



# SITREP

Air Force Association NSW News and Views

## Victorian Governor awards WWII RAAF Veteran and POW

*from Dr Richard Gates, Ballina Branch*

**W**orld War II RAAF Veteran W/O John (Jack) Bell, who turns 100 in December, received a “Senior Achiever Award” from the State Governor of Victoria in a special ceremony at Government House on the 10th of October. Jack’s award recognised his continuing contribution to the welfare of POWs and their families, the education of children about WWII, and fundraising activities.

While on a low-level supply mission in North Africa in WWII with the RAF’s 216 SQN, Jack’s plane was shot down by a German tank. Although badly wounded, he survived the crash only to spend over three years in German Stalag Luft 3 as a POW. Jack said he was treated well in Rommel’s field hospital in North Africa by a Harley Street specialist, who had not been allowed to return to England after visiting family in Germany. He secretly gave Jack a syringe and morphine to get him through the immediate post op period, without which Jack said he wouldn’t have survived while being transported to Italy then Germany. Jack was released by the Russians in April 1945.

Jack trained at No.1 Bombing and Gunnery School at Evans Head in No.2 Course in 1940. He recalls that at the time there were 18 Fairey Battles lined up on the apron for training, but only three were serviceable at the time. These were ‘hand-me-downs’ from the Brits who sent a couple of hundred of these outdated aircraft to Australia to support the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS). Evans Head was the first of these EATS Stations to be established in Australia as No. 1 Bombing and Gunnery School. Of the 5,000 who served and trained at Evans Head more than 1,000 lost their lives during the war.

Jack is Patron of the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome Committee, a community-based

organisation which prepared the successful application for State Heritage Listing of this important WWII facility in 2002. The aerodrome is currently under consideration for Commonwealth Heritage Listing, concurrent with an existing listing of the WW II bombing ranges to the north of the station, now Broadwater National Park. The southern ranges are still in use by the RAAF for F/A-18 training. Dr Richard Gates of the Ballina Branch of RAAFA and president of the Aerodrome Committee attended Jack’s ceremony in Melbourne at the invitation of the Governor; saying ‘It was a very moving occasion and an honour to attend this special event which recognised Jack’s sacrifice and commitment to the Australian community. The award is well deserved; it couldn’t go to a more remarkable and dedicated individual.’



**Jack Bell with the Victorian Governor, The Hon Linda Dessau AC, his daughter Sandra and granddaughter Penny, and wife Dolores**

## Any Mental Health Condition Now Covered Under NLHC

**A**s announced in the 2017–18 Budget, current and former members of the ADF are now able to access treatment for any mental health condition through DVA’s Non-Liability Health Care (NLHC) treatment arrangements.

There is no need to prove the condition is related to their service. NLHC does not depend on lodging a compensation claim and is open to all current and former members of the ADF who have rendered at least one day of permanent or continuous full-time service. A formal diagnosis is not required to seek treatment under NLHC. NLHC treatment is accessed through a DVA White Card and may include services provided by a general practitioner, medical specialist, psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist, psychiatrist, hospital services or specialist PTSD program. You can also access counselling services through the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS). If you have already been issued a white card under NLHC for the treatment of a mental health condition, you can use the same card to access NLHC for any other mental health condition without re-contacting DVA. DVA encourages anyone with a mental health condition who was denied treatment because their mental health condition was not covered before 1 July 2017, to reapply for cover. To make an application, email [NLHC@dva.gov.au](mailto:NLHC@dva.gov.au) or call DVA on 1800 555 254. If preferred, a claim form is also available at [www.dva.gov.au/nlhc](http://www.dva.gov.au/nlhc).

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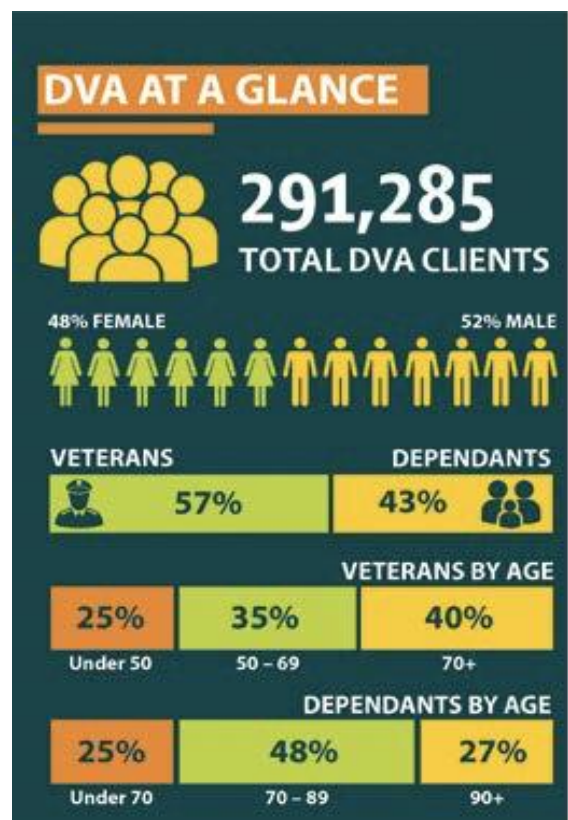
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## Who are Australia's veterans?

What does the average DVA client look like? Or the typical veteran, for that matter? If you're thinking of a former serviceman aged in his 60s, 70s or older, you're only seeing part of the picture. As it turns out, one quarter of DVA's veteran clients are aged under 50, with a further 35% aged between 50 and 69. Some 23,000 of the Department's clients are under the age of 40. Sure, more than 201,000 are 65 or older and one in seven Australians over the age of 85 has a DVA Health Card, but almost half of DVA's clients (48%) are women and 2500 of them are dependant children. Speaking of dependants, 25% of DVA clients who are dependants are under 70, 48% are aged 70–89 and 27% are aged 90+.

Another factor to consider is that DVA is undergoing a significant period of change with overall client numbers falling. Today, DVA has contact with one in three veterans who have served since Vietnam, and one in five veterans who have served since 1999. This change gives DVA the opportunity to put veterans at the centre of everything it does. Departmental transformation will empower veterans and their families by making it simpler to access the services they require. Veterans will enjoy improved health and wellbeing outcomes under a system that focuses on veteran wellbeing – moving away from a claims-based rehabilitation and healthcare system.

(Vet Affairs Vol. 34 No. 3 SPRING 2017)



## Five Tips For a Good Nights Sleep

- Undertake a social media detox (even for just 30 minutes) before you go to bed.
- Avoid stimulants (caffeine/nicotine) from midday and depressants (alcohol) closer to bed time (about five hours).
- Try to get some fresh air, sunshine and exercise each day.
- Make sure that your bedroom environment is clean, cool and relaxing.



- Establish a regular relaxing bedtime routine to help your body and mind recognise that it is time to rest.

