

RSL WODEN VALLEY SUB-BRANCH ENEWS



September 2020

Audience with Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal and Australian Second World War veteran and WV RSL member Mr Les Cook



**'It would have taken
more courage not to go'**

Photo of Les Cook: ABC Canberra /facebook page

World War II veteran and Canberra resident Les Cook lied about his age so he could join the fight at just 17.

Now aged 97, he says it was the right thing to do.

A commemorative service was held at the [Australian War Memorial](#) to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the war.



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs



Audience with Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and Australian Second World War veteran Mr Les Cook



In the lead up to the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal held a video call with Second World War veteran Mr Les Cook.

During the video call, Les regaled Her Royal Highness with his experiences serving as a Corporal in the Australian Army from 1940 to 1947. The backdrop for the zoom call was a Second World War gallery at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Mr Cook was introduced to The Princess Royal by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Liz Cosson AM CSC, and the Director of the Australian War Memorial, Matt Anderson PSM.

DVA Secretary Liz Cosson said Les was in fine form and thoroughly enjoyed sharing his experiences.

"It was truly humbling to hear Les share his memories from the War with Princess Anne," Ms Cosson said.

"We only have around 12,000 Second World War veterans with us today, from the one million Australians that served, and Les is truly one in a million."

AWM Director Matt Anderson said it was a privilege to place the call to Gatcombe Park from the Australian War Memorial.

"Her Royal Highness is Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals and she was keen to hear of Les's experiences as Signaller during the war," Mr Anderson said.

"That the call took place from the War Memorial in the lead up to the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War was truly an honour."

Born in England, Les enlisted in the 2nd AIF in May 1940 soon after his 17th birthday. Having learnt telegraphy at night-school in civil life he was posted to the 1st Australian Corps as a signaller and sent to the Middle East. Les served in the campaigns in the Western Desert, Greece, Crete and Syria before returning to the Pacific to defend Australia as part of the Owen Stanley campaign in PNG.

Les describes walking the Kokoda track as a process of climbing 'never ending hills with a multitude of heartbreaking false crests. When we got to the top of each one, too tired to take off our equipment, we just collapsed on the ground as we were'.

After the war ended Les served in Japan for a year as a part of the Australian contingent of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force.

More than one million Australians served during the Second World, and Australia owes them a great debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

Vision of the call is available to download at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=londxK1C_4A

Contacts:

DVA Media Manager, Daniel Johnson, 0419 581 853, media.team@dva.gov.au

AWM Media, Greg Kimball, 0402 800 649, media@awmgov.au

Who is Les Cook?

Regular readers of *The Serviceman* will find articles and poems produced by Les Cook - a seemingly prolific writer. You may like to know who he is and where he has been, particularly in relation to World War II.

Les enlisted in the AIF in May 1940 at the age of 17 and was discharged in February 1947. In the interim, he served with several different units in the Western Desert, Greece, Crete, Syria, Owen Stanley (Kokoda Track), Gona and Sanananda, Lae, Markham Valley/Shaggy Ridge (PNG), Balikpapan (Borneo), and with the Occupation Forces in Japan. Studiously and successfully, he avoided promotion until just before WWII ended when his Platoon Commander, Sergeant and two section leaders were killed and, with his mate, Dick Hill DCM, were 'leaned on' by an astute Company Commander to take over one of the sections. He enlisted in the CMF as a part-time soldier in 1947 after his discharge and voluntarily resigned about two years later.

Although a soldier, he says he spent six months at sea going from one country to another - the longest sea voyage being 54 days from Suez to Adelaide in Feb/Mar 1941. "The Japanese were moving much faster than we were at that time and kept ahead of us almost to the end", he said. "This was the convoy that Churchill, unbeknown to the Australian Government, had turned back with the intention of sending us to Borneo, but PM Curtin got wind of it somehow and insisted that we be sent home".

From *The Serviceman*



World War II veteran Les Cook, pictured as an 18-year-old in the Syrian city of Damascus. Photo: Sithixay Ditthavong



The Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Personnel

Saturday, 22 August 2020

Veteran Family Advocate appointed

IN a significant step towards promoting better outcomes for veterans' families, Ms Gwen Cherne has been appointed as the first ever Veteran Family Advocate, representing their perspectives in ongoing policy and decision making across Government.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester congratulated Ms Cherne on her appointment and said that her passion and experience in supporting the ex-service community would ensure the Government continues to put veterans and their families first.

"Ms Cherne has an impressive resume in roles relating to defence personnel and veterans' families at both a national and international level, but she also brings with her a range of lived experience — as a defence spouse, a war widow, and the mother of a current serving Australian Defence Force member," Mr Chester said.

