

ISSUE 31

INSPIRATIONAL AUSTRALIAN WOMEN:  
NURSE VIVIAN BULLWINKEL

DISCOVERING  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

RSL AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO  
DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE

CHRIS MASTERS – FLAWED HERO

JELENA DOKIC

# THE LAST POST

KEEPING THE ANZAC SPIRIT ALIVE FOR AUSTRALIA'S  
VETERANS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS

# *The Last Post Story*

Through bloodlines, The Last Post magazine started at Gallipoli. Its acorn then fought with the 2/10th in Milne Bay, Buna and Balikpapan and trekked the Kokoda in WW2. By the late-sixties, The Last Post magazine was ready to be born.

Raymond Thorsby Ross, who had fought in PNG and the son of Joseph Thorsby Ross, who had fought at Gallipoli, leased a small office in George Street, Sydney. Raymond had decided that a small magazine, designed to help RSLs and their members, should be introduced in New South Wales. To do this he would need advertising to help pay printing and distribution costs. Daily, Raymond would take the train from suburban Chatswood to the city and phone local businesses and sporting clubs, asking for their support. This ex-digger and RSL member worked long hours to get each edition out and was effectively the magazine's editor, graphic designer and distributor.

In 1974, Raymond and his partner moved to Scarborough in suburban Perth and continued The Last Post in Western Australia until his death in 1983.

Twenty-eight years later, Raymond's son and Joseph's grandson, Gregory Thorsby Ross brought his father's magazine back to life. Greg had lived with his father as a 15-year old, when he started working as a copy-boy and cadet journalist at The Sydney Morning Herald. The teenager became a first-hand observer of the early days of the ex-servicemen and women's publication. By 2011 he had put everything in place to re-introduce The Last Post to a public in desperate need of a modern, quality magazine to assist the veteran community. Only this time it would be a national. And this time, it would be for all Australians.

With this humble background, and from a history steeped in the Anzac tradition, the new national TLP was born and is now respected and read by not only Australian veterans but the wider global community.

Featuring profiles on contemporary and historical veteran issues as well as honourable Australians, organisations, institutions and companies, TLP has matured to be Australia's most recognised independent online and print veteran magazine.

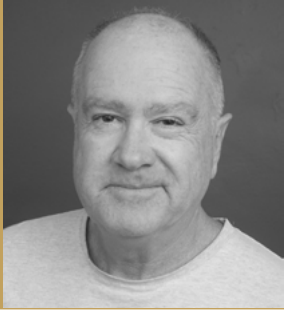
Acclaimed for its quality and journalism The Last Post is unlike any veteran's magazine seen before.

The reason?

It speaks to all Australians as a reminder that the legacy of the Anzac Spirit is relevant to us all.

With editor Greg T Ross' up-close interviews with famous Australians, stunning layout and production and input from great writers covering relevant topics in history, music, arts, entertainment, sport, travel, gardening, this magazine is so well received by a wide audience that reaches far beyond the veteran community.

Pte Raymond Thorsby Ross, founder of the original The Last Post, left, during his time with the 2/10th in Papua New Guinea during WW2.



## GREG T ROSS

### Diary of an independent publisher

As a preteen or young teenager, I'd had a dream of being the editor of a country or regional newspaper that was successful and punched above its weight. The dream was full of traditional domestic ideas with the knowledge that that may be disturbed at any time by the call-to-arms of a breaking story.

So now, I am the editor but also owner of a popular national magazine. My backyard is the country. I travel a lot. I work a lot. I have little rest.

My day is full of interaction with wonderful people from all over. There's not much chit-chat. Most of these are meaningful conversations. At the end of the day, I am usually a little tired. I'm tired also, of talking. I have a martini. I read the news. I gravitate to the kitchen. I play music. I eat dinner whilst watching the TV. I text. I bring in clothes from the clothes line. I make another cuppa and play more music. Tonight, a lot of the stuff was from 1972, the year my life in media started. In Sydney. On Broadway. At the Sydney Morning Herald.

So tonight, it was mostly stuff from 1972. And the solitude is important for me. It gives me a break.

A lot of this music I played tonight, I had originally bought at a shop not far from Central Railway Station. Back then, a lot of it was bootleg. Tonight, for a time, I was 15 or 16 again. As Lee Michaels might say, do you know what I mean?

A lot of the childhood dream has not happened but enough of it has, to make it still a dream come true.

And here, now, to have the opportunity to honour Remembrance Day with the release of the 31st edition of The Last Post.

In this edition we look at the growing crisis affecting an increasing number of Australians, the housing/homelessness dilemma. We visit WA and look at WA veterans, with help from Jeff Hughes' This Story. We include a valued piece from Prof. Ben Waldham on the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. We interview Jeff Apter about his book, Don't Dream It's Over, the story on the remarkable life of singer/songwriter/musician Neil Finn. We interview former Australian tennis great, Jelena Dokic. In this chat, Jelena talks about her new book, Fearless, where she shares stories of abuse and of the importance of finding your own voice.