*(Vet Affairs Vol. 34 No. 3 SPRING 2017)*

## **‘By The Left’**

*An initiative encouraging female veteran participation  
from Kellie Dadds WVNA Project Officer*

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of an upcoming initiative for female veterans, and to seek your support in promulgating information about the 2018 event amongst your relevant network and/or your members. In 2016, the inaugural Female Veterans and Families Forum (FVFF) was hosted by DVA. If you would like further information about the FVFF, a copy of the report is available on the DVA webpage. One of the major issues raised during the forum was recognition of female veterans. There are many female veterans who no longer wear their medals or march on ANZAC Day, as they feel that they are constantly being asked to prove their Service. Of those who attended the FVFF, the majority indicated that at some point they had either been questioned about whose medals they were wearing, or were asked to move their medals to the right-hand side. This issue may come as a surprise to you, but it is one that is felt very deeply within the female veteran community. They described their experiences as disheartening and undermining the value of their Service. This feedback prompted Minister Tehan to call on all Australians to recognise the Service and sacrifice of female veterans. Further information is available in a Ministerial Media Release of 06 December 2016 – Supporting female veterans and families. In 2017, growing the respect for female veterans in the Australian community was one of four major topics discussed during the FVFF. Minister Tehan again committed to supporting the recognition of female veterans as stated in his Ministerial Media Release of 10 October 2017 – Forum focused on issues confronting female veterans. It must be emphasised that female veterans do not want to be viewed differently; they want to be viewed the same – as veterans. But to achieve this, they must first be seen. Feedback from the male veteran community indicates that they too want both male and females to be viewed simply as

one under the veteran banner. The first initiative is a campaign called ‘By the Left’ which is aimed at encouraging female veterans to march as a group on ANZAC Day 2018. The title is a play on words which highlights the significance of veterans wearing their medal(s) on the left side, while incorporating a military marching word of command. In 2018, regardless of Service, Corps, Association, full-time or part-time Service or deployment location, female veterans will be invited to march as one group in major centres on ANZAC Day. Female veterans may also choose to march, as they have previously, with the group they deem appropriate on ANZAC Day, and they will be encouraged to do so. While ‘By the Left’ is a Women Veterans Network Australia initiative (WVNA), this activity will not be conducted under the WVNA banner. All groups will be invited to parade their banners, or to elect not to march under any banners. Female veterans acknowledge the very important role that ESOs and Associations have within the veteran community, but the presence of female veterans is often diluted amongst the number of groups who march on ANZAC Day. We are mindful that some may view this activity as female veterans requesting greater recognition than male veterans. For this reason, we are requesting your assistance in preventing possible division amongst male and female veterans by accurately informing your members of ‘By the Left’ purpose. Specifically, we call on your support to help inform female veterans of ‘By the Left’. Your assistance in sharing information via your social media resources, newsletters, meetings and notice boards would be greatly appreciated. Your assistance in helping our female veterans to feel part of the veteran community, and to be respected by the Australian community is important. We hope that ‘By the Left’ will encourage much larger numbers of female veterans to march next ANZAC Day, and for them to seek further involvement by becoming a member of and/or seeking further involvement in the ESO community. Please do not hesitate to contact ‘By the Left’ coordinator Kellie Dadds on mobile 0488 224 211, or WVNA President Nicky Rothwell on mobile 0418 782 092 should you require additional information.



## State President's Report

November 2017

Our National President, AVM Brent Espeland AM, sadly passed away on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017 after suffering from melanoma. A Service Funeral was held at St Peter's Anglican Cathedral in North Adelaide and I represented RAAFA NSW. Other State Presidents, except Tasmania, along with Peter Colliver, National Secretary, Lance Halverson, Peter McDermott and John Murray, (CEO RAAFA WA), CAF AIRMSHL Leo Davies AO, CSC, the Governor of SA, and many dignitaries also attended. The RAAF Honour Guard were magnificent and provided a fitting farewell. Our sincere condolences are with Judy and family.

Following the service, Peter Colliver, Carl Schiller and I continued on to WA on a fact finding mission as part of the NSW Sustainable Funding research and also for the Strategic Planning Group for National. The WA complex is an amazing operation, extremely well run with great support staff and is rightly recognised as a leader having expanded to become one of the largest and most respected retirement living and aged care providers in that state. It's hard to imagine that the business started as a Clubhouse for ex RAAFies in a swampland and has now developed into a world-class retirement and aged care facility in four different locations within WA and it is continuing to grow.

During the visit we discussed expansion to other States, namely NSW and VIC, and this is an issue that will be developed over the coming year by your committee. Uppermost in this, is the incorporation of critical response services for displaced families/homeless persons and suicide care units for ADF veterans.

The Aviation Museum is one of the best I have seen with some very original aircraft and equipment. Visit their website, [www.raafawa.org.au](http://www.raafawa.org.au) to be amazed.

Final details of agreed outcomes of the National Strategic Planning workshop in Melbourne over the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> August have yet to be collated for further discussion and will be released once they are available. The National CLG will be registered wef 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018.

The Battle of Britain Ceremony at the Sydney Cenotaph was organised and run by Carol Moreau and Geoff Usher and they did their Association proud. Geoff had it running like clockwork and his MC role had the usual organised 'Usher flair'. Thank you both very much for your great effort. The Governor and Mrs Hurley both attended and spent considerable time meeting and talking to veterans and their families.

From next year, the Bomber Command Ceremony at the Cenotaph will also be run by Division and, also next year, the RAAF will be the principle Service for the year. This will now be an every third year rotation, and I have also received formal notification from the Sydney RSL March Committee that the RAAF will lead the 2021 Sydney March.

Our ongoing expansion of the Pillars for our Business Plan is gaining momentum from our Councillors, being driven very hard by our Secretary and I anticipate a need for considerable constitutional reforms as a result of the Plan and other issues such as electronic voting etc, at the next AGM to be held at Wests, Club, New Lambton, on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2018.

I am so appreciative for the ongoing and proactive support that our Executive and Councillors are providing to bring relevance back to our Association.

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### **RADAR Branch and the G.E.S. Stuchbury Award**

*from Ray O'Donoghue, RADAR Branch Membership Officer (ably assisted by AIRCDRE Terry Delahunty and FSGT Gary Jon Darrigo)*

**A**lthough this award is relatively new for RADAR Branch, having first been awarded in 2012, its significance goes back to the beginnings of RADAR in the RAAF. Just months after the first RAAF RADAR unit was raised, No 44 Radio and Direction Finding Wing was formed in December 1942, initially commanding six RADAR stations, then establishing a further 17 stations. On cessation of hostilities in New Guinea, the Wing was disbanded on 22 August 1944.

With the improvements in RADAR and communications technologies, and the evolutionary reorganisation of the RAAF, from



the late 1980s Air Defence and Air Traffic Control grew in importance finally coming under the command of the reformed No 41 Wing (41WG) and later, the nascent Surveillance and Control Group (SCG). In November 2000, ATC responsibilities were transferred from 41WG to the newly reformed 44WG. Reorganisation progressed rapidly and in 2004 SCG was merged with Maritime Patrol Group to form the extant Surveillance and Response Group (SRG), to which both 41WG and 44WG are subordinate. During that first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, RADAR Air Defence Branch, was renamed to become RADAR Branch. This recognised the evolving nature of RADAR in RAAF, the growing importance of RAAF ATC and the historical connections of 44WG to RADAR in the RAAF. In 2011 the Branch made two important decisions to more fully embrace and engage with 44WG. The first was to produce a new Branch banner to include all known 44WG deployments, while the second was to approve an additional annual award to a member of 44WG, complementing the awards presented to 41WG personnel. While 44WG was initially reluctant, due to its existing involvement with other Associations, unfortunate events changed the dynamics of the proposal. On 12<sup>th</sup> December 2011, WGCDR Grant 'Stuch' Stuchbury, Executive Officer 44WG passed away very suddenly, leaving behind a devastated family and a shocked workplace. Stuch was a veteran of 44WG deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and his operational experience together with his excellent people skills, provided considerable support to his superiors and subordinates alike. When 44WG was initially reformed, Stuch, was a member of the 44WG Tactical Operations (TACOPS) team. In this position, Stuch was instrumental in formalising the evolving battlefield role of ATC into the new Joint Battlefield Airspace Control (JBAC) concept; a role that endures to this day and stands as part of his considerable legacy within 44WG. Air Commodore (AIRCDRE) Terry Delahunty AM, who was the inaugural Officer Commanding 44WG, said of Stuch "he was a conceptual and strategic thinker who could articulate in writing [and] was a very effective Staff Officer". AIRCDRE Delahunty went on to recall that Stuch was also a very

experienced and respected operator and that he had no hesitation in sending him on the first deployment to Baghdad in 2003. As XO44WG, Stuch was instrumental in the successful expansion of 44WG during 2011 and was highly regarded across the RAAF.

