternoon by the time the nurses were loaded and there would have to be a night landing in Singapore. Madsen radioed ahead, to get temporary flares on the strip, (the usual landing lights were out of service) and have crash vehicles standing by. With one tyre very low, he made a brilliant landing at Singapore airport, and Sister Vivian Bullwinkel was safely home, after four years of unbelievable degradation from a cruel enemy. For her defiance and her valour a proud and grateful nation saw her awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal.

For my part I sent an urgent cable to the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the BBC London, reading “Release the Bullwinkel Story”, and went to bed”.

This is a follow-up story from the one published in the last edition in 2017 (Christmas 2017) which was from the pilot who flew the nurses out of Sumatra... Ed

NOTES FOR THE DIARY IN 2018



Sub-Branch Meetings: 7.00PM 31st Jul, 28th Aug, 25th Sep, 30th Oct, 27th Nov.

Board Meetings: 7.00PM 12th Jul, 9th Aug, 6th Sep, 11th Oct, 8th Nov, 13th Dec.

Remembrance Day Service: Details in the Christmas edition.

Christmas Dinner: Wed 5th Dec, 12 for 12:30PM CSCC - Orion Room CSCC

Closing Date for Christmas edition of 'The Serviceman' : Fri 19th Oct.

Hospital Visiting

The Sub-Branch is in need of volunteers to participate in the Hospital visiting program. The commitment is for one half-day each week, on a two-months per year basis, [eg., March and September]. This is not an onerous task for participants, but is comforting to those in hospital at the time and who greatly appreciate the visits as many of the patients are not always from the local Canberra area.

Advice is given on how to perform the task with visitors normally working in teams of two. For further information contact our Sub-Branch office — 6285 1931

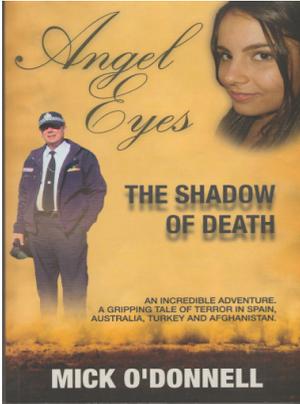


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LEGACY BADGE WEEK **Sun 2nd Sep to Sat 8th Sep, 2018**

Please buy a badge and wear it with pride.

The Legacy Family in Canberra has over 1600 widows, children and disabled adults enrolled. Legacy receives some Government assistance by way of grants for special projects. However, to maintain its services, Legacy is heavily dependent on public support.



Book Review
Angel Eyes
The Shadow Of Death

The fourth and latest novel from Mick O'Donnell and for mine, the best so far. This is a love story, a drama all rolled into an incredible adventure beginning with the bombing on a train in Spain and continuing while travelling from Australia to Turkey and Afghanistan on the trail of a suspected radicalized Australian terrorist.

There are many twists and turns as other forces become involved and frustration that the suspect may not still be where he was last reported adding to the tension.

The main character, Pat O'Brien begins to question his own capability and whether he will be able to complete this mission, while attempting to deal with the information from his love interest, Sergeant Ginger Winslow, who is being threatened in her own job with the police while investigating the local drug scene and supply routes into Australia.

Like many stories in war torn countries the risks to yourself and those around you is intensified and Mick has cleverly used his ex-service experiences and of his time with the Australian Federal Police to create this very real and difficult to put down drama. I notice one of comments suggested that it would make a great movie and I would agree with that - something for Tom Cruise maybe! (well anyone but Tom Cruise!)

Keep up the good work Mick and we look forward for the next edition!!

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PROUDLY SUPPORTING THE VETERAN COMMUNITY

Burrangiri Day Centre, Rivett

Rani Kalimeris

A Veterans Catch-up Day at Burrangiri Day Centre. Social interaction is one of the main elements contributing to a happy and fulfilled life, and so much richer when you make connections. Our social club began on January 18th with six veterans and eleven volunteers attending. We have had another four sessions since then and plan to continue each month.

