

# Air Force Association

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## CONTACT

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*Commanding Officer 460 Squadron Wing Commander Karri Roberts lays a wreath for the late RAAF World War II veteran, Flying Officer Peter Birt, during a Last Post ceremony at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. Photos: Leading Aircraftman Kurt Lewis*

## A FAMILY'S LEGACY IN SERVICE

**The courageous service of an Australian World War II aviator was celebrated on both sides of the country at a special Last Post ceremony at the Australian War Memorial in February.**

Members of the Birt family, alongside aviators from 100 and 460 Squadrons, attended the service dedicated to Flying Officer Peter Birt, who flew with 460 Squadron as part of Bomber Command in the European theatre on the Avro Lancaster.

Peter flew 14 operations over Germany and quickly earned the respect of his crew for his calmness, professionalism and skill.

The squadron suffered the highest casualty rate in Bomber Command, and sadly, Peter was one of them. While on his 15th operation in January 1945, his Lancaster, 'S for Sugar', was attacked over Stuttgart. He ordered the crew to bail out and managed to control the aircraft long enough for most to safely escape.

Peter, along with two of his crew, was killed in the crash. He was just 20 years old.

Watching the service from his home in Perth was Peter's brother, James, who served with 100 Squadron in World War II, flying the Bristol Beaufort.

Continued on page 2



Members of the Birt family during a Last Post ceremony.

"It brought back many memories hearing his story," James Birt said.

The Birt family received a special tour of the Bristol Beaufort housed at the Australian War Memorial, which has been painted to reflect its wartime service with 100 Squadron, and the 'G for George' Lancaster, which was operated by 460 Squadron, providing them with a glimpse of what James and Peter might have experienced flying these aircraft.

Commanding Officer 100 Squadron Wing Commander Richard Brougham reflected on the poignancy of the visit.

"There's a living connection between these aircraft and the Birt family, which has brought Peter and James' stories to life," Wing Commander Brougham said.

"It means a lot for families to see their relatives' service remembered, and how we are maintaining history and legacy for future generations."

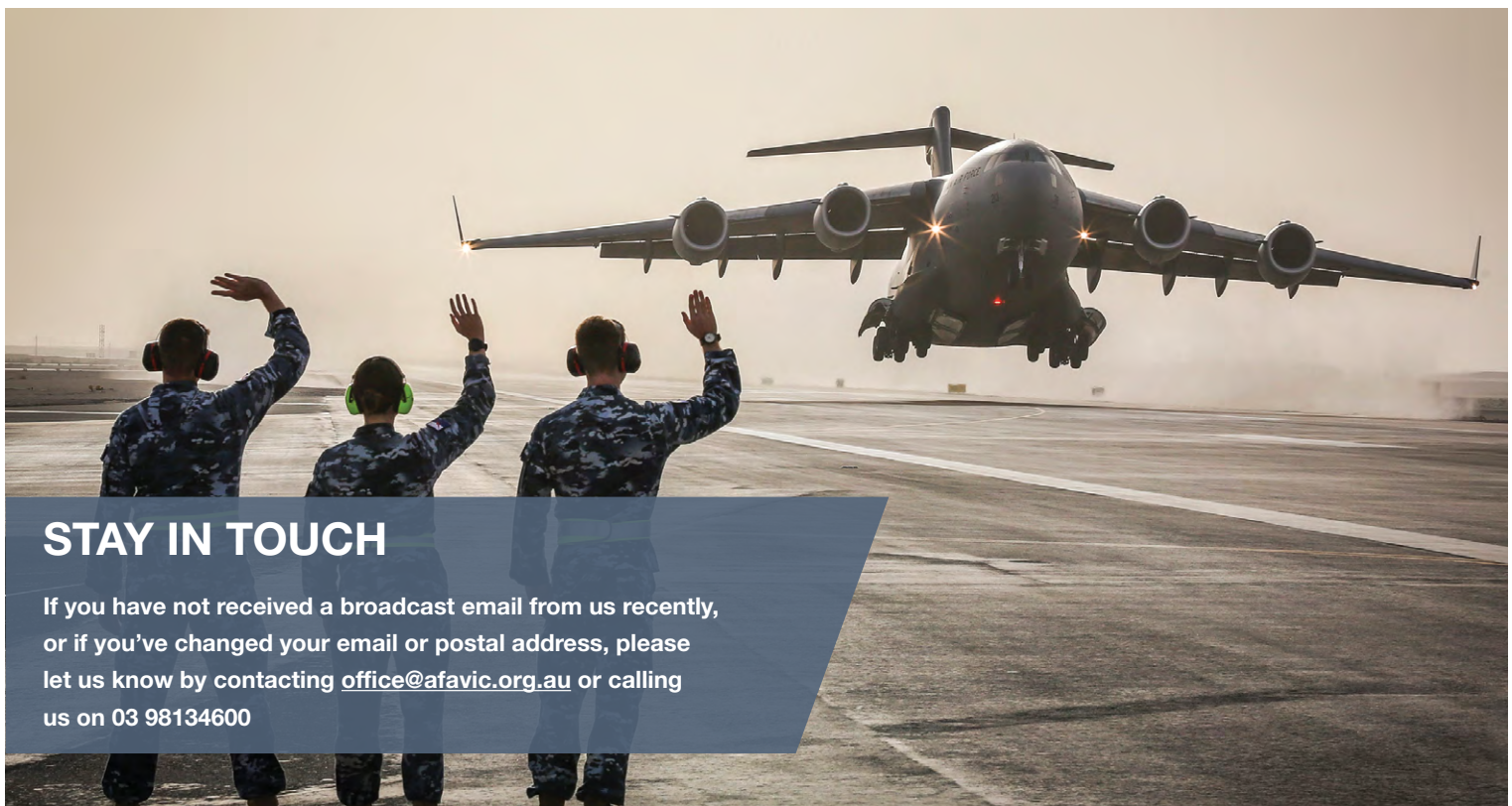
For Commanding Officer 460 Squadron Wing Commander Karri Roberts, the service highlighted the ongoing connection between aviators past and present.

"For our younger aviators in particular, it's an important opportunity to appreciate the courage and sacrifice of those that have served with 460 Squadron, and ensure their legacy lives on," Wing Commander Roberts said.