"By directly engaging with the families of veterans of all generations, Ms Cherne will draw on their advice to help shape the design of programs, policy and services, with a focus on building on our understanding of the factors that can enhance or detract from the mental health of veterans and their families, particularly during transition from service."

The establishment of the Veteran Family Advocate will be undertaken through the existing Repatriation Commission structure enshrined in the Veterans' Affairs legislation, so it can be established immediately.

Ms Cherne said as a single mother with two young children at home, and having lost her husband to suicide, she was acutely aware of some of the challenges that Defence families face.

"I am proud to be appointed the Veteran Family Advocate and am looking forward to building on the important work that has been done to better support veterans' families in the last few years," Ms Cherne said.

"The department has made some significant and positive changes for veterans and their families, and I am very cognisant of the responsibility I have to ensure that work continues and that the voices of veterans' families are heard."

Ms Cherne's background includes service to the veteran community as a board member on the NSW War Widow's Guild, as an Ambassador for the Commando Welfare Trust and working with DVA on issues facing widows and families through her appointment to the Council for Women and Families United by Defence Service. In recent years, she has also served on the Council of the Australian War Memorial and as an ambassador for the 2018 Invictus Games.

A merit selection process to appoint the Veteran Family Advocate was undertaken in accordance with the APS Merit and Transparency Policy. Ms Cherne will start in the role on Monday, 24 August 2020.

Open Arms welcomes the announcement of the appointment of Ms Gwen Cherne as our first Veteran Family Advocate.

As a Defence spouse, a war widow, and the mother of a currently serving Australian Defence Force member, Ms Cherne is acutely aware of the challenges Defence families face and the responsibility of ensuring "the voices of veterans' families are heard." #StrongerTogether

We look forward with working with Gwen to improve the support we provide.



Open Arms -
Veterans & Families
Counselling

@OpenArmsVeteransAndFamiliesCounselling



Photos above: MP Darren Chester and Gwen Cherne from Minister Facebook page.

The veteran community will be pleased with the appointment of Gwen Cherne as our first national Veteran Family Advocate.

Gwen has a unique understanding of the stresses which are often faced by family members of our serving personnel and sadly lost her husband, Peter, to suicide in 2017. She's determined to help me stop other families suffering a similar loss.

I've worked closely with Gwen in her various roles where she has demonstrated her passion and determination to support our veterans and their families, particularly anyone dealing with mental health issues.

Gwen will make a tremendous advocate and I look forward to delivering further positive reforms in the future.

If you, or someone you know, would benefit from free mental health counselling for veterans and their families, please contact Open Arms on 1800 011 046.

The Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel



MEDIA RELEASE

Saturday 29 August 2020

LEGACY WEEK - SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS' FAMILIES

THIS coming week is Legacy Week, an annual appeal that raises awareness and funds to support the families of Australian veterans.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said Legacy Week was known for its trademark badges and was a simple way that Australians can support our ex-service personnel and their families, and say 'thank you'.

"Every year since 1942, Legacy volunteers have fundraised across Australia for the families of veterans who stand by our service men and women both during and after their service," Mr Chester said.

"This year has been unprecedented in so many ways, and the coronavirus crisis has heightened many of the pressures that our veterans and their families are experiencing.

"That is why it is more important than ever that we all do what we can to help organisations like Legacy support the families of veterans and I encourage Australians to consider buying a badge or supporting Legacy online."

This month has also seen the appointment of Gwen Cherne as the first ever Veteran Family Advocate, ensuring veterans' families' perspectives are represented and at the forefront of policy and decision making across Government.

"Legacy supports the families of veterans who have fallen, or whose health has suffered as a result of their service. They helped my family in our darkest of times with financial and social support," Ms Cherne said.

"Legacy Week is about ensuring continued services are available for the 52,000 veterans' families that Legacy supports across Australia.

"Legacy has a strong history of commitment to Australian military families, so buy a badge, donate or consider becoming a volunteer for this great organisation."

Due to coronavirus pandemic, unfortunately this year many of the normal fundraising events that Legacy run during Legacy Week will not be able to go ahead as they normally would. This is to protect the health and safety of the participants and Legacy volunteers.

Badge Day is Friday, 4 September (Thursday, 3 September in Western Australia) and donations can be made at the Legacy Week website, www.legacyweek.com.au. Legacy merchandise, including their *Open Arms — Veterans & Families Counselling* provides free and confidential support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families. Help is available 24/7 on 1800 011 046 (international: +61 1800 011 046 or +61 8 8241 4546) or visit www.OpenArms.gov.au

Famous badges and bears, can also be purchased online at the Legacy shop, www.legacyshop.com.au.