A whole lot more, but I'll leave that to you to discover. With Summer fast approaching and holidays, a message to embrace life and to take it easy, geez, that's the title of another song that goes back to 1972.

**#thelastpostmagazine**  
**#diaryofanindependentpublisher**

Greg T Ross



# foreword

Edited 2021 speech from  
AWM Director,  
Matthew Anderson PSM

In 1993, on the 75th anniversary of the Armistice, then Prime Minister Keating delivered the Eulogy for the Unknown Australian Soldier.

In interring a soldier from the Great War, the so-called War to end all Wars – but which we now know sowed the seeds of a second, even more terrible war – Paul Keating said 'We might think this Unknown Soldier died in vain.'

But, in honouring our war dead, as we always have and as we do today, we declare that this is not true.'

Today, 30 years on we declare, still, that this is not true.

And, as we say every evening at the Last Post Ceremony, we also honour all those who have served, those still serving, and the families that love and support them.

We do not gather to glorify war.

Indeed, at our opening 82 years ago today, the then Governor General, Lord Gowrie, VC, said that when people leave this place, they must utter 'Never again, never again.'

I have never sacrificed anything for the freedoms that I enjoy.

They were won by others, and on this day and at this hour, they continue to be guaranteed by others; by the women and men of the Australian Defence Force.

What I can do, and what I ask of each of you, is to honour the two million women and men who have worn this nation's uniform, and 102,800 recorded on the Roll of Honour and ensure their service and sacrifice is not in vain.

The philosopher Arthur Danto wrote that 'We erect monuments so that we shall remember, and build Memorials so that we shall never forget.'

In honouring our war dead, as we always have, we declare they did not die in vain.

Today, we remember.

Lest we forget.

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## FRONT COVER:

Studio portrait of Staff Nurse Vivian Bullwinkel, Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS).

Photo courtesy Australian War Memorial.



## designer / art director KIRSTIE WYATT

The Last Post Magazine has been praised nationally and internationally since it was launched in 2011 and is designed by Kirstie Wyatt from Wyatt Creative. Kirstie is a freelance graphic and web designer and can enhance your marketing to get the results you want in your business.

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# RSL AUSTRALIA UPDATE

## National President Greg Melick

At 11.00 am on 11 November 1918 the guns of the Western Front fell silent after more than four years of continuous war. The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month attained a special significance in the post-war years and is now known as Remembrance Day when we honour all those who bravely served our country and continue to serve our country.

Please join us in honouring our veterans this Remembrance Day. Whether it be attending a service, wearing a poppy, observing a minute's silence at 11 a.m., or donating to the Poppy Appeal. Your support allows the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) to continue to support veterans and their families.

### **One of the ways that the RSL supports veterans and their families is by advocating for veterans' benefits and welfare.**

This year we're pleased to report that strong progress has been made in the key areas that the RSL has been focused on. Though much remains to be done, we have seen the Government commit to:

- demand-driven funding for DVA,
- the harmonisation of the veterans' entitlements legislation,
- more funding for DVA to reduce the claims backlog,
- and a review and uplift of the DVA fee schedule.

Each of these things RSL Australia advocated for before the release of the 2023-24 Federal Government Budget.

### **The RSL has also been present at each of the Hearings of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, listening and learning as the Commission proceeds.**

We have seen that there is a need to bring together Ex Service Organisations (ESOs) and work together to address the Commission's emerging findings and ensure that the recommendations of the Royal Commission can lead to a real improvement in the health of the men and women who serve and have served our nation.

### **The RSL has proactively taken action, and facilitated three National Forums for ESOs which have brought together over 70 organisations from across Australia.**

Together we are working towards establishing a peak body for the sector to represent and advocate for the needs of ESOs – both large and small – as well as for veterans, and their families. The National Forum process has been supported by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and participants have heard from the Royal Commissioners into Defence and Veteran Suicide at each forum.

In addition to this, RSL Australia is calling on the Government to establish a peak body headed by an Independent Commissioner to lead the implementation of the forthcoming recommendations of the Royal Commission to ensure there is a mechanism to keep a permanent watch on the issue and continue to hold Government, Defence and others to account.

### **Did you know...**

**The current Royal Commission marks the 58th inquiry into Defence and veteran suicide by Australian Governments. Australia must seize this opportunity to, once and for all, provide real improvement in the health and wellbeing of the men and women who serve and have served our nation. The cost of not doing so is too high.**

Another strategic priority for RSL Australia is advocating for increased defence spending, particularly for the Army in response to the Defence Strategic Review, to ensure that our nation's Defence Forces are balanced and appropriate for our region's current unstable strategic environment.