"The courage and service shown by Peter continues to provide inspiration for all our aviators, and we are thankful for his family's continuing support."



Members of the Birt family with 100 Squadron World War II pilot, James Birt, after watching the live stream of the Australian War Memorial Last Post ceremony commemorating his brother Peter.



## STAY IN TOUCH

If you have not received a broadcast email from us recently, or if you've changed your email or postal address, please let us know by contacting [office@afavic.org.au](mailto:office@afavic.org.au) or calling us on 03 98134600



John Clarkson – President, AFA Victoria.

**Two months ago, on 4th February, the Australian government released a public version of the Defence Estate Audit. Of particular interest for Air Force veterans in Victoria was the planned divestment of RAAF Williams – Point Cook and the partial divestment of RAAF Williams – Laverton. Our national president, Joe Iervasi, released a statement in regard to the government's announcement on 8th February and that statement is reproduced in full in this edition of Contact.**

Many of you will be sensing déjà vu going back to when the government of the day announced similar intentions for the divestment of Point Cook in 1998. Much effort was expended at that time to ensure protection of the RAAF heritage that Point Cook represented.

That effort resulted in the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence announcing in February 2004 of the withdrawal of Point Cook from freehold sale and that the Federal Government's intention was to lease the land to a trust before deciding in November 2005 to cease the trust development and retain Point Cook as a Defence estate asset.

However, work continued on the heritage recognition of Point Cook which resulted in its inclusion on the National Heritage List in October 2007. A media release by the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Mr Malcolm Turnbull, stated:

*"From 1914 until 1992, Point Cook has had a significant role in protecting the nation, training many thousands of Australia's military aircrew and engineers," Mr Turnbull said. "The base is the only remaining World War One military airfield complex in Australia and features the oldest, most extensive complex of military aviation buildings in the country. It's also associated with aviation pioneers like Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, whose epic 1929 voyage in the Southern Cross saw him take off from Point Cook and make the first non-stop, east-west crossing of the continent. "Point Cook was the arrival and departure point of other historic flights, including the first expedition to circumnavigate the Australian coastline by air by two RAAF flyers, Wing Commander Goble and Flight Lieutenant McIntyre."*

This recognition provides protection to this aspect of RAAF heritage and will place significant obligations on any future owners of the site.

In the case of RAAF Williams – Laverton, you will be aware that some parcels of land have already been disposed of by Defence. The government intention this time is to further divest the golf course and unoccupied areas. There is little concern with this decision.

Beyond the heritage considerations, we also have real concerns with protecting what Point Cook means to the culture of Air Force. And we can't overlook the value of Point Cook to the connection reservists and cadets have to Air Force and therefore, ultimately, what they contribute to Air Force capability.

Rest assured, the AFA Victoria board will work with other interested groups, as was done 25 years ago, towards an acceptable outcome to RAAF veterans. One great opportunity is that this should result in far better access to Point Cook by the public and the recognition that would bring to the Air Force legacy.

**John Clarkson**

*President*

*AFA Victoria*

## ANZAC STRIKE WING'S DARING HUNT REMEMBERED

**Flying at wave-top height in all weather and under heavy fire, the crews of 455 (RAAF) Squadron and 489 (RNZAF) Squadron formed one of the WWII's most daring maritime strike forces – and they paid a devastating price.**

Between December 1943 and May 1945, 87 young men were lost as the two squadrons flew together as a strike wing under Royal Air Force (RAF) Coastal Command in the fight against German shipping across the North Sea.

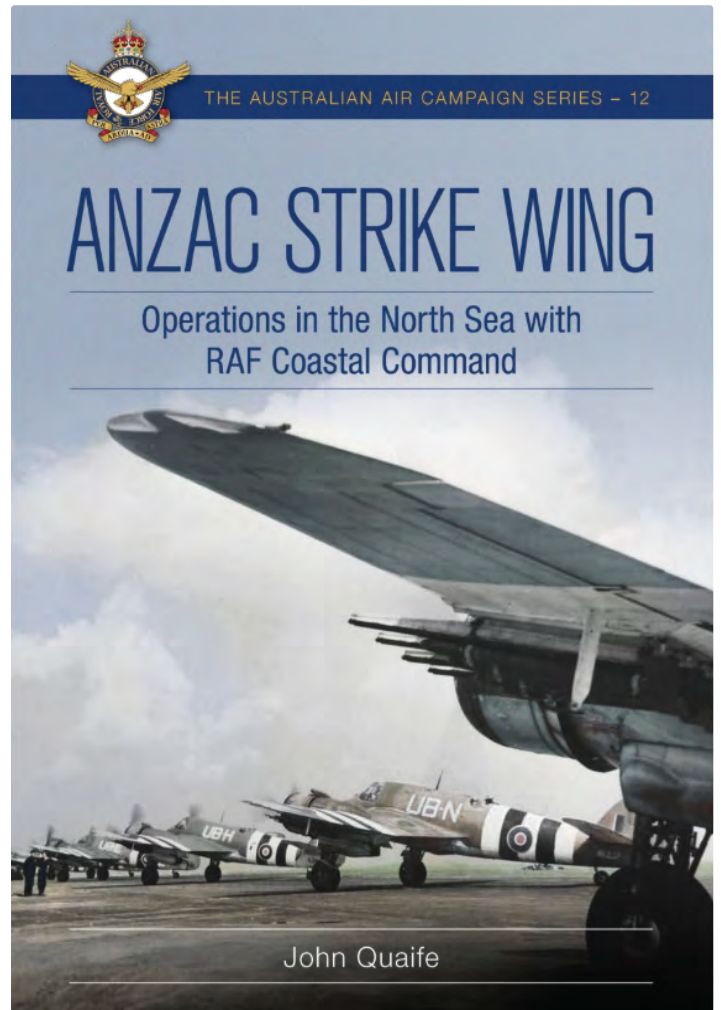
That story of courage, comradeship and relentless operational tempo has been brought together in ANZAC Strike Wing: Operations in the North Sea with RAF Coastal Command, the 12th title in the Australian Air Campaign Series published by History and Heritage – Air Force (HH-AF).

Drawing on newly digitised archives, operational records and eyewitness accounts, the book by retired Air Vice-Marshal John Quaife chronicles the exhilaration and chaos of low-level strike warfare and the human bonds forged in one of the war's most dangerous arenas.