The Legacy Australia National Launch Commemorative Wreathlaying Ceremony will be hosted by the Australian War Memorial on Monday 31 August 2020. Members of the public are encouraged to support the national launch by considering purchasing Legacy merchandise or making a financial donation.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Rachel Tharratt: 02 6277 7820 DVA Media: 02 6289 6466 Office
of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT.

05 Aug 2020 9:00 AM AEST - Chester release - Two new providers

The Hon Darren Chester MP

Wednesday 5 August 2020

TWO NEW PROVIDERS OF PSYCHIATRIC ASSISTANCE DOGS TO SUPPORT VETERANS

VETERANS with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) will benefit from the addition of two new providers to the Government's Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program, the Royal Society for the Blind of South Australia and Integra Service Dogs Australia.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said this was an important program to help veterans manage their PTSD and the feedback received so far from veterans and their families was that it was making an amazing difference.

"We have seen the positive outcomes from this program with six veterans already sharing a special bond with their psychiatric assistance dogs, making a remarkable difference to their everyday life," Mr Chester said.

"These dogs are specially trained to perform specific tasks to help their owner when experiencing symptoms of PTSD, such as a night terror, and helping veterans to reach their clinical recovery goals.

"Adding two new providers will increase the availability of psychiatric assistance dogs and ensure the growing demand from eligible veterans can be met.

"I encourage veterans managing their PTSD and who are interested in this program to contact the Department of Veterans' Affairs to check the eligibility requirements and to apply to get an assistance dog."

More than 140 applications for psychiatric assistance dogs have been received by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and having two new providers, along with two existing ones, will ensure the program supports veterans across the nation.

To be eligible for a psychiatric assistance dog, veterans must have a Veteran Gold or White Card, have a diagnosis of PTSD from a psychiatrist and be currently engaged in treatment with their mental health professional for a minimum of three months.

DVA is continuing to evaluate the effectiveness of psychiatric assistance dogs in the treatment of PTSD through a partnership with La Trobe University with early feedback from veterans who have trialled the dogs being overwhelmingly positive.

"The current arrangements to source and train psychiatric assistance dogs allows DVA to address the needs veterans are experiencing now, while the La Trobe University research continues to better understand how psychiatric assistance dogs can support the treatment of PTSD for our veterans," Mr Chester said.

For more information about DVA's Psychiatric Assistance Dog program visit the [DVA website](#).



Good afternoon ESORT Members

As you may be aware on 15 August 2020 we will be marking the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. To acknowledge this significant anniversary, as well as of all those who served during this war, the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Darren Chester MP have launched the *#OneInAMillion* campaign.

#OneInAMillion is a communications initiative to raise awareness in the community about the over one million Australians who served during the Second World War, it has two elements;

#OneInAMillion: Wall of Respect – a social media wall of photographs, and

Hearing their stories – a series of eight compelling interviews in the form of short animated videos that share moments of inspiration and courage.

We are seeking your support for the '*#OneInAMillion: Wall of Respect*' project, by encouraging your members to post a photo to their social media wall of them holding a photograph of a family member who served in the Second World War, and use the hashtag *#OneInAMillion*.

Since 2 June this year, the Minister has also been posting a daily social media series, *75 days, 75 stories*, about Australians who lived through the Second World War, from those who served to the many who contributed on the home front.

I would appreciate your assistance in communicating this information to your members, and encouraging their involvement in sharing an image for the '*#OneInAMillion: Wall of Respect*' and listening to the video and social media series www.dva.gov.au/oneinamillion.

Attached are social media graphics and the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War branding guidelines and files to assist with any promotional activities. This branding can be used with the words 'Australia Remembers' or be tailored to reflect the organisation, for example, 'Braidwood RSL Remembers'.

I greatly appreciate your assistance with promotion of this important anniversary.

Also of interest to your members may be the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force (IGADF) Afghanistan Inquiry. Information on the Inquiry and support available to those impacted by it can be found on the new website - <https://afghanistaninquiry.defence.gov.au>.

I thank you again for sharing this information with your members.

Regards



Liz Cosson AM CSC
Secretary
Department of Veterans' Affairs



COMMEMORATIVE MEDALLION AND CERTIFICATE OF COMMEMORATION



Available to every living veteran of the Second World War



75th Anniversary
**End of the
Second World War**
Australia Remembers 2020

Apply now at www.dva.gov.au or call 1800 838 372. #OneInAMillion

WALL OF RESPECT

#OneInAMillion



AVCAT



Essay Prize 2020

AVCAT presents the inaugural
AVCAT Essay Prize 2020
on the theme:

'Impact of the Vietnam War on Family'

Entries open on Vietnam Veterans' Day, 18 August 2020
and close midnight 16 October 2020.

