

Veterans Support Centre

2nd Edition May 2021



Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association (NSW)
Hastings Manning Macleay Branch Inc.



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There are NO COSTS to access the services such as Pensions, Welfare and advice provided by Veterans Support Centre, Port Macquarie

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Mental health - Who do I contact if I, or someone I know, needs help now?



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

EMERGENCY	000
Port Macquarie Base Hospital.....	5524 2000
Wauchope District Hospital.....	6580 8000
Kempsey District Hospital.....	6561 2600
VVCS (Veteran's 24/7 crisis line).....	1800 011 046
Lifeline.....	13 11 14

Every veteran, ex-Service person who deploys or not, or is injured, deserves a lifestyle and better treatment than is currently available.

Every veteran should be able to successfully attain their rights to pensions with a simple expedient system through DVA. Yet we still have veterans unaware of their rights and entitlements about what they may be entitled to and where and how to apply or file a claim.

Through your will, you have the power to make a difference. Any gift you bequest to our Sub-Branch, HMMVPPAA, no matter how small, can and will assist a fellow veteran by assisting us to continue our services.

DVA Media Releases and Ministerial Speeches

A large number of DVA Media Releases and other publications are available for your information.

A copy of the full text and other less topical releases may be obtained by visiting

<http://minister.dva.gov.au/media.releases.htm>

You can also subscribe to receive all releases to your computer

or Email a request to us at hmmvppaa@bigpond.com

or Phone us on 6581 5230

or visit our office at **Veterans Support Centre** if you require assistance

From the Editor's Desk

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www.veteranssupport.org.au

Hello,

I hope you like the brilliant artwork by Ian Coate, artist and illustrator, he has such talent and I love the way his beautiful pictures always have just the right emotion in the words that accompany them.

Thanks to Peter Dutton's new appointment, he has reversed the decision to remove awards and honours from our soldiers. Quick action and a sensible decision which is fair and right. Those who may be proven guilty should be dealt with after a full and fair legal process, not trial by media.

ANZAC Day was commemorated this year with marches and services around the country instead of last year's driveway marking of the day. I have shared some photos of Vietnam Veterans in Port Macquarie and am sorry not to have any from Wauchope or Laurieton. (pgs 14-15)

Fires last year, flooding this year, I hope you have managed to stay safe and well. I have seen the massive effort that has been put in to helping those affected by our emergency services, Police, RFS, SES, Defence and many others. It has also been great to see communities helping each other and I think this will need to keep going for a long time yet. Mike and I volunteer with Disaster Relief Australia and they have been sending in teams of 20 or so members each week to do all sorts of work that is still needed after the initial wave of emergency help slows down. We have been able to identify some of our Vietnam Veterans and have given them specific assistance. DRA, mostly ex-military or ex-first responders, will spend 2 months here and they have been welcomed with open arms. Veterans Support Centre had members willing to go to them and offer a friendly bbq meal one evening and it was enjoyed by both groups. (pgs 22-23)

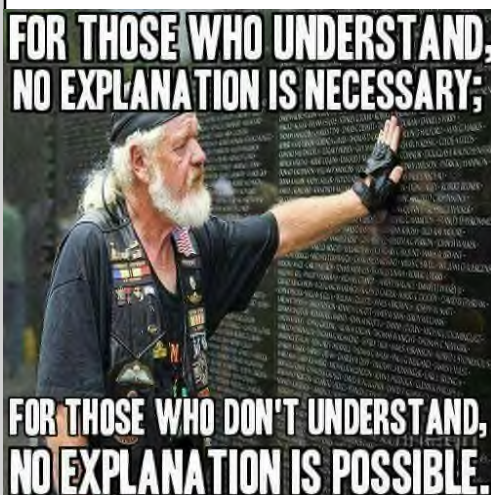
The serious issues of homelessness and suicide among veterans continues to roll around, seemingly with little change. Another Royal Commission is suggested - the last one took over 3 years and failed to make much difference to rates of suicide or homelessness among our veteran community, our leaders need to do better.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Contact Front, the last couple of pages have been given to humour in various wars and conflicts. I know war is never funny but there is a certain value in humour, dry and sometimes dark but which is aimed to lift the sombre to humorous. (pgs 38, 39)

The above are my personal opinions only, take care of yourselves, Jill



Jill Opie, Editor



Pinterest.com

A true soldier fights
not because
he hates
what is in
front of him,
but
because
he loves
what is behind him.



memesbam.com

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT May 2021

There is very little to report at the moment although the Pensions and Welfare Team has a constant number of veterans, both young and old, requiring assistance and support.

Our Thursday lunches are still attracting a regular number of veterans attending which keeps the chefs on their toes trying to come up with different menus. As you know sausage, egg and bacon rolls get very boring week after week. Culinary delights are a welcome change.

The ANZAC Day services at Wauchope and Port Macquarie were well attended considering the covid restrictions. Our members who attended either ceremony were more than impressed with the way the services were conducted.

I attended ANZAC Day in Sydney to catch up with a few old mates that I had not seen for a number of years. This reminds me that as the years roll by we need to make the effort to catch up with old friends before we are unable to do so. The March itself did not pass the Cenotaph in Martin Place but went straight up Elizabeth Street with the eye left at the Memorial in Hyde Park then terminated at Liverpool Street. I think this could be the way it is done in the future as the new light rail tracks run down the middle of George Street all the way to the Quay, so marching up George Street would be quite a task. The March did not seem the same without the big crowds but it is still a moving spectacle.

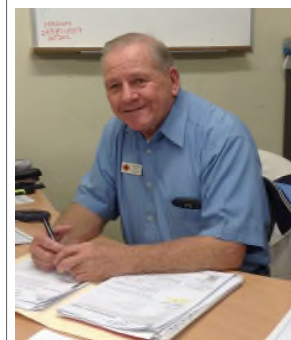
Last month we hosted a barbecue for Disaster Relief Australia who were billeted in the North Haven Surf Club. These volunteers were assisting the flood victims around the Camden Haven area. DRA is made up of ex-military and civilians from all over Australia, we had one from Tasmania and one from Townsville. They give up a week of their time to assist where needed, then they are relieved and another team takes over. The next team will be moving to Wauchope for flood relief in that area. Many of our members who were caught up in the floods send a very warm thanks to one and all for their assistance. Thank you to the members who assisted with the barbecue and we all enjoyed the opportunity to do something for these volunteers.

Hope all members are doing well with all that is going on around us.

Cheers, Bill Wagner



**President
Bill Wagner**



**Welfare Officer
Peter Millen**



**Compensation
Advocate
Mike Opie**

Gold card holders - if you have any service related condition, that you have not claimed for or had accepted, make an appointment to come and see me. Only accepted conditions might make it possible for your partner to make a claim for compensation upon your death.

Have you claimed your NSW Regional Seniors Travel card yet?
Full conditions at

www.service.nsw.gov.au/regionalseiniortravel

**Compensation Advocate's Report
Mike Opie**



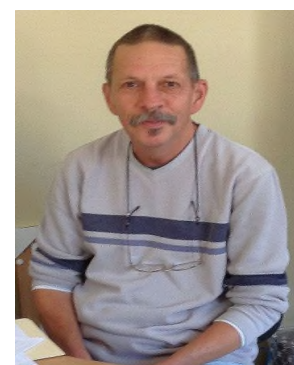
**Lyn Hancock
Assistant Secretary**



**Treasurer
Peter Dorman**

Peter Millen, Welfare Officer

We are here for you, veterans of all ages and service. Call or visit for general guidance or make an appointment to discuss welfare matters in greater detail. Appointments every Tuesday.