Following WGCDR Stuchbury's untimely passing, AIRCDRE Delahunty, who was the then president of the RADAR Branch, held discussions with OC44WG and WGCDR Stuchbury's family. The outcome was to establish an annual award in the memory of an outstanding officer who had contributed so much to the development of 44WG and ATC generally throughout his career. The award, known as the G.E.S. Stuchbury Award, is presented to:

***A No 44 Wing Officer of any category who is of Squadron Leader rank and below who has demonstrated outstanding professional mastery through their dedication and performance.***

The RADAR Branch contributes an individual plaque and a selection of military books to the recipient, while a bequest established by WGCDR Stuchbury's family maintains a perpetual trophy. The award is usually presented in April, around the time of the Branch AGM and ANZAC Day. The Branch is honoured to be associated with 44WG and WGCDR Stuchbury's family in promoting and perpetuating the legacy of professionalism and excellence that has always been a hallmark of the RAAF.



**2017 winner of the G.E.S. Stuchbury Award, FLTLT Mathew Brown, 453SQN East Sale, being congratulated by Mrs Teena Stuchbury and OC 44WG, GPCAPT Patrick Cooper**

## A Report from Behind the Fence

*By SQNLDR Phil Frawley*

Many of you may have driven past RAAF Base Williamtown and seen a hive of construction activity taking place with large cranes working overhead and trucks entering and leaving the base. The reason for this base-wide transformation is preparation for the arrival of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). To that end the old ammunition preparation area over near the tower is now the area where the F-35s and their Squadron's will be accommodated. The reason for the requirement to have completely new facilities for these aircraft is because they contain highly classified material and the support facilities will also be handling very highly classified matter. The United States will not release our aircraft until these new facilities have been fully inspected and deemed secure enough to protect all those secrets. I am led to believe that progressive inspections have already taken place by 'black suits' as construction continues. Getting around the base at the moment is problematic as road diversions change regularly. Some of those old familiar roads, like the perimeter road around to the tower and the FRA have disappeared altogether and new roads and taxiways have sprung up in unexpected places. Additionally, the runway has been extended to the South East by 1,500ft and the North Western end is also being extended to produce a 10,000ft runway. This is not actually for the F-35 as some might think, but rather to allow our new KC-30A Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft to use the base. This will enable the MRTT to land and take on a full Squadron deployment contingent (all the passengers and cargo as well) and depart with the F-35s or F/A-18s and deploy to just about anywhere; a distinct advantage over the way we used to attempt these difficult undertakings.



**RAAF MRTT**

So what about that F-35? There has been a lot of bad press about the aircraft and I would ask that you cast your mind back to the purchase of the F-111, all the bad press that surrounded that purchase and then how the F-111 turned out for Australia. The F-35 is going through a similar gauntlet of reports about its cost and suitability and how it stacks up against other aircraft and possible threat aircraft from Eastern Bloc countries. The question I hear a lot is 'why didn't we get the F-22 Raptor?' Simply, it was not and is not for sale to any foreign power, and in any case it is way too expensive for Australia. The good news is that the F-35 has improved on the capabilities of the F-22 and actually has better battlespace information collation abilities, if not the actual raw performance. Yes that's a 'buzz word', but that is the new direction of aerial warfare these days. The problem with all the bad press is that the people writing these reports don't know the full capability of the aircraft and because of the classified information it contains, they never will. I have flown the simplified demonstrator simulator; it is fantastic and I can only imagine what the real aircraft is capable of!



**F-35 Joint Strike Fighter**

In other news the latest F-18 Operational Conversion Course is entering its final phase with deployment to Townsville to conduct complex strike missions. The really good news is that we will have our first female F-18 pilots amongst the graduates, a huge accomplishment for all concerned. I have flown with both these ladies during their Introductory Fighter Course at 76 SQN and they are very good fighter pilots; I wish them the best of luck with their careers and I am confident they will be F-35 pilots before too long.



On the subject of Introductory Fighter Courses, 76 SQN has graduated the latest IFC of 8 pilots and 3 Weapons Systems Officers (WSOs) or Air Combat Officers (ACOs) as they are now known. These people are now waiting for their operational courses to start next year and are destined for all three F-18 variants including the new Growler electronic warfare version. A very exciting time for these young aviators as the RAAF moves to become the only fully fifth generation air force in the world.

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## Care Parcel Program

The Care Parcel program is scheduled to start in time for the parcels to reach our people serving overseas before Christmas. The response from the past programs has been terrific with much appreciation from recipients sent back to AFA (Vic). The NSW Division is supporting the project with a \$5,000 contribution this time which will see 500 parcels being packed and labelled to individual service men and women.

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## National Presidents Commendation: Bruce Connell



Wing Commander Bruce Connell (ret'd) is long term member of Fighter Squadrons Branch (FSB) of the RAAF Association, having joined in 1980 while still serving. At that time, WWII veterans held all the executive positions in the branch, but identified a need to recruit the 'next generation'. A change of name from Kittyhawk Squadrons Branch to Fighter

Squadrons Branch, together with frequent visits to Williamtown (and occasionally Butterworth), enabled them to attract people like Bruce. Following his resignation from the RAAF as a Wing Commander, Bruce volunteered to join the FSB Committee. He accepted the job of Secretary/Treasurer in 1996, was Vice President from 2003 to 2009, and was President from 2009 to 2015. After standing down from his Presidency in 2015, he has continued on as a committee member for a further 2 years. Bruce is a guy who leads from the front, and during his time as an office bearer, and in particular President, he put many hours into ensuring that the administration of the Branch and the Committee ran smoothly. An excellent organiser, for many years he has been proactive in promoting the social side of Branch activities, and has run a number of very large (400 people) 'fighter' reunions in the Williamtown area. For the past eight years, he has organised the annual Anzac Day dinner in Sydney, attended by 180 people. Bruce recently resigned from the FSB Committee but continues to advise on function organisation.

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## The Sheldon

*from Don Langley*

The vehicle pictured immediately below is not a restoration. It may be better termed a reproduction. I constructed it, albeit with help from some friends, from the ground up, in my garage in Coffs Harbour. It is arguably the only vehicle of this type in existence, apart from the original in the Fairbanks Museum in Alaska.



The story of how it came into being is as follows. The picture below which I downloaded

from the internet, displays the first car built in Alaska.



The driver, who was the builder, is Robert 'Bobby' Sheldon, a young man in his early twenties. His girlfriend at the time became interested in another young man who owned a very fancy horse and carriage, which apparently attracted the girl. In an effort to upstage him, Bobby Sheldon decided to build a motor car. He had never owned a car previously, far less driven one, but he had seen a picture of one and set out to make his own. He had no plans and certainly no source of parts, but he used what was available locally. The wheels were buggy wheels, the engine was a two stroke marine engine, the seating was composed of two bar stools, the lights were miners carbide lamps and the framework was a combination of, as he said, wood and tin. I have no idea where he scrounged the components for the transmission, suffice to say, showing remarkable ingenuity, he did. It worked and he used it as a runabout for some ten years. He went on to set up a car manufacturing company which, some years later, was taken over by the Ford Company. With the cars he manufactured he set up a thriving tourist business and years later, upon being elected to the Alaskan Legislature, became the Minister for Roads and Tourism. That first car is now in Fairbanks Auto Museum and slowly undergoing restoration. A couple of points of further interest. It appears he never gave the car an official name. It was, apparently, simply called Sheldon's car. There is no indication anywhere whether he won back the girl!

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## RAAF Handover of AP-3C Orion A9-753 to HARS

On Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November, representatives from the NSW Air Force Association attended the handover by the RAAF to the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society (HARS) of AP-3C Orion aircraft, A9-753. Arriving courtesy of 34SQN, Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Leo Davies AO CSC, held a special handover function at the HARS facility, Illawarra Regional Airport.



AP-3C Orion A9-753

Air Marshal Davies gave an excellent speech for the handover, followed by an inspection of '753'. Built as 160753 and delivered to the RAAF in May 1978, it was transferred to HARS in December 2016. HARS will now maintain this aircraft to keep alive the RAAF's maritime mission legacy, already well established at HARS, as they operate a flying WWII era PBV Catalina flying boat and a flying SP-2H Neptune. This new, soon to return to flight, AP-3C Orion will complement the legacy airframes and create exciting displays for airshows around Australia into the future.