While the Battle of Britain and Bomber Command's campaign dominate popular memory, Coastal Command's anti-shipping war remains less visible to many readers. The author notes that these operations were often out of the public eye, peaked later in the war, and were conducted on a different scale to the bomber offensive – all factors that helped keep the campaign in the shadows despite its strategic impact.

What made the Strike Wing's work uniquely perilous was the combination of tactics, proximity and timing. Coastal Command's strike wings flew aggressive, massed attacks, using aircraft such as Beaufighters and Mosquitos to smash convoys protected by concentrated ship-borne defences.

Beyond operational detail, ANZAC Strike Wing centres on the people and what 'Anzac spirit' looked like far from home in a harsh, unfamiliar theatre. The author follows two crews in particular, showing how ordinary young men from



*The ANZAC Strike Wing book by Air Vice-Marshal (retd) John Quaife*

vastly different backgrounds shouldered relentless danger and loss without fanfare.

With ANZAC Strike Wing, Air Vice-Marshal Quaife hopes modern readers take away a clear message: the service and sacrifice on which today's air forces are built should never be forgotten, and can only be honoured by telling these stories honestly and without embellishment.

ANZAC Strike Wing can be purchased from Big Sky Publishing:

[www.bigskypublishing.com.au/anzac-strike-wing/](http://www.bigskypublishing.com.au/anzac-strike-wing/)

(Story credit: Department of Defence)

## THE EMPIRE AIR TRAINING SCHEME – A CORNERSTONE OF THE ALLIED WAR EFFORT.

**Australia played a key role in the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) in WWII, contributing both personnel and training infrastructure to support the Allied air war effort.**

The Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS), also known as the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, was a major

cooperative military program established during the early years of the Second World War. Formally agreed upon in December 1939, the EATS brought together countries of the British Commonwealth—including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—to train aircrew for service in the Royal Air Force (RAF) and other Allied air forces.

Continued on page 5

The scheme emerged from Britain's urgent need for a large, steady supply of trained pilots, navigators, bomb aimers, and wireless operators. Following the outbreak of war and especially after the Battle of Britain, it became clear that air power would be decisive.

However, Britain itself was vulnerable to attack and had limited space for large-scale training. As a result, under the scheme, recruits from across the Commonwealth were sent to safer training locations in Canada and in Australia, where a number of airfields and schools across the country were established. Under the scheme, Australia agreed to supply large numbers of aircrew—including pilots, navigators, gunners, and radio operators—many of whom trained domestically before being sent overseas.

An official announcement of Australia's initial contribution to the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS), was made by Prime Minister Robert Menzies on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 1939.

Mr. Menzies said "The scheme would play a decisive part in the war. It would afford a remarkable example of the unity and strength of Britain and the Dominions working together for supremacy in the air. Australia will not only be a unit in the massed Empire air forces, she will also add immediately to her defences by creating an organisation

which will be much bigger than she could ever have hoped to attain herself".

The scale of the Empire Air Training Scheme was enormous. By the end of the war, it had trained over 130,000 aircrew, making it one of the largest aviation training programs in history. This output was crucial in sustaining Allied air operations in Europe, North Africa, and the Pacific. Importantly, the scheme also fostered a sense of unity and shared purpose among Commonwealth nations, strengthening political and military ties.

Australia undertook to provide 28,000 aircrew over three years, which represented 36% of the total number of proposed air crew.

Under Article XV of the EATS agreement, it was proposed that each country's aircrew would service in distinct national squadrons once they arrived in Britain. Eventually



1940 RAAF recruitment poster (AWM ARTV04297)

### **NO1. WAGS (WIRELESS AND GUNNER SCHOOL)**

**The Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) relied on a network of specialised training schools across Australia including the No. 1 Wireless and Gunnery School (1WAGS) Ballarat and No. 11 EATS Benalla, both of which were key components of Australia's EATS contribution.**

The No. 1 Wireless and Gunnery School, located in Ballarat, was responsible for training aircrew in two critical areas: wireless communication and aerial gunnery. Trainees learned how to operate radio equipment, maintain communication during missions, and defend aircraft using mounted guns.

The 1 WAGS Memorial was established in Ballarat in 2019 coinciding with the restoration of the 1 WAGS Officers Mess-Hut 48 at the Ballarat aerodrome. Officially opened in 2019, it is now the headquarters of the AFA Ballarat Branch.

The 1 WAGS website enables worldwide access to the records, photos and information about RAAF 1 WAGS. trainees who were killed in action or on active service during WW2, as well as history and stories of the school and AFA Ballarat events.

To date, the 1 WAGS Memorial Roll has 1,182 confirmed names out of over 6000 trainees, with research continuing to identify and include all personnel who trained at 1 WAGS.

[Visit the 1 WAGS website here.](#)



No.1 WAGS Base theatre in 1941. Occasion unknown

there were 17 Article XV RAAF squadrons, these being numbered 450-467 [with no 465 formed]. Four of these units were in Fighter Command, seven in Bomber Command, and one in Coastal Command. Another five were also formed in the Middle East. Article XV, the bulk of Australian aircrew served with RAF squadrons in Europe and the Middle East rather than with a designated Australian squadron, bringing some criticism of the scheme.

The agreement was renewed for an additional two years in March 1943. Throughout 1944, Australia's contribution to the EATS was scaled back, with the Scheme effectively ending in October 1944, although it was not formally suspended until 31 March 1945. By this time, over 37,000 Australian airmen had been trained as part of the scheme.

Participation in EATS greatly expanded the size and capability of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).



No. 11 Elementary Flying Training School (No. 11 EFTS) was a RAAF pilot training unit and one of 12 elementary flying training schools that formed as part of Australia's contribution to the EATS. Above: Instructors and students with their Tiger Moth training aircraft, c.1944

Thousands of Australians enlisted, and the RAAF grew from a relatively small force into a major contributor to the Allied air war. The experience and infrastructure developed during this period had long-term benefits for Australia's military aviation.

The Empire Air Training Scheme accounted for training almost half the pilots, navigators, flight engineers, wireless operators, bomb aimers and air gunners that served with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF), Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Royal Air Force (RAF) during World War 2.