**Membership Officer
Trevor Morrow**

Membership Report, Trevor Morrow

A brief report this issue, our membership is up to 85 and rising. If you have not yet renewed, please do so. Application form is on the back of the newsletter address label or call in to the VSC weekdays 1000 - 1400 hrs. Thank you.

Military reminded core business is to use 'lethal violence' to defend Australia's values and sovereignty

Assistant Defence Minister Andrew Hastie has told military personnel their "core business" will always be the "application of lethal violence" and warned "mission clarity" is vital to their work.

Senior government figures said Mr Hastie's message closely aligned with the directives new Defence Minister Peter Dutton issued to the ADF's top brass.

Liberal backbencher Phillip Thompson backed the message, warning "we've gone a little bit woke over the past few years, and we can't afford to be doing that"

One recent incident that caused controversy among government ministers was the decision to have dancers at a commissioning of a Navy ship.

The blunt directive from the former Special Forces officer came as Morrison government figures also took aim at the Australian Defence Force (ADF) after scantily clad dancers helped to formally commission the Navy's newest ship, a move one senior figure dubbed a "shitshow".

Mr Hastie, who was last year promoted to his frontbench role, outlined his vision for the defence force in a message to his West Australian constituents.

"Our military serves a vital role across Australian society, whether during pandemic, flood or fire," Mr Hastie wrote in his most recent electorate newsletter.

"But the ADF's core business will always be the application of lethal violence in the defence of our values, sovereignty and interests. We should never forget that."

The Liberal MP, who entered Federal Parliament in 2015, previously served in the elite Special Air Service Regiment for five years, including deploying to the war in Afghanistan.

In his emailed newsletter, Mr Hastie argued that "mission clarity is vital in the profession of arms".

"Without it, confusion grows – confusion about role, identity and purpose. And confusion is deadly on the battlefield, at sea or in an aerial dogfight," he said.

"Mission focus is the foundation of victory. It keeps everyone driving towards a singular purpose."

'We've gone a little bit woke'

Senior Morrison government figures said the Assistant Minister's message closely aligned with the directives new Defence Minister Peter Dutton issued to the ADF's top brass during their initial meetings.

Inside government, there are frustrations over military decisions seen as too 'politically correct, such as a 2018 directive banning soldiers from wearing 'death symbols'.



Assistant Minister for Defence Andrew Hastie previously served in the elite Special Air Service Regiment for five years.
(Defence: Jay Cronan)



photos from Dept of Defence website
Above - RAAF Hornet leaves RAAF Base Williamtown, photographer unnamed
Below left - by Cpl Mark Doran;
Below right - HMA Ships Ballarat and Sirius by POA Mumbi



2018 article reproduced

Australia's Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Angus Campbell, has issued a directive that prohibits the wearing of 'death' symbols.

Lieutenant General Campbell said the practice was arrogant, ill-considered and that it eroded the ethos of the Army.

The directive was circulated as an internal minute on April 17, and later posted to unofficial social media pages for commentary.

Several symbols were specifically prohibited because of their violent, murderous and vigilante symbolism including the Grim Reaper, the Skull and Crossbones, Spartans, and the Phantom or Punisher.

Lieutenant General Campbell, who was this week named as the next Chief of the Defence, stated in his order that he had come across the symbols worn as patches or badges while visiting army units in Australia and overseas.

He reiterated that such symbols were at odds with Army values while acknowledging this was not the intention of those who wore them.

"Such symbology is never presented as ill-intentioned and plays to much of modern popular culture," Lieutenant General Campbell said.

"But it is always ill-considered and implicitly encourages the inculcation of an arrogant hubris and general disregard for the most serious responsibility of our profession; the legitimate and discriminate take of life.

"As soldiers our purpose is to serve the state, employing violence with humility always and compassion wherever possible. This symbology to which I refer erodes this ethos of service."

In the directive, Army officers were ordered to take immediate action to remove any formal or informal symbols from within their command.

Lieutenant General Campbell acknowledged the decision would upset a minority of soldiers.

"I appreciate that without explanation some will rile at this direction, so please ensure my reasoning is explained but be clear that I am adamant that this is right for the Army."

"I wish to reiterate that the use of symbology/iconography is uncommon within Army. The overwhelming majority of force elements are very much on the right path," he said.

When approached by the ABC the Department of Defence issued the following short statement:

The Chief of Army issued an internal minute to all Commanders on 17 April, 2018 to reinforce that all symbols, emblems and iconography used across the organisation must align with the Army values of courage, initiative, respect and teamwork.

Death symbology demonstrates a general disregard for the most serious responsibility of the Army's profession; the legitimate and discriminate taking of life.

Masks and scarfs depicting skulls are commonly used by United States soldiers and have been portrayed in popular video games such as Call of Duty.

A picture of a French soldier wearing such a scarf in Mali in West Africa was published in 2013 while battling against Al Qaeda.

It sparked an investigation at the time with the French military saying it was unacceptable behaviour.



Concerns are also growing over the Defence Department's ability to deliver on ambitious demands such as those set out in the multi-billion-dollar Naval Shipbuilding Program.

Liberal backbencher Phillip Thompson, who is also a former soldier, said ministers Dutton and Hastie were making sure the ADF was focused on its main tasks.

"Having Minister Dutton at the helm and leading our Australian Defence Force, we're bringing back our core values — we've gone a little bit woke over the past few years and we can't afford to be doing that."

The Queensland backbencher argued the ADF had lurched "too far to the left" with its social agenda in recent years.

"Our ADF shouldn't be left or right, they should be straight down the middle of what their job is, and their job is to defend our nation, our interests, our values, our sovereignty, but also when we go on operations, have an unapologetic aggression and violence to get the mission done."

WOKE - being overly politically correct to the point of ridiculous

2021 main article—Exclusive by defence correspondent to ABC news Andrew Greene
2018 article by David Chen for ABC News

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The DVA website has Fact Sheets about a huge range of benefits that may be available to you or your partner.

One recent fact sheet is **IS45 - Partner Service Pension** and tells of when a partner may be eligible for a pension income based on your qualifying service. It is income and asset tested for those on low income.

If you need help accessing DVA's website, call the VSC for help



The **VPPAA** is dedicated to the welfare of all Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers, ex-service and serving personnel and their families. If you, or someone you know, is ill and you suspect the illness may be a result of military service, please do not hesitate to consult one of our trained volunteers.

We are here to help you and there is no cost associated with our services.



Serving and Supporting the Veteran Community on the Manning North Coast NSW

Shop 5, 1613 Ocean Drive. Lake Cathie.

(02) 6585 5737

Store 119 Horton St Port Macquarie Super Store Phone:

(02) 6583 2134

Shop 8, 100 Ocean Drive, Lighthouse Plaza Port Macquarie

(02) 6582 0914

Shop 3-5, 88 Bold St Haven Plaza Corner of Bold St & Tunis St, Laurieton

(02) 6559 9700

Shop 1, Lakewood Shopping Centre Corner of Ocean Dr & Sirius Drive Lakewood.

(02) 6559 9104



Supporting The Veteran Community in Port Macquarie

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F: 02 6583 4555

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www.leichtstyres.com**

"We don't take your safety lightly"

General Business– Your Office



Our office is open weekdays - phone or call in 10am - 2pm

Committee Meetings:

Second Thursday every month held at Unit 22, 35 Merrigal Road, Port Macquarie, immediately following the Luncheon Clean up. However the Committee may determine an alternative location and day from time to time.

Annual General Meeting Minutes and Financial Statements are available at the office.