Our initial meeting was very well received with entertainment provided by Matthew Vrins who sang classic songs filling the room with memories of the past. Conversation was limited initially, however, after lunch there was a healthy exchange of small talk that highlighted the benefits of just being able to share stories and a laugh. At the Get Together that followed we placed more emphasis on the social communication aspect. Close to ANZAC Day, our veterans brought in old photos and their medals and we spoke of the more favourable memories that conflict had left behind. The laughter and smiles that our Get Together generates is priceless. Seeing veterans meet up with others they haven't seen for over 30 years and the youthful energy that surfaces can be felt by all.

Casual conversation, a bit of trivia and a warm beverage in a safe homely environment is what you can expect to find, plus a great meal. Meeting new friends that share their stories and help us realize the value of life which is the love that remains in the hearts of those on this earth to remember the brave that left us behind.

We would like to acknowledge our friends Graham Wright and Ed Jones who are no longer with us. Two men that shared golden moments of their lives with us. Their company will be missed and we treasure the impact they made on our lives.

So many of this generation died in the war and their loss left pain and suffering. Our veterans who lived through the battles and now carry the scars are few. We have these honourable people amongst us. They teach us that there is no glory in war and conflict but the love and comradeship that is left behind has an intensity like nothing else.

Our Veterans' Catch-Up is held every 3rd Thursday of the month at Burrangiri Day Centre, Rivett, the Centre providing a safe environment with trained staff to oversee our frailer veterans, if needed. Transport can be arranged. Call Rani Kalimeris or Florence Sofield for further details.



Sid Penhaligon's Medals

Volunteers
Judith Rowe,
Tozi Cumings
and
Trish Beham



SUB-BRANCH SERVICES

Sub-Branch Office Hours. The office is open from 9:00AM until 3:00PM Monday to Friday, except public holidays. The services of the Sub-Branch are available to all Sub-Branch members, and all serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force and overseas defence forces.

Office Administrator. Joyce O'Brien administers the Sub-Branch office and is responsible to the Executive for the efficient day-to-day routine of the office. Joyce will supervise all Sub-Branch matters including membership, correspondence, functions and access to Sub-Branch services.

Veterans' Support Centre (VSC). The office is open from 9:00AM until 3:00PM Monday to Friday, except public holidays, and at other times by appointment. The services of the VSC are available to all Sub-Branch members, and all serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force and overseas defence forces.

Entitlement and Advocacy (E&A). A team of trained advocates and entitlements/pension officers, both male and female, is available to provide assistance with claims under the Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA), the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA), and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA). We also provide support and advice to war widows and widowers in regards to pensions. Andrew Properjohn, the E&A Administrator will assist you with your enquiries.

Community Support. Florence Sofield co-ordinates the provision of welfare to Sub-Branch members and their families. Advice is available on matters such as DVA Gold and White Cards, travel, Veterans Home Care, residential and transitional care, HACC services, DVA Housing and financial information.

Hospital Visiting: Volunteers visit each of the southern hospitals, The Canberra Hospital, Calvary John James and National Capital Private Hospital. They aim to visit every veteran, RSL member, Legacy widows and widowers.

Hospice Visiting: Visits can be arranged for Sub-Branch members in Clare Holland House.

Christmas Visits: In December each year, all Sub-Branch members 80 years of age and over, and all Sub-Branch widows and widowers receive a home visit and a gift.

Health and Fitness Program. Arrangements between the Southern Cross Health Club (SCHC) and the Sub-Branch relating to gym use have changed. For details, call the office on 6285 1931.

Sub-Branch Publication. The Sub-Branch Publication, '*The Serviceman*' is published three times per year and distributed free to all Sub-Branch members, widows and widowers. A special edition is also published for schoolchildren attending the annual ANZAC and Peace Ceremony at Eddison Park.

Eddison Day Club. Sponsored by the Sub-Branch, the Day Club caters for members, their spouses, widows, widowers and the general community. It meets every Friday from 10:00AM to 2:00PM (except Good Friday) from mid-January to mid-December at the Irish Club, Parkinson Street, Weston.

If you know of any member who would benefit from any of these services, but is reluctant to apply, please let our office know.