First Prize: \$500
Second Prize \$200
Third Prize \$100

The AVCAT Essay Prize is open to all entrants over the age of 18 at 18 August 2020. Essays should be up to 2500 addressing the theme 'Impact of the Vietnam War on Families'.

avcat.org.au

Contest guidelines and entry form online at avcat.org.au.

National Scams Awareness Week: 'This Is Not Your Life'

The ACCC has launched a podcast series for this year's National Scams Awareness Week to provide Australians with tips on how to protect their personal and financial details from scammers.

The five-episode podcast series, *This is Not Your Life*, is produced by Julian Morrow, the creator of ABC TV's consumer series *The Checkout*. The podcast, which is a parody on the popular TV show *This Is Your Life*, contains advice on how to avoid a scammer stealing your identity and features cameos from ACCC Chair Rod Sims, eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant and IDCARE's founder David Lacey.

Scamwatch has received a staggering 24,000 reports of stolen personal information this year alone, an increase of 55 per cent compared with the same time last year.

Australians reported losing more than \$22 million to scammers who also stole their personal information and people aged 25–34 reported losing personal information more than any other age group.

Scammers are targeting personal information more than ever which has contributed to an increase in financial losses across all scams, up to \$91 million so far this year.

This year's [National Scams Awareness Week](#) (17–21 August) has over 100 partners from the government, NGO and business sectors working together to raise awareness about scams that steal personal information under the tagline: 'Be yourself. Don't let a scammer be you'.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, with more people working and socialising online, we have unfortunately seen a sharp increase in scammers seeking personal information," ACCC Deputy Chair Delia Rickard said.

"Personal information, such as bank and superannuation details or passwords, are extremely valuable and scammers will try to steal them for their own financial gain. Our increased use of technology has created more opportunities for them to do so."

"Scammers will also try and steal a range of other documents, or the numbers associated with them, including passports, driver licences, credit cards, tax statements, utility bills or Medicare cards, so that they can impersonate you," Ms Rickard said.

Phishing scams, the most common form of scam, are up by 44 per cent compared with the same time last year. Scammers pretend to be from government departments and businesses, like the ATO, myGov, Telstra or the NBN, to gain bank account details and other information about a person that can be used to impersonate them.

Once a scammer has that information, they can then use it to access individuals' bank accounts or superannuation, take out loans under their names and impersonate them on social media to try to get money from family and friends.

"Scam victims who have lost personal information are vulnerable to further scams, fraud or identity theft," Ms Rickard said.

"If you do have your identity stolen, it can take years to recover and people can end up losing more than money. Not only time in trying to undo the damage done financially, but it can also impact greatly on your mental health."

"Never give your personal or financial information to anyone you don't know or trust via email, text, social media or over the phone," Ms Rickard said.

Background

If you suspect you are a victim of identity theft, contact [IDCARE on 1300 432 273](#). IDCARE is a free government-funded service which will work with you to develop a specific response plan to your situation and support you throughout the process.

If you have been the victim of a scam, contact your bank as soon as possible and contact the platform on which you were scammed to inform them of the circumstances.

More information on scams is available on the [Scamwatch website](#), including how to [make a report](#) and where to [get help](#).

South Canberra Veterans Shed Inc (SCVS)



**SOUTH CANBERRA
VETERANS SHED**

Veterans' Sheds are meeting places where currently serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members (Veterans) and First Responders (Police, Fire, Ambulance & Emergency Services Members) and their families can socialise, discuss issues of concern with like-minded mates, enjoy themselves, learn new skills, work on projects together and get involved in activities to support their shed and their local community. To find out the latest information, please email them or go to their website:

Email: scveteransshed@gmail.com

Web: <http://mensshed.org/profile/AMSA101255/>

HEALY OAM
June Marie (nee Davidson)
June 1934 - August 2020



June passed peacefully on Sunday, her youngest child by her side, and under the outstanding care of staff at Vasey RSL Care, Brighton East.

Wife of Col John Healy (dec)
and mother of Daele and Katie.

June created a life of adventures and accomplishments at home and overseas including leading over 30 commemorative tours.

In 1990 she was awarded an OAM for service to veterans. Former RSL National Secretary, National President of ACOTA, War Widows Guild and WRAAC Association, and member of the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters. RAANC 1954-1960 and WRAAC 1960-1965.