Thank you:

To all donors, supporters and advertisers: Your continued support helps us to keep our doors open for veterans, serving and ex-serving personnel who need our help. Members are encouraged to support businesses whose advertisements appear in this newsletter.

Contributions Welcome:

Please send any letters, stories, questions, comments, poems, jokes, photos etc to The Editor, Contact Front, PO Box 5330, Port Macquarie NSW 2444. All such submissions are subject to copyright laws, may be edited and remain the property of VPPAA Sub-Branch unless otherwise agreed. All submissions received will be considered for publication, but will not necessarily be accepted. No correspondence regarding acceptance or otherwise will be entered into.

Take a break



THURSDAYS - ON AGAIN

Join us on Thursday mornings from about 10am for an informal get together. Find out what's happening with veteran's issues, catch up with old and new friends or just have a chat over a cup of coffee or tea.

These informal mornings are followed by **OUR FAMOUS \$5 LUNCH**



Defence Community Dogs

Applications for 2021 are now open! Our dogs are trained to help and love having a job. If you know a veteran who could benefit from a DCD Assistance Dog, please share this with them and encourage them to apply

<https://www.dcdogs.com.au/contact-us/contact-us-apply/>

Everyone deserves a helping hand.

(please note: we have quite an energetic group at the moment)

Source Women Veterans Network Australia

Defence Minister Peter Dutton overturns decision to strip veterans of military decorations

The family of a soldier who was killed while on duty in Afghanistan has thanked Defence Minister Peter Dutton for overturning a decision to strip him, and others, of their military honours.



Private Gregory Michael Sher was killed in a rocket attack in 2009.(Department of Defence)

Mr Dutton on Monday (April 2021) announced he would overturn the decision to strip honours from around 3,000 defence personnel who served between 2007 and 2013.

Last year the Chief of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), General Angus Campbell, recommended the meritorious unit citation be revoked for the Special Operations Task Group, in the wake of the Inspector-General of the ADF's Inquiry report into war crimes.

General Campbell announced the move while handing down the explosive report which found Australian special forces murdered at least 39 prisoners and civilians during the Afghanistan war.

The decision was met with significant criticism within defence and veterans circles, as well as the government.

As a result, General Campbell walked back the idea earlier this year, saying he did not want to "be at odds" with the government's position on the issue and to avoid "negative public attention".

The parents of Private Gregory Sher, who was killed in a rocket attack in 2009, thanked Mr Dutton for the move.

"We express our sincere appreciation for your decision to only withdraw the Meritorious Unit Citation for those soldiers who have been convicted of misdemeanours," Felix and Yvonne Sher said.

"The Brereton Report and subsequent decision by CDF Angus Campbell were grossly unfair and devoid of thorough analysis.

"The psychological effect that his decision would have had on those that served with honour and on families like ours would have been most hurtful and groundless."

Mr Dutton told Nine Radio the decision would be reversed given the vast majority of ADF personnel did nothing wrong. "Those people deserve our recognition, our praise, our honour, because many of them have lost mates," he said.

"Families this Anzac Day should proudly wear that medal in honour of their loved one who passed away in the service of this country."

But Mr Dutton did make clear anyone found to have committed a war crime would still lose the honour.

"My judgment was that we shouldn't be punishing the 99 per cent for the sins of one per cent," he said.

"This says to people very clearly before Anzac Day that we want to reset, that we want to provide support to those people who have served their country and as I say, who have died in that service."

The citation was awarded to the Task Groups for "sustained and outstanding warlike operational service in Afghanistan from 30 April 2007 to 31 December 2013, through the conduct of counter-insurgency operations in support of the International Security Assistance Force".

In a speech to be delivered on Monday, Chief of Army Lieutenant Rick Burr will argue his organisation needs to "rely on a culture that is aligned with optimal behaviours".

"Good soldiering is who we are. We are individuals of good character and sound ethical grounding," General Burr will tell the Chief of Army Symposium in Brisbane.

"We create strong teams who actively include others and bring people together to be effective and achieve their mission."



Defence Minister Peter Dutton says people found guilty of war crimes will still be stripped of the honour.(Department of Defence: Max Bree)

Source - Dept of Defence for ABC



Maintain the Memory of our Meritorious 'Many'

The Chief of the Defence Force has stated that he will ask the Governor General of Australia to strip the Meritorious Unit Citation awarded to Task Force 66, Special Operations Task Groups who served during the period 30 April 2007 - 31 December 2013. This will impact over 3000 Special Operations personnel including the families of those heroes who have died in combat. Show your support for common sense and help us stop this persecution of 'the many' who served with honour.

The petition and signatures collected by "Voice of a Veteran" Has been a positive influence on the decision to overturn the decision to strip honours from around 3,000 of our Defence Force soldiers.

Voice of a Veteran is a site for veterans of all conflicts - Launched by Voice of a Veteran Founder and retired Special Forces Major Heston Russell and co-hosted by Special Forces Veteran Scott Evennett, each episode will deconstruct the physical, mental and emotional resilience that has enabled each guest to succeed or fail in their lives.

Defence Minister Peter Dutton's move to reverse a decision to strip soldiers who served in Afghanistan of their medals has been labelled the "right decision" by Liberal MP Dave Sharma. "There should be due process, there should be the presumption of innocence, there should be the full protections of the rule of law," he said. Three thousand special forces soldiers were set to be have their citations removed as "collective punishment" for alleged crimes uncovered by the Brereton Inquiry. The original recommendation faced widespread scrutiny attracting more than 50,000 signatures to overturn the decision. Mr Sharma said the original decision looked like an act of collective punishment for the many thousands of troops involved. "Australians who served in Afghanistan overwhelmingly with great distinction and honour were having their reputation tarnished by the unfortunate and regrettable actions of a few." The ruling will mean only individuals who are dismissed for failing to uphold standards or are found guilty of a war crime will be disciplined. Mr Sharma highlighted the importance of addressing the Brereton Inquiry and those responsible were held accountable for their actions.

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Weekend Australian article - author not indicated



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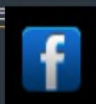
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For the fallen

*With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children
England mourns for her dead across the sea,
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.*

*Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,
There is music in the midst of desolation
And glory that shines upon our tears.*

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eyes, steady and aglow,
They were staunch to the end against odds un-
counted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

***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.***

*They mingle not with their laughing comrades again,
They sit no more at familiar tables of home,
They have no lot in our labour of the daytime,
They sleep beyond England's foam.*

*But where our desires and hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are
known
As the stars are known to the night.*

*As the stars shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our dark-
ness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.*

Written by Robert Laurence Binyon (1869-1943)

This page from the top

The lone piper

Two of the Catafalque Party

Cadets carry the flags of units present

Opposite page

Our Vietnam Veterans gather to remember
the fallen and to commemorate the veterans with
us today

Lest we forget



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2021
Port Macquarie



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Editor - Darren, of Arranbee Framing, has again stepped up to help veterans affected by the recent floods. He went especially to Sydney to obtain the ribbon and replaced the damaged ribbons with new. The owner was absolutely thrilled to have them back in such great condition and also delighted that Darren restored them at no cost to the owner. (see next page)

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Left to Right

Dan (DRA)

Kylie (DRA)

Gloria (medal owner)

Nico (DRA)

Gordon

Chris (DRA)

Missing Mike (DRA)



DISASTER RELIEF AUSTRALIA (DRA)

This volunteer group consisting mainly of military veterans and ex-first responders came to the area to help out with flood recovery work. They also love to help with veterans and were in touch with the owners of World War 1 medals from their family members. The medal ribbons were badly damaged and needed to be replaced. Arranbee Framers (previous page) replaced the ribbons at no cost and the medals were cleaned and presented back by DRA members who had also spent time assisting the couple with damage. The photos show DRA members with Gloria and Gordon (with permission) taking custody of their family medals.