Transfer of ownership



**AIRMSHL Davies with HARS members**

Whilst the most obvious aircraft in the HARS collection are the ex-Qantas Boeing 747-438 “VH-OJA”, and the only flying Super Constellation in the world, there is a growing and significant representation of RAAF heritage. There is the only flying ex-RAAF Neptune, as well as in a static capacity, the last Neptune to fly in RAAF service; two flying ex-RAAF C-47 aircraft; two of the three flying Caribou left in the world; a flying “Black Cat” Catalina; and a raft of static aircraft including a Canberra, Sabre, Mirage IIIO and F-111C A8-109 the last F-111 to shut its engines down.

## Fighter Squadrons Branch Presentation

On 30th June 2017, RAAFA Fighter Squadrons Branch, represented by James Mackay OAM, presented a commemorative plaque to Forest Row Parish Council England, in remembrance of Pilot Officer John Dallas Crossman. Pilot Officer Crossman, from Newcastle NSW, flying with 46 Squadron RAF, was killed in action on 30th September 1940, during the Battle of Britain.



**Councillor David Lewin, Forest Row Parish Council, acknowledges receipt of the plaque commemorating the life of Pilot Officer John Dallas Crossman**



**James Mackay OAM RAAFA and Anna Pearce, Forest Row joint project co-ordinator (right) with Councillor David Lewin Forest Row Parish Council, Kelly & Helen, daughters of the late Peter Wheeler (left).**

## Battle for Australia and Battle of Britain Commemorations in Ballina

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September this year was the date chosen by the Ballina branch to organise their annual commemoration Sunday service and wreath laying ceremony. This joint commemoration honoured the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle for Australia and the 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. The Ballina branch has organised this service since the Battle for Australia Day was promulgated by Governor General Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC in June of 2008, making this year the 10<sup>th</sup> joint commemoration held in the Far North Coast of New South Wales on a Sunday between these two significant events in Australia’s commemorative calendar.



**Group Captain Guy Burton CSC (L) with Ballina branch Patron Group Captain Dr David Scott**

This years service address was delivered by Group Captain Guy Burton CSC from Headquarters Combat Support Group RAAF



Amberley. The service was very well attended again with people travelling from Coffs Harbour south to South East Queensland north.



Padre Graeme Wheeler from the Coffs harbour branch joined with local Salvation Army identity Jack Ransom to lead the people assembled with service prayers. Jack was a RAAF apprentice and has supported the Ballina branch for many years.

Cadets from 326 (City of Lismore) Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets and Training Ship Lismore Australian Navy Cadets formed the Catafalque parties which change during the service.



**Cadets from 326 (City of Lismore) Squadron  
Australian Air Force Cadets**

During lunch following the service the branch made annual donations to 326 Squadron AAFC, Legacy, Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome Heritage Aviation Association, The Salvation Army and Ballina RSL Life Care residents. Group Captain Guy Burton then presented five cadets with the Ballina Branch scholarship awards for 2017. Cadets from the squadron are chosen by the squadron's Commanding Officer and staff, then recommended to the branch for this award.

The branch scholarship aims to assist cadets financially towards achieving the education required for their future aims in life. Scholarship funding come from the branch fundraising efforts and the branch ladies auxiliary.



**Branch secretary Colleen Wills, GPCAPT Guy Burton, FLTLT Roy Nuttycombe CO 326 Squadron, LCDT Kayla Finningan, CDT Megan Moore, CWOFF Levi Wilmoth, LCDT Zanthie Bailey, GPCAPT David Scott and Dick Wills branch president**

The 2018 service and lunch will be held on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September. Book the date and come to beautiful Ballina by the sea, stay awhile or permanently, all are welcome.

## Mental Health Treatment

*from Mal Jamieson 3 Sqn News September 2017*

**M**uch has been spoken about Veterans' mental health in recent months. If you or your family or friends think that you may have a mental health issue, instead of "self-medicating" on booze or pills, seek some assistance. It really is easy to access the system. Treatment is provided for the following problems: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; Depressive Disorder; Anxiety Disorder; Alcohol Use Disorder; Substance Abuse Disorder. Treatment is provided under the **DVA Non-Liability Health Care Scheme** which basically means you are **not** required to prove that your condition is service- related. All that is needed is for you to have had a period of full-time service. No minimum duration of service is specified. The use of this scheme will not affect further claims for compensation. (If you do however, lodge a claim for compensation, be aware that all accepted disabilities will be reviewed. Speak to a Pensions Officer at your Ex-Services Organisation before proceeding with a claim.) There is no need to lodge a formal application form. The easier way is to email a request for Non-Liability Health Care to: [NLHC@dva.gov.au](mailto:NLHC@dva.gov.au) or phone 1800-011-046. If you are not in the DVA system (e.g. white or gold card) you may be required to show proof of ID, but don't let that deter you. For complete info please see DVA Factsheets HSV99 and HSV109.



## Toilet Humour

*From Michelle and Terry Marr*

During the latter stages of WWII, the RAAF operated a pacific island airstrip which was frequently used as a refuelling stage by transport aircraft travelling to and from the US. Upon the arrival of any aircraft, the most popular spot on the airfield was the latrine block, which in accordance with normal service practice at the time, consisted of wooden seats over deep holes in the ground, surrounded by hessian screens. To relieve their boredom on the weeks following the Japanese surrender, some RAAF ground personnel booby trapped the women's latrine with strategically placed loud speakers connected to a microphone equipped airman hidden behind a nearby palm tree. Favourite victims were American nurses, who, on landing, would make a bee line for the 'ladies'. Their expressions of well-being and relief however, would quickly change to horror when a voice would boom from down below 'Fair go Miss, we're still working down here!!!!' The practice was subsequently stopped to avoid injury after a numbers of nurses tripped during their hasty retreat from the latrine block!

## The Age of Success

At age 4 success is....Not piddling in your pants  
At age 12 success is...Having friends  
At age 17 success is...Having a driver's license  
At age 35 success is...Having money  
At age 50 success is...Having money  
At age 70 success is...Having a driver's license  
At age 75 success is...Having friends  
At age 80 success is...Not piddling in your pants

## Aircrew Behaving Badly

*An Occasional Series*

Don Watson was the pilot of a 20 Squadron Catalina en route from Rathmines, south of Grafton, to Labuan in Borneo. "I noticed when we were approaching Grafton that something special was going on and realised it was the Jacaranda Festival. I thought the least we could do was to join in the merriment. I could see a parade going down the main street where hundreds of Jacaranda trees were in full bloom. I thought what they need is an aerial float in that

procession so I put the nose of the Cat down and did a screaming pass at about fifteen feet over the trees, scattering jacaranda blossoms all over the marchers, and scattering quite a few of the marchers too! At the end of the run I turned the plane and repeated the low level run at nearly tree-top level, the Catalina's great outspread wings almost skimming the jacarandas and its slipstream causing another sea of blossoms to fall and carpet the parade, which stopped while all eyes turned skyward to glimpse the huge (for those days) flying boat. By the time we disappeared to the north we felt that this was one Jacaranda Festival they would never forget". A high ranking officer, who had been the invited Guest of the City, tried to get the offending Catalina pilot identified but without success, and Don's identity remained unknown until 1967.

*Skylarks - The Lighter of life in the RAAF in World War II, edited by Eric Brown, Air Power Studies Centre, 1998*

## Forum Focused on Issues Confronting Female Veterans

*10 October 2017*

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Dan Tehan said the Government was listening to its female veterans and using their feedback to inform significant reform as he attended the second Female Veterans' Policy Forum in Canberra today. Establishing the Female Veterans' Policy Forum was a Coalition election promise to ensure female veterans received the recognition they deserve and to better understand some of the specific challenges they face. Mr Tehan said feedback from the first forum, held last year, was informing how the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) used \$166.6 million in funding to update its ICT systems and improve access to DVA services. "Feedback from the first Female Veterans Forum led the Government to provide \$8.5 million in this year's budget to expand eligibility for the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service to the partners and children of our contemporary veterans, who have had one day of full-time service," Mr Tehan said. "We also listened when our female veterans said the nature of their service was not well understood by the community. "In the lead up to Anzac Day this year, we raised awareness about the important contribution female ADF



personnel had made to our national defence and we will be supporting more initiatives in the future. “It is encouraging to see members of the female veteran community, such as *By the Left*, encouraging female veterans to march in larger numbers on ANZAC Day 2018.” Attendees at the forum participated in sessions including targeting the health needs of female veterans and providing support for domestic violence.