It remains one of the largest aviation training programs in history - was a cornerstone of the Allied war effort - and is acknowledged as the predominant driving force that saw the RAAF grow from around 4,000 personnel in 1939 to almost 120,000 in 1944.

With thanks to Ricky Hattam & 1 WAGS for contributions to this story. (Other sources: Australian War Memorial)

## HAROLD FREEMAN'S AIRCRAFT MURAL



First section of the mural depicting aircraft 1909-1918. Harold Freeman, untitled (Mural of Australian military aircraft, 1968-69, oil on canvas on hardboard, 460cm 910cm). Accession number: ART27777.001

**The biggest painting since Michelangelo did the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was finished today,' announced a newspaper in 1972, heralding the completion of Harold Freedman's mural.**

While it was not the biggest, nor complete, what was monumental and resolved was Freedman's vision for the mural. Intended to be more than decorative, it was also to be an accurate pictorial record of Australian military aviation history from 1909 to 1972.

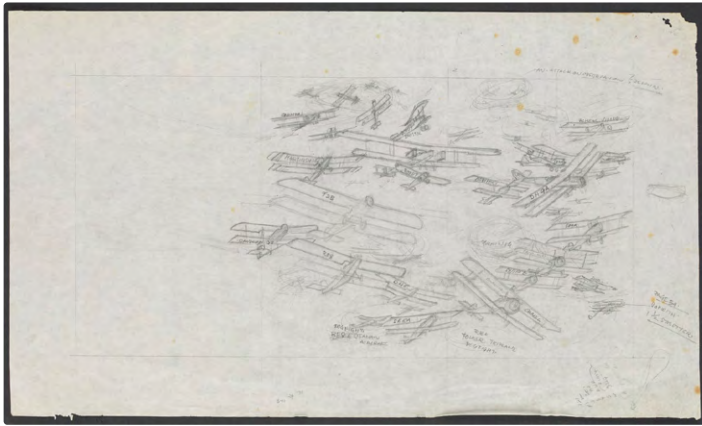
Commissioned by the Australian War Memorial in 1968 to re-invigorate what it called an "inadequate" RAAF display, Harold Freeman's vision was never just decorative. The former senior war artist attached to the Royal Australian Air Force War History Section, wanted an accurate pictorial

record of Australian military aviation from 1909 to 1972, recording every aircraft used in Australia's defence.

To do it, he expanded his Melbourne home studio to fit the 15-foot-tall panels (with an 18-foot ceiling), worked 10-14 hours a day, seven days a week, and filled the sky with the flight patterns of 900 aircraft.

Behind the scenes, RAAF historian Wing Commander Keith Isaacs reviewed thousands of sketches - and when genuine inaccuracies were identified after installation, Freedman returned to make changes.

The mural was completed as 26 panels covering almost 279 square metres - including a patch of empty sky left for future additions.



Harold Freeman, preparatory sketch of WWI aircraft for first of History of Military Aircraft murals, Australian War Memorial circa 1968-69 pencil on paper, 27.6 x 47.0cm, State Library of Victoria ,H2011.131/132.

The Memorial released a set of six wall charts corresponding to the sections. These posters became a feature on the bedroom walls of many aspiring young Australian aviators during the 1970s. (and due to popular demand special edition posters are available from the AWM's Memorial shop - <https://shop.awm.gov.au/collections/prints-limited-edition>).

However, following, extensions to Aircraft Hall in 1998 when the mural was considered incompatible with future display plans, it was covered by false walls and hidden from sight for nearly three decades. Now it's being restored to its original state and will be ready to be rediscovered by visitors.

Read the full story on the Australian War Memorial's magazine, WM: <https://brnw.ch/21x0Kbd>

(Source: Australian War Memorial)



Harold Freeman, preparatory sketch of WWI aircraft for first of History of Military Aircraft murals, Australian War Memorial circa 1968-69 pencil on paper, 27.6 x 47.0cm, State Library of Victoria ,H2011.131/132.

## SEEKING THE FAMILY AND CONNECTIONS OF FLT LT NEIL LESLIE CHISHOLM (1929-1956)

### AFA SOUTH AUSTRALIA IS SEEKING OUR HELP.

FLT LT Chisholm was a Radio Officer from Melbourne. He was killed in an aircraft accident on 28th September 1956 when Air Trials Unit Meteor A77-2 crashed at Evetts Field, SA, 40 kms NW of Woomera. Also killed was the pilot, PLTOFF Murray Henzell from Roma in Queensland.

Their names are two of the 23 RAAF members listed on the new Air Force Memorial at the South Australian Aviation Museum. This Memorial is dedicated to those airmen who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our nation in post war peacetime aviation accidents in South Australia.

This year, AFA-SA will be featuring the stories of FLTLT Chisholm and PLTOFF Henzell at the annual Air Force Memorial Commemorative Service to be held on 28 September 2026 – the 70th anniversary of their accident.

AFA-SA is keen to invite their family members to the ceremony. If any AFA Victoria member has a connection or knows of who might be able to reach out FLT LT Chisholm's family, please contact Barb Stallard at AFA Victoria on 9813 4600.

# 105 YEARS SERVICE – PER ARDUA AD ASTRA

**From its beginnings as a small army flying unit raised for service during the First World War, to becoming the Royal Australian Air Force in 1921, the RAAF has served Australia with skill, dedication and distinction.**

31st March marked 105 years of service of the Royal Australian Air Force, and across those 105 years, the RAAF has answered the call in war, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations - from aerial mapping and maritime defence to service in the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam and beyond.

Air Force personnel at bases across the nation commemorated the anniversary with official events to

honour current and former service personnel and the proud history of Air Force. Official events in Canberra included the raising of the RAAF Ensign, a Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial, and the announcement of the Air Force Proficiency and Leadership Award winners.

We acknowledge and commend the generations of RAAF personnel who have helped shape the service into the well-trained, technologically advanced and effective fighting force it is today.

Per Ardua Ad Astra. Through adversity to the stars.

Read the full story on WM: <https://brnw.ch/21x1bx3>



# LEGACY EXPANDS ELIGIBILITY TO SUPPORT MORE VETERANS' FAMILIES



Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel The Hon Matt Keogh MP, at the commemorative event at the Australian War Memorial on 13 February.