DRA seeks volunteers all over the country, for more info contact them on
<https://disasterreliefaus.org/contact-us/>
Or call PH: +61 (02) 8072 9130

See also pages 22-23



Left - water damage to records and documents



Right - Gloria has an incredible sense of humour despite the damage and chaos suffered

Dogs recognised for their service



The Canine Service Medal Award ceremony for military working dogs was held at RAAF Base Pearce, Western Australia.

A ceremony to honour the careers of 10 military working dogs and present them with their Canine Service Medals was held at No. 3 Security Forces Squadron, RAAF Base Pearce, on December 8, 2020.

Able, Dagger, Gilda, Loki, Maxi, OJ, Onyx, Otto, Oscar and Walt were presented their medals by the ADF Trackers and War Dogs Association, along with thank you packs for each by the Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation.

Both organisations work to promote and educate people on the service of dogs and other animals that have served in operational or mascot roles.

The Canine Service Medals, which are awarded in recognition of five years' continuous service, were presented by No. 3 Security Forces Flight Commander Flight Lieutenant Lawrence O'Reilly as Sergeant Luke Webber read out each citation.

One of the Canine Service Medals was awarded posthumously to Otto, who died in July 2018. His medal was accepted by his daughter, Military Working Dog Xeren and was placed on the right hand side of her jacket.

Otto's handler Sergeant Luke Webber said he was grateful and moved by the posthumous Canine Service Medal for Otto.

"Otto lived to work and be loved, he helped me mentor and develop multiple dogs for the ADF due to his love and tolerance for younger dogs," Sergeant Webber said.

"Otto helped develop and display future capability possibilities for the ADF and I am honoured and humbled that his dedication to service has been recognised today."

The WA Ambassador of the Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation, Linda Scott, said there was no greater bond than that of a military working dog and their handler.

"The members of the ADF have chosen to dedicate their lives to the service of our country, however the military working dogs were born into it," Ms Scott said.

"The blood that runs through the veins of the dogs we honoured today is definitely Air Force blue."

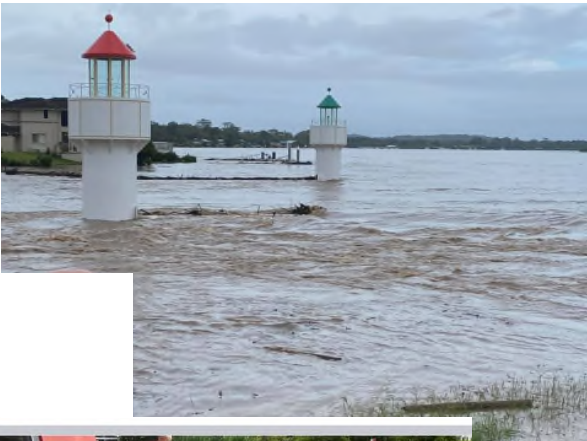
The story of the Military Working Dog began in 1943 when the Army established a war dog reception and training depot, however when the school closed, the RAAF took over the animals in the training program and used them for asset security.

Ten years later, the Air Force introduced canine handler roles and a Police Dog Training Centre was formed.

Air Force is the largest single corporate user of military working dogs within Australia with the dogs and their handlers posted to more than 12 bases to provide security to high-value RAAF assets.

The basic preparation and dog training course is four months long and is conducted at the RAAF Security and Fire School in Amberley, Queensland. The school is responsible for training dogs for use in the RAAF and Army.

Mother Nature at her worst - Port Macquarie and Camden Haven



For our out-of-town readers, devastation in Camden Haven and Port Macquarie and almost every small town in the region. Just over a year ago, fire was the enemy and now this.

Thank you to SES, RFS, Police, ADF members, local groups and those who came to help, so much to do, so many helping



Currently at the LUSC which is an evacuation centre for the Camden Haven. We had about 100 people here overnight and we have just finished providing breakfast. The Club has about a metre of water thru the ground floor



Sources - LUSC, Miss Nellie's fb page, most taken from anon on-line pages, photographer not known



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PARTNERS OF VETERANS ASSOCIATION Port Macquarie HASTINGS GROUP

The Partners of Veterans PMQ Hastings Group meet for Lunch at 12.30pm onwards on the Third Wednesday of each month

Partners of Veterans from all conflicts are always welcome.

For any further information contact
Tineke Dalton on 6586 3461

Royal Australian Navy commissions first Supply-class AOR vessel

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) commissioned its first of two Supply-class auxiliary oiler replenishment (AOR) ships in a ceremony held on 10 April at Fleet Base East in Sydney, New South Wales.

Named HMAS *Supply* (II) (with pennant number A195), the 19,500-tonne vessel had arrived at the naval base on 15 January, only a few days after the Australian Department of Defence (DoD) formally accepted it from Spanish shipbuilder Navantia.

Launched in November 2018, *Supply* completed sea acceptance trials off the Spanish coast in August 2020 before arriving in Australia in October of that year for final fit-out and testing activities.

The 173.9 m-long AOR is one of two of the class ordered as part of a AUD642 million (USD500 million) contract signed in May 2016 under Australia's Project Sea 1654 Phase 3 Maritime Operational Support Capability programme.

Second-of-class *Stalwart* (III) (with pennant number A304) was launched on 30 August 2019 and is expected to join the RAN later this year.

"The AORs will enhance fleet capability by extending the time a task group can spend at sea and the distance travelled," said the DoD in a statement, with Defence Minister Peter Dutton adding, "*Supply* will help sustain our lethal naval capability and will play a critical role in enabling our joint force to maintain the security, sovereignty, and prosperity of Australia and our regional partners."

The new vessels, which are based on the Spanish Navy's Cantabria-class AORs, are to replace the AOR ship HMAS *Success* (II), which was decommissioned on 29 June 2019 after 33 years of service, and supply ship HMAS *Sirius*.



The ship that would serve in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as HMAS *Supply* (I) was built by Harland & Wolf Ltd, Belfast, Northern Ireland. She was ordered as a war operations measure for the RAN as a result of a Government direction in 1951 requiring the armed services to prepare for mobilisation by 1953. Her keel was laid on 5 August 1952 and she was launched on 1 September 1954 by Mrs Foley, wife of Captain JB Foley, RAN, the Liaison Officer for the RAN in the United Kingdom. A bottle of Australian wine was used to christen the vessel *Tide Austral*. The subsequent easing of international tensions rendered her employment as a unit of the RAN unnecessary at the time of her completion in March 1955 and she was subsequently leased to the British Admiralty which operated her as a Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) between 1955 and 1962. (right)



Sources - HMAS *Supply* II - janes.com/defencenews by Gabriel Dominguez
And HMAS *Supply* I - Navy News

Vietnam Veterans show their BBQ skills to Disaster Relief Australia team members, wave 1 OP Elliot



Above left - Barry Lynch L supervises while David Barnes R get the meats ready; Above right - Bill Starrenburg cooks up a feast , Below left and right- David L and Bill R ready the food for the hungry workers and bottom shows Greg Walsh talking to the DRA volunteers.



Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) consists of mainly military veterans, first responders and like minded people, all volunteers who travel to disasters and “get shit done safely” for those affected by fire, flood or other disaster. Their members come from all over Australia in waves (of about 8 days to each wave) of approx 20-25 members who take on a variety of work to help with recovery. In recognition of their work, Veterans Support Centre treated them to a BBQ one evening at North Haven Surf Club (permission kindly given for DRA to use the club) and to give them a social break and chance to meet some local veterans. A great evening all round.