Media enquiries: Minister Tehan’s Office:

Byron Vale, 0428 262 894.

Department of Veterans’ Affairs Media: 02 6289 6466.

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for support and free and confidential counselling. Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 8 8241 4546). VVCS is a service founded by Vietnam veterans.

## Radar Branch Commemorates Battle of Britain

Members of the RADAR Branch attended the 77th commemoration of the Battle of Britain at Civic Park Newcastle on 15th September. The Branch invited SQNLDR Nathaniel Christopher, RAF Exchange officer currently serving at No3 Control and Reporting Unit (3CRU) RAAF Base Williamtown, to lay a wreath at the service.



SQNLDR Nathaniel Christopher, RAF, with the RADAR Branch wreath

SQNLDR Christopher said he was honoured to be asked to lay the wreath on our behalf and found it very moving that a young man from the Newcastle area in which he is now serving, had travelled to England to join the RAF and subsequently died in the Battle of Britain. (*see earlier article on Pilot Officer John Dallas Crossman*). Following the service, SQNLDR Christopher, accompanied by his wife Alli, joined Branch members for an informal lunch overlooking beautiful Newcastle harbour.

## With friends like this, who needs enemies?

*from Len Ralph in ‘Radar Yarns’, edited by Ed Simmonds and Norm Smith, August 1991*

At 306 Radar Station (RS) we were luckier than most stations in that we were close to the airstrip and so there was no supply problem. Our mail was delivered by Wirraway and, needless to say, it was always welcome. One morning as a late comer arrived at the mess for breakfast a lone single-engined aircraft approached at tree height and circled the 'doover' (RADAR antenna). Jack Bryce, a guard just coming off duty, called out, “You beauty! Here’s the old Wirraway. Mail today!!” Len Ralph spotted the red roundels beneath the wings and promptly dashed behind a tree yelling, “Take cover! Jap!” Meanwhile the Jap flew up the valley, wheeled and commenced a diving attack on the doover. Jack Bryce left the mess like a rocket, realised that he could not make the slit trenches, smartly altered course and launched himself into the grease trap near the mess where he landed with an oozy squelch. Fortunately the Ack Ack boys were alert and opened fire causing the Zero to disappear in the direction of Lae. As Jack emerged a dripping greasy mess, to be hosed down by the cook, some wag remarked, “Funny place to have a swim”.

Next day everyone, including the Ack Ack boys across the valley, was on the alert waiting for a return visit by the Zero. Down the valley came the Wirraway with our mail. The very anxious Americans on the Bofors in their gun pit opened fire. One of the RAAF guards ran towards the Americans yelling, “Stop firing you bastards! It’s one of ours!” Now the gunner in question was unable to hear as the tracers were homing in



onto the Wirraway - action had to be taken. The RAAF guard swooped onto a nearby piece of timber and clobbered the gunner over the head. Fortunately the American's steel helmet reduced the blow to a rude shock. The chatter of the machine gun was changed to a verbal exchange indicating some rather strained international relations.

### **'Drama at the Farm' Number 5 Elementary Flying Training School, Narromine 1943**

*from Jessica Addison; an extract from the memoirs of Robert Roxburgh Addison, Lancaster pilot, 460 Squadron, (now 92 years old).*

The Tiger Moth is fully aerobatic. While flying upside down one day my engine stopped and I looked for a smooth paddock to land in, settling for a nice green one. The zig-zag descent was text book until I realized I was too high, so turned 360 degrees near stalling speed to reduce height. This was suicidal in theory but I got away with it and after some side-slipping, I got yards over a rise to the farmhouse where I got the hero treatment and Devonshire tea. I was near strutting with pride when the Chief Flying Instructor arrived by car and tore strips off me for:

- (a) choosing a cultivated field which might have deep ruts;
- (b) leaving the switches on until I was on the ground (fire hazard if landing became a crash);
- (c) failing to shake the aircraft immediately the engine stopped - that would have dislodged the needle valve in the carburettor from its stuck closed position and the engine would have started itself.

I didn't burden him with a description of the hairy approach. He flew it out but I returned by road.



**An aerobatic Tiger Moth**

### **3 Squadron 1948**

*from Stan Curran via Jim Hall*



*Stan Curran was a member of our Queensland Association for many years and passed away on 10 Jul 2010 in Brisbane. He was an Engine Fitter in WWII and discharged as a Squadron Leader ENGO in 1975. I wrote a vale to Stan in the August 2013 issue of the newsletter and promised to publish some of Stan's writings which were featured in 'The Whisperer', the newsletter of the Boston and Beaufighter Association of Queensland. Here is the first of two, this one titled Recruiting, which I think shows a stage in RAAF history which will not ever be repeated. This story is in the time of 3 Squadron flying Mustangs and Austers out of Canberra, a far reach from our later activities. (Jim Hall President 3 Sqn Association Qld)*

#### **RECRUITING**

After WWII, the RAAF had an interim Air Force for about two years; this was to allow time to change over from wartime to a post war Permanent Air Force. The standard for the new Permanent Air Force was very high and towards the end of the interim Air Force, it was realised that too many skilled men had been culled out and new recruits were required. It was decided that a recruiting drive was necessary. It was 1948, I was in No. 3 Squadron in Canberra. We were equipped with Mustang and Auster aircraft. I think the Austers were mainly used for instrument flying. Most personnel were WWII veterans. To say the pilots were a bit "Gung Ho" would be an understatement. They were very skilled Mustang pilots and to them



the Austers were mere toys. No 3 Squadron's share of the recruiting was to embrace the South Coast of NSW between Nowra and Stanwell Park. We were to take three Austers, three pilots and two ground staff and the new Sikorski helicopter, which was still on trials, to meet us at Nowra. The plan was to go to HMAS Albatross at Nowra, stay overnight, and fly over to Nowra the next day, then go on to Wollongong, book into an hotel and operate from there for the next week. I was selected to go as Corporal engine fitter NCO in charge. A Corporal was needed to sign the daily serviceability checks. The other ground staff was a flight rigger. Although I was stationed at Canberra, my wife Daisy and I had our home in Sydney, and I was lucky to get home at week-ends. It would be a good opportunity to have a weeks holiday with Daisy at Wollongong, so we made a double booking at the hotel and arranged to meet there.

We met the helicopter crew at Nowra, and next day we flew around the Nowra district. The pilots were authorised to do low flying, and also to take civilians on joy flights, providing they first signed an indemnity form. The pilot I was flying with decided to fly low up the Shoalhaven River. It was pleasant flying up the river, when suddenly the pilot pushed the stick hard forward and at the same time he was saying something unprintable. It was only then that I realised we were flashing under a cable that was strung across the river, we must have missed it only by inches. That was the end of low flying up the river.