Advocacy is a continued focus for RSL. We will continue to advocate for funding to enhance the Advocacy Training and Development Program to ensure that veterans have access to free, trained advocates to assist with claims.

In addition to some great progress made in advocating for veterans, we've also been fortunate to receive grants from the government to establish veterans' hubs in locations across Australia. These hubs allow veterans to access one-stop-shops of services within their communities.

If you haven't already, we encourage you to follow RSL Australia on social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter) to stay abreast of initiatives that RSL is working on and how we are supporting veterans and their families.



ABOVE, FROM TOP:

Greg Melick at the National Forum for ESOs.

RSL delegates with the Commissioners for the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

The third National Forum for ESOs underway in Sydney.

# RSL ACTIVE

*Recreation, Events and  
Activities for Veterans  
and their Families*

Take part in programs and events created for the veteran community. Connect with other veterans, improve physical and mental well-being and enhance your support circle.

There are regular RSL Active events held through RSL Sub-branches across Australia.

You do not need to be an RSL member to be a part of RSL Active.



**RSL**  
ACTIVE

Join the fun! [rslaustralia.org/rsl-active](https://rslaustralia.org/rsl-active)





**Written by: Belinda Crossman – RSL Queensland**  
**Images: Leigh Gilbert**

This article was originally published on [rslqld.org](http://rslqld.org) by RSL Queensland and has been republished with permission. Warning: This article discusses the experiences of a prisoner of war, which some readers may find confronting.

#### **About Leigh Gilbert**

Like her father was, Leigh Gilbert is a passionate advocate for the veteran community and sees many of the ex-POW community as family. She worked for RSL Queensland for 19 years, first as the RSL Girl in a Million Quest SED Consultant and then as State Fundraising Coordinator.

## POW's daughter shares her journey of reconciliation

Eight decades after Cyril Gilbert was imprisoned by the Japanese Army, Japan welcomed his daughter in the name of reconciliation.

In March this year, Leigh Gilbert made her first visit to Japan – the former empire that made her late father a prisoner of war (POW).

She'd been offered a place in the 2023 Japan-Australia Grassroots Exchange Programme, along with the daughter of another POW, and RSL Australia President Greg Melick.

"I know Dad was looking down on me going to that trip," Leigh says. "I think he had something behind me getting there, because as soon as I heard about it, I just knew that I was going."

"I had his photo with me everywhere I went. It was the first time I was able to wear his medals over there too, which was pretty special."

### **Reconciliation, understanding and goodwill**

More than 120 POWs and POW descendants have taken part in the programme since it began in 1997.

Organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, it "aims to deepen the mutual understanding of the peoples of Japan and Australia by inviting descendants of former Australian POWs to Japan, through the RSL network".

It's an opportunity for all participants – POW descendants, RSL representatives and Japanese citizens – to "promote post-war reconciliation, understanding and goodwill between both countries".

For Leigh, this "amazing privilege" was a chance to seek closure, apology, and some idea of what Japanese people went through during WWII.

### **An emotional journey**

Leigh and her companions spent eight days touring Japan, visiting sites including the Hodogaya (Yokohama) Commonwealth War Cemetery, and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, Museum and Genbaku Dome – the epicentre of the atomic bombing.

There were meetings with Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Parliamentary Vice-Minister, who acknowledged Japan's wartime actions. But the biggest highlight for Leigh was meeting Japanese citizens and students.

"Seeing how interested they were in my father's story, seeing the photos – I wasn't expecting it. It was actually overwhelming to realise how sorry they were for what had happened," Leigh says.

"They didn't know what their soldiers were doing during the war. It's still not taught in schools and that's something they want to do. And I think they need to do that to be able to move on."

Visiting Hiroshima was particularly emotional for Leigh. "I have always felt that if it wasn't for Hiroshima, I wouldn't be here," she says. "I particularly wanted to go there and pay my respects because I knew civilians and children were affected by it. I laid a poppy and had my quiet reflection, saying sorry that they had to lose their lives so that we've got peace in the world."



OPPOSITE PAGE:  
Leigh Gilbert, Lesley Callcott and RSL Australia National President  
Greg Melick meeting with Japanese citizens.

LEFT:  
RSL Australia National President Greg Melick and Deputy Head of Mission  
to Japan Peter Roberts at the Yokohama War Cemetery.

### Three and a half years as a prisoner

In Leigh's words, her beloved dad was "a true Aussie character who loved to tell a yarn, have a laugh and a cold beer". "I'm absolutely privileged to have had him as my father," she shares.

Born in Brisbane, Cyril enlisted in the Australian Army in 1940, just after his 20th birthday. He served as a Lance Sergeant in the 8th Division 27th Brigade Australia Army Service Corps. But he was captured after the fall of Singapore in 1942, and marched 316km to help build the infamous Burma-Thailand Railway.