Top left - Greg Walsh (VSC) talking to DRA members Aaron and David; Top right - DRA members talking about their day;
 Above left - start to head upstairs to share the meal Kim (DRA), Bill Wagner President and Peter Dorman (VSC), front - David (DRA) and Greg Walsh (VSC); Above right - the food looks great, a good meal after hard work of the day;
 Below left - everyone helping themselves and Below right - the balcony overlooking the beach, sound of the sea and good company



Photos supplied by DRA who are helping with flood relief to so many homes and properties within the mid north coast area and will continue their work for several weeks yet

More families of servicemen involved in top-secret WWII

Australian mustard gas trials and storage speak out

Rhonda McGovern remembers the horror she felt the day her father described being sprayed with mustard gas during secret World War II chemical weapons trials in Australia.

In an interview recorded about 15 years ago, Bryce Daniel told his daughter he was serving as a Leading Aircraftman (LAC) in the RAAF when he was first told to take part in a gas trial.

"He said basically they lined them all up and they gave what they called a 'gas demonstration' and they went along and just sprayed everybody with mustard gas and phosgene ... he said some dropped to the ground," Ms McGovern said.

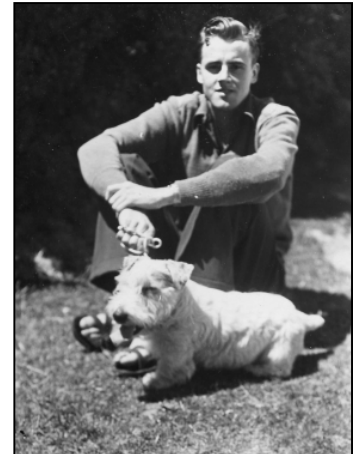
"I was rather horrified, of course, to think my father had to go through this, as well as everyone else who was involved as well ... it was pretty horrific."



Bryce Daniel was a Leading Aircraftman in the RAAF and was involved in mustard gas trials. (Supplied: Rhonda McGovern)



Chris Miller said his dad, Lt Ross Miller, described being told to "run through a tent filled with mustard gas" during WWII. (Supplied: Chris Miller)



Bryce Daniel at 17 years old. (Supplied: Rhonda McGovern)

Ms McGovern said her father later lived on the New South Wales Mid North Coast and passed away in 2012, but she kept a transcript of the interview she recorded with him, in which he described in detail what happened during the trial.

"I first had a gas demonstration at Richmond in NSW," Mr Daniel told his daughter.

"I remember the day, it was overcast and drizzly, and the instructors ... were grizzly about the weather being no good for their demonstrations.

"We were formed into a long, straight line, shoulder to shoulder, and the fellow with a pack on his back, cylinder rather, and a hose, and a fine spray through a nozzle, started at one end of the line and of course we were told that we just had to breathe normally.

"Anyway, he came along the line ... took his time about it, at a slow, slow march with the gas spraying from the cylinder on his back.

"I suppose that in the time he took to go past myself and the other [person] adjacent to me, that would be something like a minute, you just had no chance of not breathing ... he never came back again, thank God."

Later in the interview, Mr Daniel described to his daughter how the gases affected him.

"I was one of those in the line and there were many of us who just had to stoop, and cough, and spit ... just how long I was bending over, stooping, coughing and taking gulps of fresh air I just can't remember," he told his daughter.

"Well, everybody was ... coughing, but some of them just sort of collapsed on the ground in the heat, with legs kicking and arms flaying ... quite a few of us just collapsed and went to hospital."

Ms McGovern, who lives in Kurrajong near Sydney, shared her father's story after reading a recent ABC article about an **old rock engraving at Glenbrook** which threw the spotlight on Australia's top-secret World War II mustard gas programme. .

Researcher Janine Roberts, who investigated the story behind the rock engraving, left by LAC Ross Ashley Bryan, said Ms McGovern was one of many to reach out after reading the story.

"I was pretty overwhelmed by the number of people who contacted me by email," Ms Roberts said.

"A lot of them were from north Queensland where [chemical weapons] trials were occurring in World War II."

More families of servicemen involved in top-secret WWII Australian mustard gas trials and storage speak out contd



RAAF chemical warfare armourers at Innisfail, in 1944 as part of the chemical warfare research facility. Ross Ashley Bryan is standing on the steps behind the man sitting down. (Supplied: Geoff Plunkett)

Ms Roberts said 14 bulk storage facilities, including one at Glenbrook in NSW, were used to secretly store poisonous phosgene and mustard gas in Australia during World War II.

"Mustard gas had been used in WWI with devastating effects and, as a result, many countries, including Australia, became signatories to the Geneva Protocol 1925 prohibiting the use of chemical warfare," she said.

"Japan however was not a signatory and had already used mustard gas against the Chinese.

"After the fall of Singapore in February 1942 the threat of Japanese invasion into Australia became very real, so Australia imported 1 million chemical weapons from the UK and US to use against the enemy if necessary."

The story behind the - **old rock engraving at Glenbrook**

In 1943, a young man carved his name, the date, and his place of birth, into a rock outside the old Glenbrook Railway Tunnel, at the eastern side of the Blue Mountains.

Almost 80 years later, that small act has highlighted his remarkable involvement in the top-secret Australian storage of deadly mustard gas during World War II — despite a ban on its use after World War I.

The path to the discovery started last year after the Glenbrook District Historical Society sent a photo of the engraving to the Manning Wallamba Family History Society on the NSW Mid-North Coast.



This engraved rock is at the entrance to the old Glenbrook Railway Tunnel with the inscription, 8/43, LAC R A Bryan, Taree, NSW. (Supplied: Neil McGlashan)

It sparked the interest of local researcher Janine Roberts.

Ms Roberts started investigating who "R A Bryan" was and why he had engraved his name at that location.

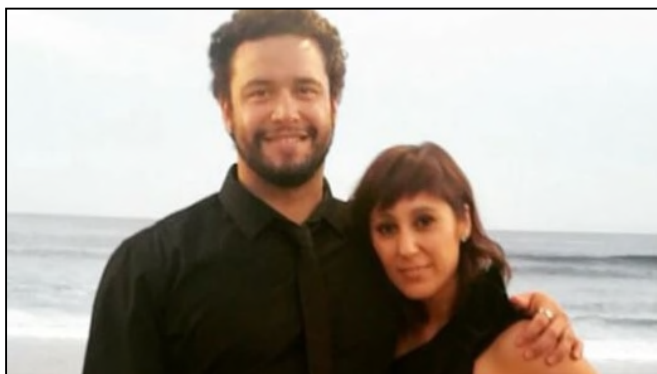
"It's these tiny little clues that give hints to what happened in the past," she said.

"So, all we had to go on was this photograph, and knowing the date, I started to look into something to do with World War II."

She applied to the National Archives of Australia for the service record of R A Bryan.

"It confirmed to me he was in the RAAF, but the story that unfolded under that, I was just fascinated and shocked by," Ms Roberts said.

Royal commission into veteran suicides welcomed by families and colleagues



The late Jesse Bird with Connie Boglis, who says she has "mixed emotions" following the announcement of the royal commission.



Jesse Bird suffered from multiple mental health issues after he returned to civilian life.

The partner of an army veteran who took his own life in 2017 says she has mixed feelings about the announcement of the royal commission into veteran suicides.

Connie Boglis met Jesse Bird in 2014 and was in a relationship with the former 1RAR Infantry Battalion private for two years.

Mr Bird served in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2010, where he was shot at in fights with insurgents and was at constant risk from roadside bombs, one of which killed a close friend.