We were making our way up the coast. At Kiama the helicopter was on the oval, and my pilot did a demonstration of slow flying. I could hardly believe an aircraft could fly so slow without stalling. I was a little concerned as the oval had a ring of tall trees around it, if we stalled we would have nowhere to go but the trees. All went well; we landed at Wollongong, secured the aircraft for the night and went to the hotel where Daisy was waiting to meet me. Next morning we went down to the strip, which was parallel with the beach. One of the pilots coaxed Daisy to go for a flight for the first time - she had some reservations but bravely went along. As soon as they were airborne one of the other pilots said to me "Give me a start, and we will go up and formate on them". Imagine Daisy's

surprise when she saw another aeroplane only feet away tucked behind the starboard wing. After we landed and re-fuelled, the pilots decided to go in different directions. My pilot decided to go north up the coast. Soon after leaving Wollongong we were passing over a large surf club building. The club house was in the middle of two large open-top dressing sheds, men's on the south side, ladies on the north side. It was obvious that the members were sun lovers, as each shed had numerous benches for the members to lie on, and get an all over sun tan. I soon became aware that the pilot was intent on recruiting more females than males, judging by the number of times we flew over the north shed. I thought they may become offended and complain, instead quite a number stood up and waved. Needless to say that during the week the surf shed had plenty of attention. I didn't tell Daisy, as I thought she wouldn't have approved. We went up to Stanwell Park and back, low flying both ways. The surf club just happened to be in our flight path on the way back. When we landed the rigger saw us in. By the look on his face I guessed that something was wrong. He said "A kid kicked a football when we were flying low on the beach, and we hit it". The ball had gone through the propeller, damaged the front engine cowl, then bounced into the leading edge of the port wing. The dent in the wing wasn't too bad, but it would be a big repair job and was ok to fly. The engine cowl was a mess. I took the propeller off and then the cowl. Then I took the cowl to a garage in the town and borrowed some panel beating tools. I had to be careful not to stretch the metal or the dzus fasteners would be out of register. After about an hour it looked pretty good, so I took it back, and was pleased to find it fitted perfectly. This is where the sequence of events may come undone. I think it was the next day we were flying over Port Kembla at about 1,000 feet; the pilot said "That looks like a nice big flat paddock down there, I've always wondered how these would glide. If anything goes wrong we can land there". With that he switches off the engine! It glided ok, but he had left it a bit late to re-start the engine. When he tried there was no response. We were getting dangerously low so he gave away the engine, to concentrate on a dead stick landing. I was getting concerned, the paddock looked like a bowling green when we



had height, but the lower we got the worse it looked. There was some livestock, cows and hens and the ground was rough, it looked bad. We were lucky enough to land without incident. We pushed the aircraft onto a road about 20 feet away. The road went for about half a mile in a sweeping bend. The pilot was confident he could take off, if I lightened the load, by going back in a taxi. I blew the engine out: open throttle, switches off, petrol off, and turned the engine several revolutions. The engine started first time, and the pilot did a clever take-off following the bend of the road. Of course we had quite an audience for all this, one of the locals rang for a taxi for me, and I met the pilot back a Wollongong.

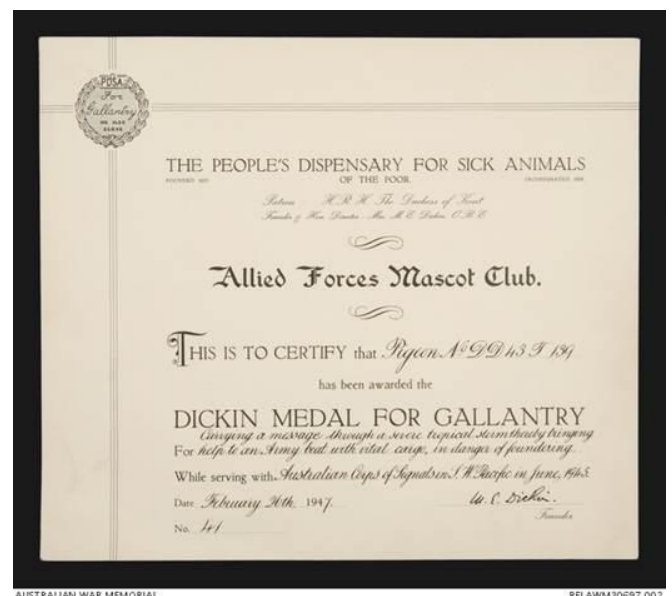
The next incident was the following day. We were flying over Port Kembla, and there was a man on top of a flat roofed shed, painting it green. The pilot said "Watch me put him off the shed". I thought I would rather be watching from the ground. The pilot flew in real low and straight at the man. I expected to see him jump off the roof. To my amazement he stood up, feet apart, and shook his fist. The pilot said "He is mad. I'll put him off this time". I had reservations about who was mad, and I wasn't too fussed being where I was. When we went around again, the same thing happened. The man still shaking his fist. I thought, I'm glad that's over, when to my dismay, the pilot said "This time or never". I really thought it was going to be never. This time he went in below the height of the shed, ever so close. I had a vision of the man between the port wheel and the wing tip, as we flashed over I saw his right arm go up in a throwing action. The pilot said "He's absolutely mad". I didn't say anything, but a lot of thoughts were going through my head. On the way back I was wondering, whether the man had thrown anything at us. As soon as we landed I had a look at the port side of the fuselage, and sure enough there was wet green paint splashed along the side. I put some petrol on a rag and wiped it off. I wonder how many people have been in an aeroplane, and had it painted when flying over a shed?

On the Friday night the pilots went to a dance and a party with the nurses at the hospital. During the party it was arranged that they would put on an air race on the Saturday morning. The course was to be around the light-house at the

beach in line with the main street, then up the main street for about two miles to the hospital, about ten laps, doing very tight turns around the hospital and the light-house. Well, it certainly stirred things up in Wollongong.

We ground staff heard some of the senior hospital staff made complaints in high places. There were questions asked in Parliament. It was feared the pilots may be in trouble. However, we didn't hear any more about it. Daisy went home on the Sunday. We had a great week and the No 3 Squadron recruiters went back to Canberra.

## Not Air Force, but a decorated aviator nevertheless



On 12 July 1945, a vessel of the Army's No 55 Port Craft Company struck a severe storm off Madang, New Guinea and was driven ashore. Carrier Pigeon DD43 T139, a veteran of 23 operational flights over a distance of about



1,000 miles, carried the following message from the foundering boat to Madang, flying 40 miles in 50 minutes. The message read: *To: Detachment 55 Australian Port Craft Company, MADANG. From: A.B. 1402. Date: 12.7.45. Engine Failed. Wash on to beach at WADAU owing very heavy seas. Send help immediately. Am rapidly filling with sand./ TOO: 0800 - Senders signature - HOLLAND Cpl./ TO Liberation 0805 - No. of copies 2./ TOR at Loft - 0855'.* As a result of the successful delivery of the message the boat together with valuable stores, ammunition and equipment was salvaged.

The Blue Bar cock pigeon was awarded the Dickin Medal in February 1947. The citation reads: *'During a heavy tropical storm this bird was released from Army boat 1402 which had foundered on Wadou Beach in the Huon Gulf. Homing 40 miles to Madang it brought a message which enabled a rescue ship to be sent in time to salvage the craft and its valuable cargo of stores and ammunition.'*

The pigeon was donated to the army in 1943, as a patriotic gesture by a civilian pigeon fancier, Mr George Adams of 11 Vigo Street, Footscray, Victoria, for use in signals units in New Guinea. Mr Adams, however, was not the bird's breeder; as part of his effort to obtain birds for the war effort Adams approached members of pigeon clubs in the Melbourne area, seeking the donation of birds. After he had approached the Yarraville Pigeon Club, one of its members, Mr Gordon Whittle, whose family had bred and raced pigeons for many years, donated a number of birds. One of the pigeons he bred was the bird who was awarded this Dickin Medal.

## Ballina Branch Supporting Legacy

The Ballina Branch of the Air Force Association was well represented at the Annual Legacy Day Service and Luncheon at Ballina on August 27<sup>th</sup> August with Dr Richard Gates, Vice President of the Branch, laying a sheaf of local banksias, pink boronia and rosemary at the Ballina Cenotaph during the wreath-laying ceremony.



A number of Branch members were present at the service and luncheon, with Ballina Branch presenting a cheque to Legacy at the luncheon.



Local Ballina High School Captain Dominique Isacc, who volunteers for Legacy in its fund-raising efforts, gave a well-received luncheon address about the role of Legacy and an emotional account of her great grandfather who served in WWI. She also spoke about this being the last year that Ballina High School would

have a graduating class as the school is to be replaced with a new 'super' "Ballina Coast High School". For many years Ballina High School was led by Headmaster A. R. Hughes, a WWII veteran well-remembered for his 'firm hand' including 'emu parades' and 'there is no such thing as being sick' activities for those not well enough to play sport, which soon encouraged miraculous recoveries.