## Legacy has announced the most significant change in its history, expanding support to more families of veterans.

For over 100 years, Legacy has supported the families of veterans who could no longer provide for their loved ones due to service-related death, injury or illness, or who have later died.

From early 2026, the requirement for a veteran to have completed a period of operational service has been removed. This major eligibility change is in direct response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide findings on military life's far-reaching impacts.

Legacy will now support families of former permanent defence force members and reservists who have served on continuous full-time duty, irrespective of the nature of their service, allowing thousands more to be welcomed into Legacy's care.

This expansion builds on the promise made on the battlefields of World War 1, when soldiers pledged to care for each other's families.

Since then, Legacy has supported hundreds of thousands of people, from those who lost partners in war, to the

children of those veterans who were injured or killed during peace time service for Australia.

"Our dedicated volunteers, often drawn from the veteran and wider community, currently support more than 28,000 people and have been nothing short of phenomenal, offering personalised mentorship and a sense of belonging that has transformed countless lives," said Chair of Legacy Australia, Dr Mark Lax, speaking at a commemorative event at the Australian War Memorial on 13 February.

"Service has many impacts, not just through death or injury. Families carry the weight of service in ways that aren't always visible. Broadening eligibility to services and support clearly shows we are responding to the wider spectrum of challenges they face.

"Legacy's services are now also available to families of current serving veterans who are in the process of transitioning out of Defence due to no longer being medically fit for service and are unable to care for their families themselves.

"This natural evolution extends Legacy's proven impact to even more families who need it," said Dr Lax.

"Many older partners of peacetime veterans will have the opportunity to foster a new community through local club activities such as social outings, morning teas and attending memorial events, helping combat isolation while building identity and belonging.

For more information or to check eligibility visit [legacy.com.au](https://www.legacy.com.au) or contact your nearest Legacy club.



 Find us on  
**Facebook**

[www.facebook.com/raafavic/](https://www.facebook.com/raafavic/)



# DARWIN COMMEMORATION

**On the 84th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin, we honoured and remembered those who served, those who lost their lives and those whose lives were forever changed.**

On 19 February 1942, just 10 weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan launched its first attack on Australian soil, targeting Darwin, with a population of just 2000, in an attempt to prevent Allied military forces from using it as a base to contest Japan's southward expansion.

It was the heaviest single attack mounted by the Imperial Japanese Navy on the Australian mainland.

The initial attack involved 242 aircraft and resulted in significant destruction and loss of life, with more than 240 people killed and hundreds wounded.

Another raid carried out by 54 land-based bombers later the same day resulted in further damage to the town, RAAF Base Darwin and the destruction of 20 Allied aircraft

There were many stories of tremendous courage that day. Service personnel and civilians rescued survivors from sunken and burning ships, while doctors and nurses rushed to treat the wounded.

Darwin endured a further 62 Japanese air raids, with the last in November 1943, but it was the first two raids on 19 February 1942 that were most devastating.

In 2011, the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, declared 19 February as a national day of observance to be known as Bombing of Darwin Day, joining Anzac Day and Remembrance Day as our National Days of Observance.

On this day, we pause to honour the men and women who served and sacrificed during the Darwin air raids and remember the Darwin community who suffered greatly during this time.

## 84 YEARS LATER...

On 19th February, sirens rang out across the Darwin Esplanade as hundreds of people gathered to commemorate the single largest foreign attack on Australian soil and remember those who bravely defended Australian soil and those who lost their lives.

In line with tradition, the commemorations began with a historic re-enactment of the bombings, involving current Australian servicemen and women.



*A soldier at the Darwin cenotaph commemorates the Bombing of Darwin. (Source: ABC News)*



*The Bombing of Darwin Memorial Stone in Darwin, NT.*



*Darwin, 19 February 1942' – by artist Ray Honisett, 1984 [oil on canvas 122 x 182.8 cm]*



Members of the ADF re-enact the Bombing of Darwin. (Source: ABC News)

**At Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance, the 84th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin was marked with a formal service led by the Darwin Defenders Association.**

The commemoration service was conducted by MC Mr Tim Gurry OAM with wreaths laid at the Cenotaph, including by AFA Victoria President, Mr John Clarkson CSC and AFA National Past President, Mr Carl Schiller OAM CSM.

Following The Ode recited by Commodore Greg Yorke AM CSC RAN (Retired), The Last Post sounded across the forecourt, followed by a flypast from 100 Squadron at RAAF Base Point Cook.

Students from Avila College, Christ Church Grammar School and Puckapunyal Primary School read the Darwin Defenders' Memorial Poem and In Flanders Field.

The service closed with the national anthem and a composition written about this unique time in our country's history, Blood on the Frangipani (When the Bombs Rained Down on Darwin).



AFA Victoria President John Clarkson CSC pays his respects after laying a wreath at the Eternal Flame



Carl Schiller laying a wreath on behalf of the RAAF Veterans Resident Trust.



The AFA Victoria Roundel, laid at the eternal flame by AFA Victoria President, John Clarkson, CSC

# MESSAGE FROM AFA NATIONAL PRESIDENT

**On 4 February 2026 the Australian Government released a public version of the Defence Estate Audit and the Government's response to it – agreeing or agreeing-in-principle to all 20 of the Audit's recommendations.**

Commissioned following the 2023 Defence Strategic Review, Ms Jan Mason and Mr Jim Miller led an independent process to assess whether the estate is fit for purpose. Specifically, to make 'recommendations to optimise the Defence estate to support the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) posture and basing requirements to meet the nation's future security needs and to support the long-term management and sustainment of the Defence estate.'

As a result, a total of 68 sites were identified for divestment by the Audit, including RAAF Williams – Point Cook, RAAF Williams – Laverton (partial Divestment), and RAAF Glenbrook. The report also recommended Defence adopt a more common base naming convention in lieu of service-specific base names.

The Air Force Association recognises the need for Government to review the Defence Estate, and acknowledges the strategic challenges faced now and into the future.

However, due consideration must be given for the historical and cultural connections that the Australian people have with significant sites.

This goes beyond mere infrastructure. There are places

which hold significant memories for veterans and their families in honour and respect of those who have served and sacrificed. These intangible assets hold the fabric of culture, identity and tradition, being core to the ethos of the Australian Defence Force now and into the future.