Since his death, Ms Boglis has been advocating for change, but she said Prime Minister Scott Morrison's announcement of the royal commission yesterday stirred up "mixed emotions" for her.

"There is a sense of relief that we can now focus on the next steps and building those terms of reference," she said.

"There is sadness for all the souls that have been lost over the years, and in the same breath there is hope that after us these voices can be heard and the veterans and families struggling into the future can actually have their stories shared, heard and acknowledged."

Mr Bird struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder (PRSD) and suffered from night terrors, anxiety, alcohol abuse and depression after he left the army.

He took his own life weeks after he was told by the Department of Veterans' Affairs that his permanent impairment claim had been denied.

Ms Boglis was "glad" a royal commission had been called, but said it needed to be done properly if it was to be effective.

"I think everyone is waiting with bated breath to see these terms of reference and to have the opportunity to also add to them," she said.

"If this has come out of families' advocacy and the need to acknowledge grieving families, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, and have their voices heard, well — it needs to start with them being involved in the terms of reference.

"It should just be an open document ... an open-door process — not closed meeting, as have occurred over the past few years."

Veteran deaths 'double in comparison'

Central Victoria's Heywood RSL has been lobbying on the issue and had been planning to hold a march this week urging the government to launch a royal commission.

President Alicia Rentsch, who was a medic in the Navy for four years, said the announcement was a win for veterans.

"We are at a crisis point," she said.

"Looking at post-service statistics of veterans, they were double in comparison to their civilian counterparts in terms of committing suicide in the community. "We really wanted to help prevent this from happening in the future and look at the reasons why these suicides are occurring."



Navy officer David Finney took his own life two years ago, prompting Ms Rentsch to advocate for the welfare of veterans.(ABC News: *Simon Royal*)



Darren Chester says more could have been done, in the past, to help veterans with their mental health and the transition into civilian life.

Ms Rentsch served with Petty Officer David Finney, who took his life in 2019..

She said that event prompted her to push for more to be done on the issue.

"I served with David back in my career and when I heard the news that he had passed, I was greatly saddened by it," she said.

"There are many reasons why veterans commit suicide.

"There is PTSD, depression and anxiety that are related directly to the service, as well as transitioning into civilian life, which can really be quite difficult."

'Any death needs to be investigated'

The Wodonga-based chairman of the Hume Veterans Information Centre, Wayne Taylor, welcomed Mr Morrison's announcement.

"Anything that can support Veterans and find a clear way forward in supporting them is a good thing," Mr Taylor said.

"It is also going to provide some sort of comfort to the families as well, which I think is really important."

He said he hoped the commission would build on the work of the 2017-18 Veteran Centric Reform model.

"There are a number of problems that do need to be addressed and that's the lack of psychiatrists and bed spaces that veterans can access," Mr Taylor said.

"I know in this region, here at the centre, we see a lot of people that are suffering from mental health.

"We have a lot of problems getting them in to see the treating psychiatrist, because there are just not the beds available or the psychiatrists to treat them."

Mr Taylor said he did not believe there had been a disproportionate emphasis on combat deaths rather than those that happened at home.

"Any death needs to be investigated and I hope the terms of reference will include both those who have served overseas and those who haven't deployed.

"There are deaths that are occurring, suicides that are occurring in veterans that haven't served overseas as well."

'Their loss has been tragic'

Veterans' Affairs Minister Darren Chester denied the government had been pressured into setting up the royal commission.

He said it had proposed appointing a national commissioner to investigate the issue who would have had the powers of a royal commissioner.

"We were trying to put forward a policy of an enduring nature that would be better than a royal commission, but it really became apparent last year we weren't going to get that legislation through the Senate," Mr Chester said.

"It also became apparent to me as minister that there are some in the veterans' community who believe that they can't really heal or move forward until there's a royal commission, and I understand that and I understand their loss has been tragic."

He said his job now was to unite the community on terms of reference.

Mr Chester said the transition out of the military could be difficult for those who suffer physical injury, mental health issues or PTSD as a result of their service.

"In the past I don't think we've done that well," he said.

"I'd have to say that has been a fair criticism from the veterans' community over a long period of time now."

By Ashlee Aldridge, Jarrod Whittaker and Prue Bentley for ABC Goulburn Murray

Royal commission into veteran suicides welcomed by support organisations

At least 500 Australian military veterans have died by suicide since the start of the Afghanistan war in 2001, but a recent spike in deaths has shocked the veteran community.

A recent spate of suicides among serving and ex-serving ADF personnel has veterans organisations shocked and fearful of ongoing mental health issues. Processing time delays at Department of Veteran Affairs and war crime allegations have been key stressors.

There were at least 10 suicides in the veteran community in October and November, as well as two in August. Four of those happened in Townsville, home to Australia's largest military base.

It has led Tasmanian senator and veterans advocate Jacqui Lambie to say that veteran suicides should be treated as "one of Australia's most pressing problems".

Veterans organisations are struggling to understand why there has been a spike, and whether it's going to get worse. "We're all very very concerned," said Townsville-based veterans advocate Chris Mills. "It's an epidemic. We don't know why and we don't know what to do about it."

A Defence spokesperson told the ABC that three full-time serving members "are suspected to have died by suicide" since August this year.

But that figure does not include ex-service members.

"There is often no single cause or event that leads someone to take their own life," the Defence spokesperson said. "Defence is committed to ensuring serving and ex-serving ADF members have access to the right support, at the right time, especially those who are vulnerable or at risk."

War crime allegations an added stressor

This year has thrown up two significant challenges to the wellbeing of the veteran community.

The first is a blowout in processing times for Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) claims because of COVID-19. The second is the impact of the Brereton report into alleged war crimes committed by troops in Afghanistan.

Chris Mills helps run Townsville's Veterans Support Centre, a small group with about 75 serving and ex-serving members on the books. Veterans' advocate Chris Mills says there are 75 clients on the books at Townsville's Veterans Support Centre, but demand is growing. "We don't know what the effect of the Brereton report is going to have on younger veterans," Mr Mills said. "Honestly, we're scared. "Every organisation I know is ramped up with the consciousness that this could tip some Afghanistan veterans over the edge. "What we really get pissed off with is the removal of citations and things like that for people who are already dead."

There have been at least 500 veteran suicides in Australia since the start of the Afghanistan war — a number that dwarfs the number of lives lost on the battlefield, at 41.

Lieutenant General John Caligari (retired) heads up a veterans' community hub called The Oasis in Townsville, the city where he also once served as commander of the 3rd Combat Brigade.

The Oasis is designed to act as a starting point for veterans to connect with the specific services they need, which often include medical and mental health treatment, financial, housing and employment services.

General Caligari agrees the Brereton report is affecting how veterans' groups are operating.

"They're all concerned and they're all taking much more of an interest in their people, it's stepped up," he said. "There's a lot more chatter going on. There's annoyance at the way the whole thing's been handled, in particular the fact that the Brereton report made a point of exonerating senior leaders and the issue over the honours and awards."

But General Caligari said it was difficult to say what's caused the spike in suicides in recent weeks. "To be honest, I don't know," he said. It makes [veterans] very worried about their mates, it makes them realise they do need to check on each other. I know of the personal circumstances of three of these [recent suicides] and I know they had very complex personal circumstances which are not [directly] attributed to their military service. I've seen people who I would've said are the toughest people on earth and I've seen them, within a month, go downhill."

A popular social media group run for and by veterans and serving ADF members, The Pineapple Express, has been cataloguing the suicide deaths in recent weeks and sharing tribute posts with the permission of affected families.