## The Wanderers Branch

*from Gordon Pert, President Wanderers Branch*

Our Branch is fairly new, having been established towards the end of 2016. We are based in Queanbeyan and cover the Canberra region. Our membership is based on an association with No 1 Combat Communications Squadron (1CCS) which was



formerly known as the Air Transportable Telecommunications Unit (ATTU). Our current membership consists of past and current serving members.

The idea to form the Branch was not a new one. Several of us knew there were a number of former colleagues living in and around Queanbeyan and Canberra. We wanted to get together to renew acquaintances and swap a few stories from the past. As you might appreciate, the older we get the better we were.

We are still finding our way and membership is increasing slowly but steadily. We have two occasions in the year that we focus on – ANZAC Day and the unit birthday in September. For this year's ANZAC Day we were able to get ourselves involved with the main Canberra march. Despite some less than favourable weather we had a good turn out. Following the march we adjourned to the Southern Cross Yacht Club for lunch. It was pleasing to see so many veterans and families at the Yacht Club and the atmosphere of camaraderie ensured we had a great time. The photo shows a few of our members prior to the start of the march. Branch members conceived the banner we use over a lunch. Thanks to the generosity of Keith Oyston and his company who sponsored the production, we were able to proudly stand behind our banner during the ANZAC Day march.



**L-R: Scott Reynoldson, Danny Howarth, Keith Oyston, Dan Hall, Daniel Smith, Gordon Pert, Ed Darke, Colin Hull and Mal Baker.**

Our intent is to make the Canberra ANZAC Day march our premier gathering and if you have an association with ICCS/ATTU you are more than welcome to join us.

Our other main occasion in the year is the celebration of the unit 'birthday'. The official date is 20 September 1965. That date proved a little inconvenient so taking some poetic licence

we convened at the Southern Cross Club in Woden on 7 October. Again we had a good turn out and it was pleasing to see a few new faces. New to our gathering but certainly not new to life judging by the few extra wrinkles and absence of hair! Everyone enjoyed a great evening of war stories and reminiscences. Here are some photos of those that attended.



**L-R: John Graves, Mal Baker, Mal Roberts and John Gill**



**L-R: Ben Wright, Justin Williams, Mal Baker and Gordon Pert**



**L-R: Daniel Smith, John Gill, Phil Rhoades and Scott Reynoldson**



**L-R: Darren Clifford, Keith Oyston, Dan Hall and Mick Enchong**

Our plans for the future include a Christmas Family day and establishing a monthly social evening/afternoon. We are also looking at a local charity to support with fund raising and working bees. More of that next time.

I would like to thank all those members who have joined our Branch and to those who have stepped up to establish the Branch. We adopted a crawl, walk, run approach and I am confident we can now move into the walk phase of our development. I look forward to providing you with more insights in future editions of SITREP.

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## Flying Boat?

*Contributed by Sondra Williams, St George Branch from memorabilia in her late husband's papers*



He had been a commercial pilot and on a trip up to Queensland saw this boat which he said had been converted from a flying boat which had crashed at Lord Howe Island. He had flown the Catalinas for years from Rose Bay up to Lord Howe Island.

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## RAAFA NSW Publications

**R**AAFANSW Publications Pty Ltd (RAAFAPubs) was set up in September 2014 to publish a fortnightly newspaper for RAAF Base Williamtown, intending to establish a closer relationship between RAAFA and the base, which is our largest single source of potential recruits in NSW. Unfortunately the newspaper struggled to attract sufficient advertising to cover its production costs, and despite the best efforts of the directors, it was discontinued in March last year. At that time, two annual magazines were also being published. Titled *Welcome to Williamtown* and *Welcome to Richmond & Glenbrook*, these handbooks were designed to assist new arrivals settle into their new base and environment. Importantly, the *Welcome* magazines were individually returning a positive bottom line in financial terms, so the company decided to continue with them after the demise of the newspaper.

The early editions of the *Welcome* magazines were published in January each year utilizing the gap in newspaper activity during the Christmas/New Year leave period. However, they are now published in early October to better align with the end-of-year RAAF (and Army) posting cycles. Buoyed by the success of last year's *Welcome* magazines, another magazine was added to the 'stable' this year – *Welcome to Edinburgh Defence Precinct*. The first (2018) edition was officially launched in the Officers Mess Edinburgh on 24 October this year. All three magazines can be viewed on-line at: <http://www.raafapublications.org.au>.



**MD RAAFAPubs, AVM Neil Smith (ret'd), presenting the new *Welcome to Edinburgh Defence Precinct* 2018 magazine to SADFO Edinburgh, AIRCDRE Joe Iervasi**

## Never in the Dark 3CRU's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary

On 01 November 2017, Number 3 Control and Reporting Unit (3CRU) had an occasion to celebrate as the unit officially recognised its achievements over the last 50 years since being formed at Duckhole Hill, RAAF Base Williamtown NSW, on 01 November 1967. The unit was first established to provide radar control services to the expanding air defence network from Port Kembla through to Newcastle and was also utilised as a mobile unit to deploy to Northern Australia for defence emergencies and help contribute to the defence of Australia's northern approaches. Now 3CRU embodies the critical Homeland Defence, both fixed and deployable, element of Number 41 Wing's mission to provide persistent, integrated air and space defence of Australia and in support of Australia's national interests.

To celebrate the unit's 50<sup>th</sup> 3CRU opened its doors on Friday 03 November 2017 to past members, family and friends at both an open day and formal evening function. With the help of the RADAR Branch RAAFA (NSW), 3CRU was able to reach out to past members which made both events extremely successful. The open day and evening function were a great success and all attendees once again found themselves in the midst of a unique group of personnel who know what it is to serve under 3CRU's motto "Unite".

3CRU was fortunate enough to have Mr Bruce Niblett, former XO of 3CRU and President of the Radar Branch, as a guest speaker for the evening. Bruce related the early role of 3CRU and some of his experiences while serving as the XO. Most notably was Bruce's involvement in the July 1983 event where Sydney Air Traffic Control had detected alleged UFOs in the New England area. This event was surrounded by a considerable amount of hysteria, including Ministerial level interest, which saw 3CRU directly tasked to investigate. 3CRU members investigated the claims, however nothing was found. A specialist team was despatched to Mascot Airport, and ultimately the problem was traced to a faulty receiver in the Sydney ATC RADAR system.

Air Commodore Craig Heap, CSC, Commander Surveillance and Response Group, supported Bruce's words with an engaging address as to the unit's achievements and its continued relevance to Defence and Government now and into the future. The formal part of the evening came to an end as the current Commanding Officer of 3CRU, Wing Commander Jason 'Bart' Burstow marked the occasion with several toasts, one of which honoured former members and absent friends. The evening continued on with past members reciting humorous anecdotes and stories with the current generation of 3CRU personnel in awe of 'how it was done back in the day'.

2017, the year of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, sees 3CRU continue in its core role and mission; to prepare for, conduct and sustain effective fixed and deployed aerospace surveillance and battlespace management in support of National Homeland Defence.



One of the displays at the 3CRU Open Day with the highlight being the AN/TPS-77 Tactical Air Defence RADAR System (TADRS).