The Review acknowledged that key heritage and veteran considerations must be considered and protected in divesting the Defence Estate. I encourage you to review the report and its recommendations.

There are also information sessions being made available by Defence. I also encourage you to bring your thoughts and ideas forward through your State Divisions so that we can best represent you.

- Defence Estate Audit Report: <https://www.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-02/Defence-Estate-Audit-Report-WEB.pdf>
- Defence Estate Recommendations: <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/locations-property/delivering-future-estate>

Thank you

**Joe Iervasi**

*National President  
Air Force Association Ltd*

If any of our AFA Victoria members would like to contribute to AFA's response to the Defence Audit Report and Recommendations from a Victoria perspective, you can email us at [info@afavic.org.au](mailto:info@afavic.org.au)



The Australian Flying Corps Memorial is one of many significant historical sites located at RAAF Base Point Cook, Victoria, including the birthplace of the Australian Flying Corps and the Royal Australian Air Force, and home to the RAAF Museum.

Point Cook was established in March 1913 as the location for the Central Flying School and has the oldest continually operating military airfield in the southern hemisphere.

(Image courtesy of Air Force Association - Victoria.)



RAAF Museum is located at RAAF Base, Point Cook.



A stunning Norman Clifford painting of RAAF Base Point Cook as it was in 1914 was presented to the Air Force Association – Victoria by AIRCDRE E J (Ted) Bushell AM (retd), in November 2018.

# AFA RELEASES GUIDE FOR WEARING AWARDS AND DECORATIONS



*: How to wear your Awards and Decorations*

**A Guide for the Wearing of Awards and Decorations has been released by the Air Force Association to assist Air Force veterans and their families on how to appropriately wear awards and decorations – whether the award be their own or worn in honour of their forebear.**

The wearing of awards and decorations as an Air Force Association member brings obligations and responsibilities to protect the reputation and honour of the member, the Association, the Air Force, and the awards and decorations.

The Guide is relevant to all AFA members including former members of the RAAF, current serving members of the RAAF who are members of the Association, and AFA members who have not served in the RAAF but may wear the awards and decorations of loved ones.

The development of the Guide was led by AFA (South Australia Division) and supported through AFA's Federation Council.

The National Board of AFA Ltd commended the initiative and approved the guide for release in preparation for ANZAC Day.

AFA encourages veterans and their families to review the guide to ensure the dignity and honour of awards and decorations are respectfully retained.

You can access the Guide via the link below.

[https://raafa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Air-Force-Association-Wearing-of-Awards-and-Decorations-AFA-Guidance\\_Final\\_27Feb2026.pdf](https://raafa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Air-Force-Association-Wearing-of-Awards-and-Decorations-AFA-Guidance_Final_27Feb2026.pdf)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### AFA VICTORIA BRANCH CONTACTS

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Bendigo	Reinhard Goschiniak	0419 375 160
Technical	David Graham	0407 248 874
Geelong	John Price	0415 077 805
RAAF Radar	Chris Harnath	0425 770 011
RAF	Val Boyd	0428 174 070
Sunderland SQNs	Ricky Hattam	0418 994 759
Vietnam Veterans	Chris Hudnott	0438 331 215
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### CONTACT: EDITORIAL DATES

#### SUMMER 2027

Contributions by: 27 November 2027

Publication: 18 December 2027

#### AUTUMN 2026

Contributions by 2 March 2026

Publication: 20 March 2026

#### WINTER 2026

Contributions by 27 May 2026

Publication: 20 June 2026

#### SPRING 2026

Contributions by: 1 September 2026

Publication: 19 September 2026

# AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION STRENGTHENS TIES AT LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCY AWARDS



Leading Aircraftman Will Lauenstein (centre) from 13 SQN in Darwin, was named the RAAF's Aviator of the Year.

## The RAAF has recognised outstanding performance and leadership at the annual Proficiency and Leadership Awards in Canberra.

Leading Aircraftman Will Lauenstein from No 13 Squadron in Darwin was named the RAAF's Aviator of the Year. Serving as the Indigenous Liaison Officer in the northern region, LAC Lauenstein has made a significant impact through mentorship, advocacy, and strengthening cultural understanding.

"I want to acknowledge the Darwin community. The people, the culture, and the connections up there play a big part in shaping who I am and the work I do. I am proud to be a part of the community," LAC Lauenstein said.



Leading Aircraftman Will Lauenstein (centre) from 13 SQN in Darwin, was named the RAAF's Aviator of the Year.

Deanna Nott, Air Force Association National Vice President and Director of Communications, presented the prestigious Most Proficient Squadron award — an honour the Air Force Association has proudly presented since 1961.

"The opportunity to speak directly with serving members about what the Air Force Association does highlight its ongoing relevance, and encourage membership — while also showcasing our important work in advocacy, commemorations, and now as a registered charity raising funds for to support homeless veterans — was truly rewarding," said Deanna, a Wing Commander Reservist, who recently celebrated 32 years in the Air Force.

"Meeting the winners, especially the outstanding young leaders of the future, was incredibly encouraging. It left me with every confidence that our Air Force is in very safe hands."

(Story credit: Air Force Association)

## YOUR LATEST EDITION OF WINGS IS OUT NOW

The latest edition of Wings – the AFA's flagship magazine – is available online now. Click here to access the online version or go to <https://wingsmagazine.org/view-wings>

WINGS will be distributed by post in the coming weeks.



# VETERAN ADVOCACY REGULATION: HAVE YOUR SAY

**The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) has launched a public consultation paper on veteran advocacy as part of its commitment to reform to better protect veterans from exploitation within the commercial veterans' advocacy sector.**

Recently DVA has seen a dramatic increase in some commercial advocates engaging in unscrupulous behaviours that prioritise profits over the health and wellbeing of veterans and families of veterans.

As a first step, veterans, veteran advocates and the broader community are invited to have their say on how to best regulate the veterans' advocacy sector.

At the same time, DVA recognises the important of not over-regulating a largely volunteer service. The principle of 'mates supporting mates' will remain at the heart of veterans' advocacy.

A public consultation paper is available on the [DVA website](#) and submissions are open until 8 May 2026. The purpose of this reform would be to:

- restrict exploitative fee practices by commercial veteran advocacy providers

- ban overseas hosting of veteran information by advocates
- protect veterans from misleading and deceptive conduct, advertising and behaviour
- ensure advocates charging fees are properly trained, insured, and conduct themselves ethically.