The group is pressing its members to keep in contact with friends who may have become socially distant.

"It's great to see that the community is clearly becoming more aware and passionate about mental health and suicide; it demonstrates the start of a cultural overhaul," the group posted.

"Whether you are serving or ex-serving, know that we are a community that helps each other out."

But veterans' groups are concerned that they are filling that void while the Department of Defence should be taking more action to stem suicides in the ranks.

Source - ABC North Qld, article & photos by Siobhan Heanue

It's not just about 'war wounds'

The causes of mental health problems among veterans are complex, and so are the solutions.

"It starts off with: what's the definition of a veteran?" General Caligari said. "Even within the veteran community, they don't agree on what a veteran is."

Some soldiers and civilians believe only those who have seen combat qualify as a veteran.

But the DVA defines a veteran as anyone who has served a day or more in the ADF, regardless of whether they ever deployed overseas.

"Which leads to the next misconception — that veterans' mental health has got anything to do with combat operations," said General Caligari.

The idea that post-traumatic stress is caused by combat alone doesn't tell the whole story.

One of the recent suicides in Townsville was of Private Braiden Russell, a serving soldier in his early twenties who joined the Army in 2018 and who friends described as "everyone's mate".

"Actually, it's been demonstrated that there's a higher suicide rate among those who've not served on combat operations than those who have," General Caligari said. "The real issue is the transition out of a very structured, orderly life into what I describe as the chaos of civilian street."

The suicide rate in 18-24 year-old men who have been medically discharged from the military in Australia is four times the national average for the same age group in the general public.

"These kids have left school, at 21 or 22 we've broken them, then we've kicked them out," he said. "You've just taken all their Christmases away from them. We spend a lot of time training them to join the Army and we don't teach them much about how to join civilian street. Some of them have never been there; they've left mum and dad at 18 and they didn't know what living on their own in society was like."

DVA delays worsen during pandemic, frustrating veterans

At Townsville's Veterans Support Centre, Chris Mills spends a lot of time helping veterans gain access to compensation or entitlements from the DVA. He said 2020 has seen a huge blowout in the amount of time those claims are taking. "Their time delays now are unbelievable; they were pretty bad at the start of the year before COVID began and now they're ridiculously unbelievable," Mr Mills said. "And delays upset the veterans, really upset them, when they think nothing's happening, no-one cares."

There has been a direct link drawn between DVA delays and veteran suicides.

Earlier this year, a Victorian coroner recommended DVA be audited over its handling of compensation claims, after former Townsville soldier and Afghanistan veteran Jesse Bird died by suicide just weeks after his impairment claim was rejected.

General Caligari tells the story of one young veteran to illustrate how hard it can be for military personnel to navigate bureaucracy after they discharge.

The woman, who was "as smart as they come", had been sleeping in her car in central Townsville after struggling to find housing and employment.

It was only when another, older veteran walked past the car and saw Army-issue socks hanging out the window to dry that she was eventually connected to services that could help her.

General Caligari said long wait times for DVA compensation could be the last straw for many.

"It's got worse [in 2020], absolutely," he said.

"I don't know what the problem is, but whatever the problem is, they need to fix it."

Too many veterans organisations but not enough help

There's disquiet in parts of the veteran community about the proliferation of groups and charities that have been set up to help serving and ex-serving personnel.

General Caligari says there are more than enough services available to veterans in areas like housing, health and employment, but the difficulty for many veterans is finding them. "In Townsville there's about 26 big ex-services organisations," he said. "But they all know that the diggers don't know how to find them. Defence stopped letting them into the barracks about 20 years ago because there were too many." He said the Oasis acts as a single front door to direct veterans to the dozens of services available that they might not find on their own. General Caligari says many veterans' mental health organisations are compelled by funding criteria to prove that they're reducing suicides, but intervention needs to come a lot earlier than that. Paraphrasing philosopher Immanuel Kant, he said it can boil down to three things. "No-one to love, nothing to do and nothing to look forward to," he said. "If you haven't got those three things you're gone, you're on the road out."



Left - Veterans' advocate Chris Mills says there are 75 clients on the books at Townsville's Veterans Support Centre, but demand is growing.

Right - Military veterans who have served in conflict zones are less likely to die by suicide than those who have never deployed on operations



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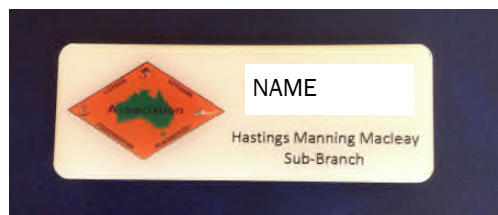
Mid Blue Shirt \$35
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Source and details -

LEFT PAGE

Top—the new Queen’s Colour and current Colour, standards and banner by CPL Craig Barrett

Far left—RAN MH-60R Romeo displays the RAN ensign by Jayson Tufrey

Far left black & white of early RAAF plane

Far left below—C130-J Hercules modern fighter jet

RIGHT PAGE

Above left—Air Force Centenary Commemorative Flypast by LACW Jacqueline Forrester

Above right—RAN MH-60R Romeo displays the RAN ensign by Jayson Tufrey

Left—Australian Army Black Hawk helicopters by LAC Adam Abela

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Australian War Memorial council backs Kerry Stokes to stay chairman in wake of war crimes report



There have been calls for Mr Stokes to stand aside as chairman of the Memorial's council over his support for accused soldiers.
(AAP: Mick Tsikas, file photo)

The Australian War Memorial has backed its chairman Kerry Stokes despite concerns about his ongoing support for special forces soldiers investigated for war crimes.

It decided that existing exhibitions should not be changed in response to the Brereton report on war crimes.

The War Memorial's council also resolved not to address war crimes in its exhibitions until investigations are finalised.

Documents obtained under Freedom of Information reveal the council met a week after the release of Major General Paul Brereton's report into war crimes, to discuss the War Memorial's response to the report.

Released in a redacted form in November, the Brereton Report detailed allegations of 39 murders in Afghanistan and recommended 19 current and serving special forces soldiers be prosecuted for war crimes.

During the out-of-session hook-up of the council on November 27, Mr Stokes raised "concerns about the impact of recent media interest regarding his support of war veterans on his role of Chairman, and the potential impact on the Memorial's reputation".

Just days before, the former War Memorial chief historian, Peter Stanley, had called for Mr Stokes to stand down as council chairman.

"Stokes is discredited by his uncritical association with the accused. For a public figure in a position like that, they've got to be at arm's length. Kerry Stokes has clearly showed what side he's on," Mr Stanley told Nine newspapers.

Mr Stokes, the chairman of Seven West Media, has reportedly offered to help members of the SAS accused of war crimes through a special fund he helped set up.

Mr Stokes also employs Victoria Cross recipient and former SAS corporal Ben Roberts-Smith, who is a Channel Seven executive based in Brisbane.

The Australian Financial Review has reported that the Seven boss is underwriting Mr Roberts-Smith's legal costs in a defamation action the SAS veteran is fighting against Nine over a series of reports alleging he was involved in war crimes in Afghanistan.

The Federal Court was told last year, as part of that case, that the Australian Federal Police was treating Mr Roberts-Smith as a suspect in a war crimes investigation. Mr Roberts-Smith strenuously denies the allegations.



Image by orientalreview.org



ANZAC Day at Australian War Memorial

Image by flickr.com



The War Memorial's council decided it should not make changes to existing exhibitions in response to the Brereton report.

(AAP: Mick Tsikas, file photo)

During the War Memorial council meeting regarding its response to the Brereton report, the council unanimously supported Mr Stokes in his role as chairman.