The 3CRU Unit patch recognises the auspicious milestone



## JOINT COMMUNIQUE

### Veterans' Ministers' meeting

8 November 2017

The second Roundtable of Ministers responsible for veteran issues has reinforced the need to coordinate effort across all levels of government to ensure the successful transition of those Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel moving from military to civilian life. Issues discussed at the Roundtable included improved transition, mental health and suicide prevention, improving employment outcomes for veterans, veteran accommodation and assisting veterans who had been incarcerated. The Roundtable was updated on initiatives in the Federal budget to enhance veteran rehabilitation and transform the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) as well as the expanded package of mental health support worth \$31 million that was announced as part of the Government's response to the Senate Inquiry into veterans' suicide. A commitment by all governments was given to information sharing across agencies to assist in improving transition across all jurisdictions. States and Territories agreed to examine the feasibility of collecting data on veteran incarceration and to promote non-liability health care for any mental health condition to those who have served one day in the full-time ADF. As a step towards destigmatising Post Traumatic Stress, Ministers agreed to refrain from using the term disorder and agreed to encourage their ministerial health colleagues to do the same. The Roundtable supported the establishment of a Veteran Support Services Accreditation Association that would enable Ex Service Organisations delivering services to veterans to obtain formal accreditation. The Roundtable reached consensus on a common definition of veteran that is to be recognised by all jurisdictions. It was agreed that a veteran would be defined as 'a person who is serving or has served in the ADF'. Ministers agreed use of the term veteran should not be limited by the definitions contained in existing legislation. Ministers agreed there needed to be a question about veterans in the next Australian Census. This will assist all levels of government to better

support services and support to veterans and their families.

Ministers agreed to establish a working party to explore the harmonisation of veterans' concessions across jurisdictions. The Ministers also agreed to mark the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day in 2018 with a nation-wide campaign to acknowledge a minute's silence at 11am. The next Veterans' Ministers' Roundtable in 2018 will occur in conjunction with the Transition Symposium and the Invictus Games in Sydney. Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs the Hon Dan Tehan MP, Minister for Veterans Affairs New South Wales the Hon David Elliott MP, Minister for Veterans Victoria the Hon John Eren MP, Minister for Housing, Veterans Issues and Youth Western Australia the Hon Peter Tinley AM MLA, Government Whip South Australia the Hon Tom Kenyon MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, Community and Veterans' Affairs Tasmania Ms Sarah Courtney MP, Minister for Veterans Australian Capital Territory Mr Gordon Ramsay MLA and Assistant Minister for Veterans Affairs representing the Chief Minister Northern Territory Mr Tony Sievers MLA attended the Roundtable. Given Queensland is in caretaker mode, Queensland was represented by the Department.

*Media enquiries:*

*Minister Tehan's Office: Byron Vale, 0428 262 894*

*Department of Veterans' Affairs Media: 02 6289 6466*

*Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free confidential counselling. Phone 1800 011 046 VVCS is a service founded by Vietnam veterans.*

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## 75 and 77 SQN Associations combine with Fighter Squadrons Branch

In the past, 75 and 77 Squadron Associations have been totally independent Ex Service Organisations. Recently their respective committees put a motion to their AGMs to wind up and combine with FSB. The belief is that Fighter Associations will not survive as independent organizations: committee positions



are hard to fill and most fighter personnel are not loyal to one squadron, as most have served in multiple squadrons. Independent fighter organizations cannot use their numbers effectively to look after the interests of RAAFies and ex RAAFies, particularly conditions of service which require a lobbying capability.



FSB will continue to maintain the identity of ex-77SQN and ex-75SQN Association members on its Member Management System. This will allow information pertinent to each group to be broadcast by email.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

AC0073

## New Rotary Wing Branch

On 20 Oct 2017, No 9 Squadron RAAF Association created a new RAAFA NSW self administering, non-incorporated branch to be known as Rotary Wing Branch.

Until the formal AGM, interim office bearers are:

President : Robert Redman

Secretary/Treasurer: Steve Hartigan

Vice President: Peter Cullerne

Steve Hartigan has been working with Steve Smith to transfer 9SQN Association membership data to MMS format. Also, both have created a Rotary Wing Branch website and updated the 9SQN Association website to be compatible with RAAFA NSW websites. Rotary Wing Branch will be seeking other like-minded Associations to merge with the new branch.

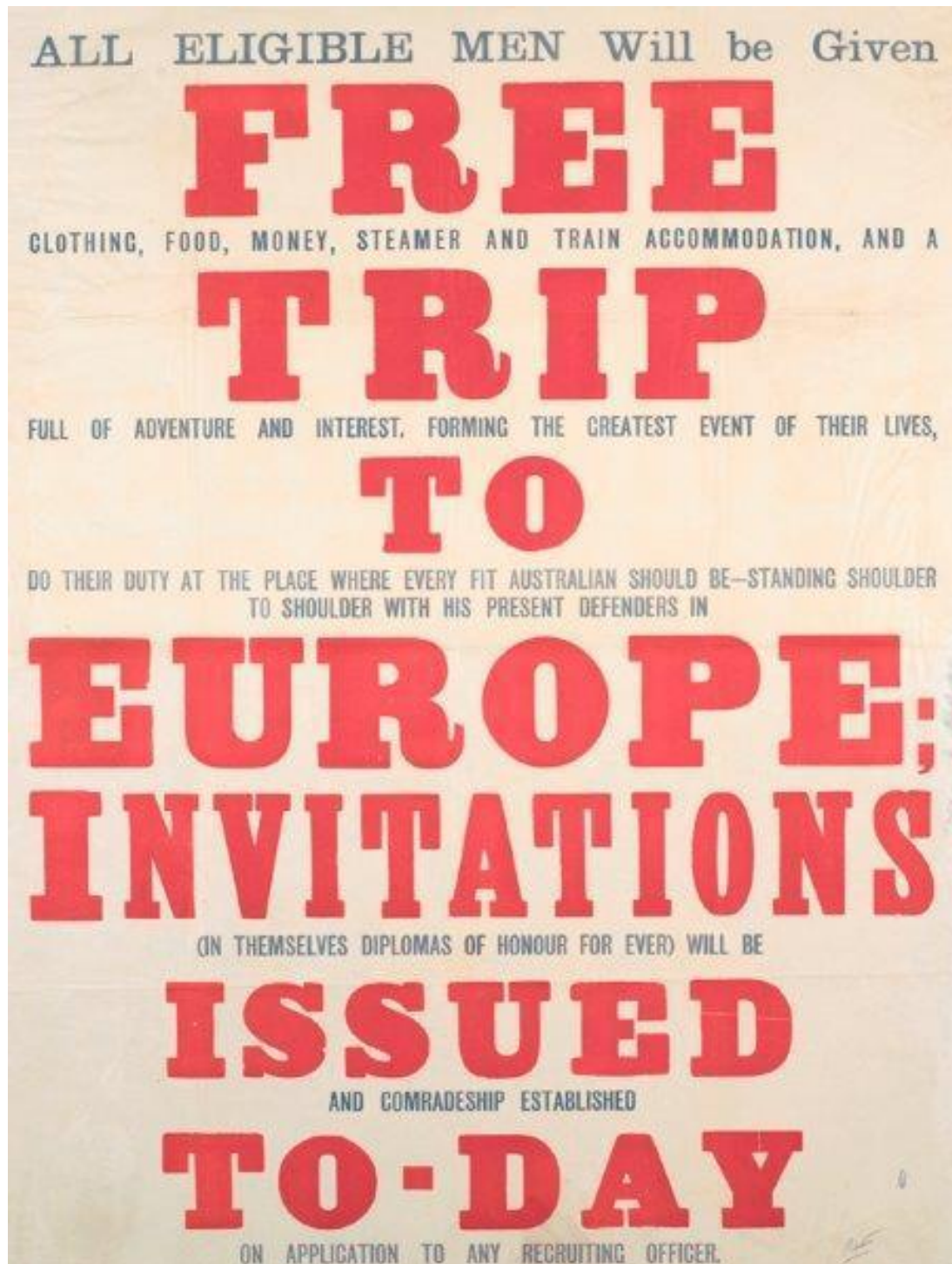




## World War One Recruiting Poster

*from 3 Squadron News, September 2017*

Celebrating **100 YEARS** since 3AFC became the **FIRST** Australian Squadron to fly combat operations on the Western Front in France and Belgium, **10 September 1917**.



*(Moral: Always read the fine print!)*

**From all the  
RAAFA NSW  
*SITREP* team, best  
wishes for a  
delightful, healthy  
festive season!**