Born in Perth to Wingate and Robert Davidson. Sister to Alex (dec), Robert, Daele Robinson and Rita Bagossy. In-laws: Richard (dec) and Charles; Tina, Leila (dec) and Jack 'Tim' Healy (dec), Neal; and John Lindsay.

Our thanks for all the kindness and support
in her fight against Alzheimer's.

Privately cremated. We look forward to gathering in a Melbourne church and telling stories of June - brilliant, charming, glamorous, feisty, and fun.

E-news editor`s note: re June Healy death notice.

Ian Gollings was National Secretary in 1990, June was Deputy National Secretary.

Dear Members and Friends,

Join the Cretan Federation of Australia and New Zealand for an ANZAC Pilgrimage to Greece, in Athens and on Crete to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Crete and the Australian involvement in 1941.

This moving journey that will take place in May 2021, will take you where soldiers from Australia, New Zealand Britain and Greece fought alongside Cretan civilians to push back German invaders during the Battle for Crete in May of 1941.

You will participate in official ceremonies honouring those who fought in the Battle, whilst tracing the history of this significant event during WWII.

Join us on this touching journey as we analyse the Battle by visiting its key sites, whilst at the same time, reliving the heroism and the hopes of the Cretan partisans who fought alongside our own Australian and New Zealand troops.

For a complete detailed program please register your interest in attending via email at with the Cretan Federation of Australia & New Zealand at president@cretan.com.au .

The Cretan Federation of Australia and New Zealand has partnered with Touchdown Tours for all your travel and accommodation requirements with two wonderful packages on offer. Please contact Jaqui on (03) 9482 5215 or via email at travel@touchdowntours.com.au .

Kind Regards

Tony Tsourdalakis *President*

Tony 0419856736 president@cretan.com.au

Or contact Rania Kalimeris

02 6285 1931 for details



| Cost per person from | 3* option | 4* option |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Twin share | \$3,242 | \$3,883 |
| Single Supplement | \$955 | \$1,235 |

INCLUSIONS & GENERAL NOTES

- 2 nights hotel in Athens including breakfast daily
- 4 nights hotel in Chania including breakfast daily
- 3 nights hotel in Rethymnon including breakfast daily
- All tours & transfers as specified in the itinerary
- Entrance fees to all sites and museums as mentioned in the itinerary
- Greek domestic flights : Athens - Chania - Athens inc. luggage allowance
- WWII Battle of Crete In-Depth Touring tour with private bus, professional English & Greek speaking bilingual guide
- Traditional Farewell Dinner
- *Battle of Crete Commemorative experiences will take place at various times during the tour, and the details will be confirmed closer to departure. They may not always take place on the days specified, and may take place in between touring, as they will be dependent on guidance by local authorities.

Social Art Program 2/20 for Veterans



Five Sessions on Wednesday

16 September

23 September

30 September

7 October

14 October

Time: 10AM – 12 NOON

Request participants to arrive at 9:45AM

Course supervised by Margaret Hadfield

Professional artist for over 20 years in the Canberra /Queanbeyan region.

Classes offer a broad taste of most mediums Watercolour, Oils, Acrylics, Pen, Inks, as well as a variety of surfaces. Using only odourless oils and solvents, which makes for a much healthier solution to those who are sensitive to the regular paints/solvents All materials included.

Location: Artists Shed 88 Wollongong St Fyshwick ACT 2609

Please contact: [Rania Kalimeris](#)

RSL Woden Valley Sub-Branch

14/27 Mulley St HOLDER ACT 2611

Phone: 62 85 1931 to reserve a place.

Don't forget our Coffee Club is open again from 10-12 every Friday in The Corey Room, Level 2A, of the Grant Cameron Community Centre, 27 Mulley Street, Holder.



Any member or prospective member is most welcome to join us for a chat and enjoy freshly brewed coffee with former service mates.

. Eddison Day Club meetings

. Burrangiri

**SUSPENDED UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE**

**Carers Friendship Groups are
back in business**

**For details call Rania Kalimeris
6285 1931**

Did you know?

**E-News and *The Serviceman*
are also readily available to
read on our website
www.rslwoden.org.au**



Contact Us

Give us a call for more
information or access to our
services

**RSL Woden Valley
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14/27 Mulley Street
HOLDER ACT 2611**

62851931

admin@rslwoden.org.au

Visit us on the web at
www.rslwoden.org.au

Or drop in for a coffee
Fridays from 10.00am

Our office hours are
9am-3pm Mon-Fri