The minutes of the meeting stated that "anyone who did not support veterans should not be on Council in the first place".

"Council members supported the Chairman to continue in his role," the minutes read.

The meeting also discussed acknowledging special forces war crimes in its exhibits in the Memorial.

"Council agreed that the existing exhibitions should not be altered but future proposed exhibitions would be informed by the outcomes of the investigations as a result of the report," the minutes stated.

"The Director advised that no changes had been made to the Afghanistan gallery in response to the report. Due process must be followed and 'strategic patience' would be central to the Memorial's response. It would, as ever, hasten slowly."

Last year, in response to the Brereton Report, War Memorial director Matt Anderson said the institution's curators and historians would be given free rein to address war crimes in exhibits, describing the memorial as "a place of truth".

"People will come to the memorial and ... because of the significance of the report and arguably because of the media attention that's been given to the report, they would expect to see it acknowledged and we will seek to do that," Mr Anderson told Nine newspapers.

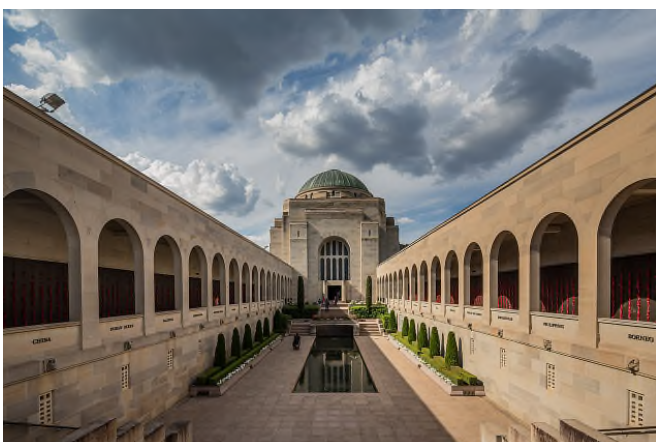


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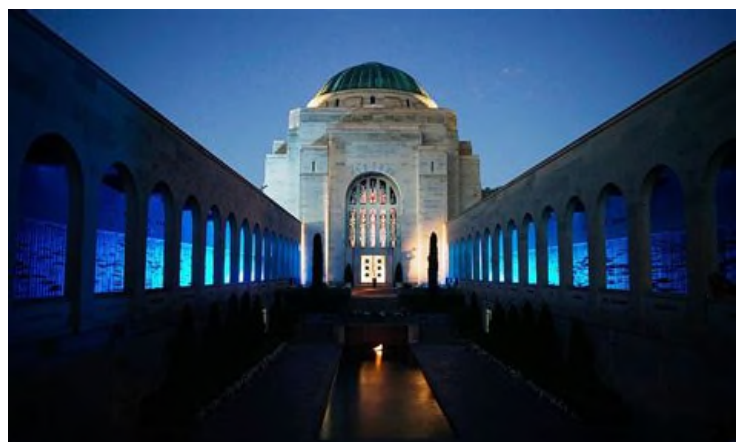


Image The new WW2 gallery at the AWM
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Comedy in the trenches

Humour was a safety valve for trench-bound soldiers during the First World War and the language of the enemy was prime fodder, journals reveal. Australian soldiers, turned amateur scribes, found relief from the relentlessness of the First World War by using the language of the German enemy to entertain each other in journals written while stuck in the trenches.

From 1915-1918, trench journals were penned and distributed, often by makeshift means in the trenches themselves, as military operations stagnated into fronts. Their aim was to entertain soldiers with words and images, often depicting the enemy.

Véronique Duché, A.R. Chisholm Professor of French at the University of Melbourne, has analysed how the language of the enemy was used in humoristic trench journals. “In the First World War, young Australians volunteered to join the Australian Imperial Force and for many of them it was their first encounter with foreign countries and languages,” she says. These soldiers had to learn not just the language of the Allies but also that of the enemy.”

A new vernacular

Twisting words in the German vernacular to create *slanguage* helped soldiers regain a sense of community, but it wasn't only the Aussie diggers who played with words – French soldiers did the same thing. “In both Australian and French trench journals, dark stories of war co-existed with cartoons, jokes and puns,” says Professor Duché, who is based in the School of Languages and Linguistics in the Faculty of Arts. “Humour in trench journals was used as a safety valve, an outlet for these soldiers stuck in the trenches and scared.

‘Aussie’ was published in France in 1918 - 1919 on a small printing press. Initially the print run was only 10,000 copies, but soon it reached 60,000 and later 100,000. “It provided relief and distance, particularly from the enemy. Naming ‘him’ and portraying ‘him’ as ridiculous are ways of fighting and mastering the enemy. Mocking the enemy’s language goes together with celebrating the mocker’s own national language, and this was particularly the case in French trench journals.”

These journals include *Aussie* magazine (1918-1919), *Bochophage* and *Rigolboche* (1915-1918). ‘Boche’ referred to German soldiers, and roughly translated *Bochophage* means boche-eater. *Rigolboche* means boche-mocker. The French army published around 500 journals during WW1.

“The Australian troops arrived on the Western Front in 1916, two years after the French had begun fighting there, but they nevertheless embraced this means of expression,” says Professor Duché. “There certainly was some cross-pollination of ideas among all soldiers, and many units wished to publish their own humouristic journal.”

Slang to emerge from the journals include the term ‘Fritz’, which evolved from the common German name Friedrich and was often used to name the Germans as an individual. Australians would sometimes call Germany ‘Fritzland’ and a German, ‘Fritzie’. Soldiers also used the word ‘Hun’ for Germans, originally a label for the barbarian invaders from Central Asia who helped bring down the Western Roman Empire. “‘Hun’ was used frequently in propaganda and linked to negative images of Germans, while Fritz was often used in a fairly neutral way,” explains Professor Duché.

French words were also used by the Australians: boche (most common used by the French with a strong pejorative tone), and Alleyman – a phonetically rendering of ‘Allemand, a French term for ‘German’.



Different relationships with the 'enemy'

Words portraying Germans may be similar in French and Australian journals, but the context was different. There was a long French history with the Germans, who had invaded France twice in 19th century, causing loss and trauma.

But multicultural Australia had a strong German component, with Germans occupying the largest non-British group in Victoria in 1861, at 10,000.

Australian journals adopted a less aggressive tone, and cartoons were good-natured; "Germans were not the incendiary and murderer who commits all sorts of atrocities," says Professor Duché.

Nonetheless, French and Australian trench journals had many common strands: realistic narratives of the trenches, humour, imagination and creativity, says Professor Duché.

Key words and phrases of German propaganda were mocked in the French journals, as well as the accent. Examples include:

- "Andt now I must avay be getting"
- "You wish dat I sing God save ter King"
- "You do nod work, you shall nod eat!"
- "You have killed von man and a piece of der bomb went through my coat"
- "Ach, mine friendts. You can never sometimes tell vot you least expect der most—aint it?"

Slang used in trench journals did not really influence language after war, aside from the term "Jerry", which also popped up during the Second World War.

Trench talk, for now, remains archived for use as a valuable insight into the mindset of troops as they fought on the frontline.

"These trench publications provide an unequalled insight into everyday life and death during the Great War and reveal the mood of the time," says Professor Duché. "There's a fine line between balancing hate, respect, reality and propaganda.

"In describing the enemy, the authors may end up revealing more about themselves. To talk about the other is also to talk about oneself."

And so it continues—**laughter is the best medicine**



Source—The article was first published on Pursuit, by Professor Veronique Duche, University of Melbourne. This article by Linda McSweeney, University of Melbourne
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