You can lodge a submission on this public consultation paper using the [submission portal](#). We encourage you to have your say and make a submission today.

An increase in funding to enable veterans to better access free advocacy services when lodging claims with DVA has also been announced.

Up to \$58.6 million over three years is now available to ex-service organisations (ESOs) to provide free advocacy services through DVA's Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Grants Program.

These changes address Recommendation 99 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's Final Report, which called for the Government to improve veterans' advocacy by funding professional, paid advocates.

(Source: Department of Veterans' Affairs)

## HONOURING OUR NASHOS 75 YEARS ON.

**The 14th February was National Serviceman's Day, marking 75 years since the inception of the first National Service Scheme.**

From the 1950s to the 1970s, more than 280,000 young Australian men were called up for National Service. Known as "Nashos," they trained, served, and shaped the nation's defence history.

First established in 1951, National Service was an integral part of Australia's defence strategy during the Cold War period to increase defence manpower. It allowed Australia's armed services, particularly the Army, to expand, providing the personnel for domestic and overseas defence commitments.

The scheme ended in 1959 but was reintroduced in 1964 as tensions in Southeast Asia increased and is most closely associated with Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Under this system, 20-year-old men were selected through a lottery based on their date of birth.

At the national commemorative service held in Canberra, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Keogh said "In a time when many Australians were weary of war, 'Nashos' put their lives on hold and stood ready to defend our nation."



*National Servicemen at their Passing Out parade at Holsworthy, 11 April 1954. (Image source: Australian War Memorial)*

Tragically, during both schemes national servicemen lost their lives. In the National Service Scheme, two men lost their lives in Borneo serving in the Confrontation and more than 200 lost their lives serving in Vietnam.

"We thank all national servicemen and their families for their sacrifices and remember those who lost their lives. Like those who served before them, Nashos served honourably and continued the Anzac spirit and legacy." Mr Keogh said.

The Air Force Association – Victoria also salutes the valuable service of our Nasho members during such a significant period in Australian military history.



## AROUND THE BRANCHES

### BALLARAT BRANCH

We are already well into 2026, with our summer period taking a more casual approach to our meetings.

In February, we commemorated the 22nd anniversary of the Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial. Keith Pitman, Janet Bates, and Peter Dowling attended the commemoration on behalf of the Ballarat Branch and Peter Dowling laid a book tribute in lieu of a floral tribute.

The Australian Ex Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat is one of the most significant commemorative sites in the country, honouring more than 35,000 Australians who were held captive in conflicts from the Boer War through to the Korean War. It stands on the southern edge of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens, beside



*Keith Pitman, Janet Bates, and Peter Dowling attended the c Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial commemoration on behalf of the Ballarat Branch*

Lake Wendouree, and has been recognised as the National Prisoner of War Memorial.

Our February meeting returned to the normal monthly format with the AGM forming a part of this meeting. The treasurer presented a brief overview of the financial picture, and a new committee

was elected. This year's committee is:

- Peter Dowling – President and Treasurer
- Sue Alexander – Secretary and Newsletter Editor
- Janet Bates – 1WAGS Co-ordinator and Committee
- Keith Lanyon – Chaplain

- Bob McDonald – Committee

We look forward to another great year full of interesting meetings. We will once again stage the Battle for Australia Ball, and we are already engaging with Ballarat Council to showcase Hut 48 and the Ballarat Branch of the Air Force Association during the Ballarat Heritage weekend later in the year.

**Peter Dowling**  
*President*

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE BALLARAT BRANCH?

VISIT OUR BRANCH PAGE ON THE AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION VICTORIA WEBSITE

### GEELONG BRANCH

Following a successful and enjoyable Christmas Lunch at Geelong RSL on 4 December (with a total of 25 attending – including partners of some members), the Branch took a breather in January and reconvened for our first meeting of 2026 on 5 February. Our guest at that meeting was

**Carl Schiller.**

Carl has a long history of distinguished service with Air Force, as well as Air Force Association, Legacy and other veteran-related roles. Carl spoke with us regarding Legacy (recent developments) and the RAAF Veterans'

Residences Trust. This was an informative session and Carl, as always, answered questions in his usual frank and informed manner. Thank you again, Carl.

At our February meeting we also welcomed a new member to the Branch, Rob Elings.

**Remembering a Founding Member and Past President – George Gourley**

Of historical interest, I was contacted recently by the daughter of a former Geelong Branch President, GEORGE GOURLEY. George was a founding member of the original RAAF Association

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Past Branch Presidents Dinner, 1979. George Gourley is pictured third from the right.

– Geelong Branch. In November 1980, he received the Certificate of Merit, a Federal Award for Outstanding Service to the Association.

George joined the RAAF as a pilot in September 1941 (he was 19 years of age) and discharged in January 1946 (aged 24). His family relates that he did his pilot training at Somers, Benalla, Victoria and graduated with his wings at Uranquinty in July 1942. Following his training, he held a position of Staff Pilot at West Sale, Victoria where

he helped train Gunners, Observers and Bombers. Later George completed a Reconnaissance Course at Bairnsdale, Victoria before completing his training on Sea Aircraft at Rathmines in New South Wales.

George was in two squadrons. Firstly: 11 Squadron until early 1945. Secondly: 113 Squadron Air Force Rescue Unit, (Z Force - Secret Service) between January and November 1945. George initially served at Morotai in the Moluccas Islands and later in various parts of

Borneo, the Philippines and the Celebes. His missions involved picking up the wounded and transporting captured prisoners for interrogation and evacuations. George flew over 400 hours, Day/Night, flying 50 operational strikes and attacks.

One of his most memorable days in the RAAF was in 1945 when on a rescue mission. George and his six crew members took the risk of air lifting 14 Americans but without success. Shortly after take-off, his own aircraft broke up and within three minutes sank to the bottom of the ocean. They were able to send out an SOS and a day later an American PT Boat picked everybody up from a nearby island.

During George's RAAF Career, he piloted the following aircraft types: DH 82, Wackett, Wirraway, Fairy Battle, Oxford, Anson, Ryan and Catalina.

After the war, George returned to Sale, working as a carpenter and building the Soldier Settlement housing in the Sale and surrounding district. In

1956, George, wife Ivy and family moved to Kerang where he continued to build for many years. Later George embarked on a teaching career, from which he retired in 1974.

In 1975 George and Ivy relocated to Geelong. George was a founding member of the RAAF Association and was appointed President of the Geelong Branch in 1976. George Gourley passed away in 1994, aged 72.

The photograph below was uncovered among the memorabilia held by the Branch. It depicts a dinner of past Presidents (of the Geelong Branch, presumably) that took place in 1979. George Gourley is shown third from the right.

**John Price OAM**

*President, Geelong Branch*

WANT TO KNOW MORE  
ABOUT THE GEELONG  
BRANCH?

VISIT OUR BRANCH PAGE ON  
THE AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION  
VICTORIA WEBSITE

## B-24 LIBERATOR BRANCH



The annual B-24 Liberator Memorial Service was held on 23 March at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance.

After the long Christmas and New Year break, it has been nice to resume 'normal operations.'

However, with the wonderful work being done by the Hangar 1 project contractors, we have had to adjust (happily!) to a new 'normal'.

We recently had a meeting with Melbourne Water, SFP-JV and Wyndham City Council representatives, and it was wonderful to note the progress that has been made, the clear vision SFP-JV has of the H1 project and to witness the excellent communication among all parties.

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The 5MR B-24 flag was flown in the Shrine forecourt

Meanwhile, good progress has been made with the B-24 Liberator restoration and work on our other aircraft.

The most conspicuous developments have been the work on the B-24 Liberator tailplane (almost completed), and the engine pod that has been fitted to the port wing.

Cleaning of some of the interior of the Liberator is also underway.

During the closure period the Aircraft was weighed by

a company experienced in this. The results will help us in planning for and moving the B-24 Liberator from H2 to H1 (probably next year!).

B24 Liberator Memorial Service

The annual B-24 Liberator Memorial Service was held on 23 March at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne.

Held every year on this date, the Service is conducted in the Crypt with the 5MR B-24 flag flown in the forecourt of the Shrine.

The Service was well attended by B24 Liberator members and dignitaries with public participation.

Read more about the B24 Liberator Restoration project here: <https://www.b24australia.org.au/>

[WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE B-24 BRANCH?](#)

[VISIT OUR BRANCH PAGE ON THE AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION VICTORIA WEBSITE](#)

## VIETNAM VETERANS

We have all become another year older and wiser since our last AGM and as AFA National President, Joe Iervasi, suggests in his report in the latest edition of 'Wings' magazine, 'It is hard to believe that we are at the end of another year'. Yet here we are – already part way through the fourth month of 2026.

As I reflect on the events and activities that were important to our Branch in 2025, one of the highlights of the year was the visit by our Branch members to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum on 9 November 2025. We were joined by members of the 37 Squadron Association including its President, Col Coyné, who was

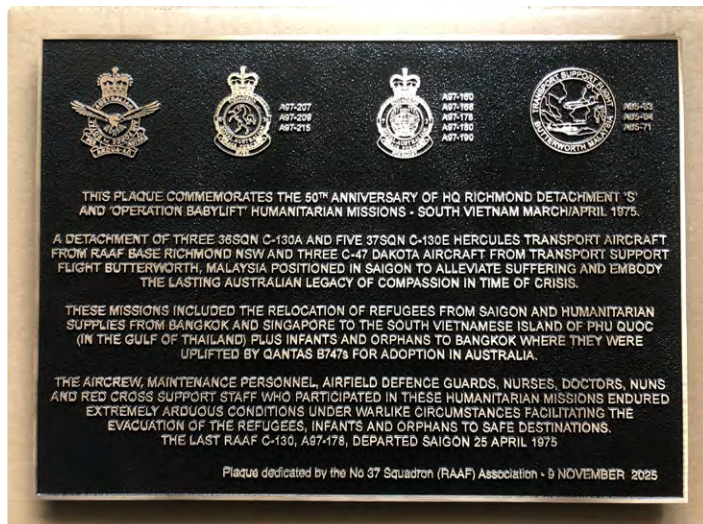
instrumental in arranging for the presentation of a plaque to the NVVM to commemorate the 50th anniversary of HQ Richmond Detachment 'S'.

A delay in the production of the plaque meant that there was insufficient time to have the plaque installed in the Garden of Remembrance at the Museum prior to our

visit, but a site has been selected, and the unveiling of the plaque was carried out under the wing of the Canberra in the relative warmth of the Museum.

Our newsletter publisher, Geoff Rose, has great coverage of the event in the December 2025 edition of the newsletter. We are grateful for the assistance

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Plaque was presented to the National Vietnam Veterans' Museum to commemorate the 50th anniversary of HQ Richmond Detachment 'S'.



Plaque was presented to the National Vietnam Veterans' Museum to commemorate the 50th anniversary of HQ Richmond Detachment 'S'.

provided by the NVVM staff and the support of the President of the VVAA Victoria Branch, Bob Elworthy.

Another plaque, presented to our Vietnam Veterans Branch was donated by the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (Victorian Branch) to recognise our membership of that association as the RAAF Sub-Branch from 1992 to 2024.

This initiative by the VVAA is in keeping with its policy of presenting a plaque to each Sub-Branch as it closes so that history of VVAA Branches is preserved. I am liaising with AFA Vic President, John Clarkson, to select an appropriate location for the plaque.

Our monthly lunches resumed from March. If you enjoy a cheap meal and maybe a glass of wine and haven't yet caught up with our regular meetings, why

not come along and enjoy the company of fellow vets – you will be made most welcome.

Finally, I am grateful for the assistance of members of the committee who provide valuable advice and assistance in the running of our Branch, and I join with John, our Treasurer, in thanking all those members who make an additional financial contribution when renewing their annual membership.

Stay well.

**Chris Hudnott**  
President

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE VIETNAM VETERANS' BRANCH?

VISIT OUR BRANCH PAGE ON THE AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION VICTORIA WEBSITE

## VALE

*It is with the greatest respect and fond memories, we remember our colleagues who have passed on before us.*

The following members have passed away since our last publication. May they rest in peace.

Mrs Penny Roberts Ballarat Branch ..... 11 Feb 2026



# Air Force Association

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