More than 80,000 Allied POWs and romusha (Asian labourers) died building the railway, succumbing to exhaustion, starvation, tropical disease, and their captors' brutality.

Leigh remembers Cyril's stories from that time well.

There were dark ones, of course – about seeing those who tried to escape tortured in front of everyone; saying good night to the man beside him, then waking to find him dead the next day; and having to carry, then burn, the bodies of cholera victims.

But there were lighter ones, too – about the time he and seven mates, all starving, celebrated Cyril's birthday with a tin of herrings, meticulously divided under team supervision.

"There were nine herrings and eight mates, so the ninth herring had to be evenly cut into eight pieces – with them all standing over the poor one whose task it was to cut it up. I cannot tell you the number of times Dad told that story," Leigh recalls.

She says Cyril lost all faith in God, in everything – except for his mates. To him, they were the reason he survived.

## The Grassroots Program

Commencing in 1994 as the Hand of Friendship project, the Japan-Australia Grassroots Exchange Program aims to deepen the mutual understanding of the peoples of Japan and Australia by inviting descendants of former Australian POWs to Japan through a partnership with The Returned & Services League of Australia.

By participating in this exchange, representatives of the RSL and descendants of POWs have an opportunity to promote post-war reconciliation, understanding and goodwill between both countries.

The next tour of the Grassroots Program is scheduled for early 2024. The Japanese Government have generously offered two places to descendants of POWs. The tour includes 7 nights/8 days in Japan, with flights, accommodation, travel within Japan, meals and travel insurance covered by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Grassroots Program is only offered in Australia and is a testament to the strong relationship between Japan and Australia.

### A lifetime advocate

Cyril spent most of 1945 in Changi Prison – "a resort compared to the railway", he'd later say – before finally returning home, "a shell of his complete self".

After discharging from the Army, Cyril spent rest of his life assisting other ex-POWs and veterans – work that earned him numerous recognitions, including the Medal of the Order of Australia. At 91, he was still organising reunions and at 94, he was still the National and Queensland President of the Ex-Prisoner of War Association.

"Dad was always about his mates, always," Leigh says. "They were the biggest part of his life apart from his family."

### Growing awareness

Much WWII history is unknown in Japan, Leigh says. But various Japanese groups and initiatives are determined to change that.

"The civilians in Naoetsu built this beautiful Peace Memorial Park. The whole town is behind it. Somebody donated their house, which was on the edge of the POW camp there, and they've turned that into a museum.

"I had my photo taken with an elderly fellow there who was really lovely. He lived around the corner when he was a child but was never, ever told what was going on. He only found out about it a few years ago. And that's when they started this Peace Memorial Park."

She's also encouraged by the awareness that the Grassroots Exchange Programme has sparked.

"There was media, so there were stories being written. The schoolchildren were doing projects on it and the POW network group is really pushing for, 'How can we improve it? How can we get this into the schools?' So that message was getting across to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well.

"I would like to think that one day it is taught in their schools – this happened; we're not proud of it, but this is why; and especially this is why Hiroshima happened, and why the war ended."

For those in Australia, Leigh believes remembrance has a key role to play in reconciliation.

"I think as long as we don't forget, and we continue things like ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day, people will find out more.

"Hopefully, one day the world will come to its senses and there won't be any wars."

### Closure

While Cyril "loved going back to Thailand", returning almost yearly to visit his mates who didn't make it home, he never got to visit Japan. (He applied to join the Grassroots Exchange Programme but was unsuccessful.) However, Leigh was honoured to make the pilgrimage on his behalf.

"I really wish that Dad had heard that Vice-Minister say sorry, and seen these beautiful Japanese people and how interested and remorseful they were. I think that would've made a huge difference to him in his life," she says.

"But I feel I have that closure for Dad and my family. "I know he would've been very proud. One of the last things I ever said to him is that I would keep his memory alive. I'll keep doing that 'til the day I die."



# Together We Remember.

The RSL provides life-changing support for our veterans and their families.



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### RSL Scholarships

RSL Australia provides scholarships for children and grandchildren of Australian veterans. There were three new RSL Scholarships awarded in 2023. The winners were Brooke Mitchell, Abigail Paduch and Matilda Langham.

My name is Matilda Langham, a proud Wiradjuri Woman, and I am honoured to be featured in the Last Post Magazine as an Inspirational Woman. I grew up in the small town of Ungarie, NSW, population of only about 300 people. I was an academic, sporty, and bubbly girl, all traits which I still uphold today. That is where I found lifelong friends and my like for teaching and thought it may be a fit for me.

In 2017 we decided to make the move to Forbes, NSW, and that is where I really blossomed. I excelled in school academically and physically, playing at least 2 sports throughout the year. I found my passion in indigenous studies and pursued that passion, as now it is a major part of my life and current study. I worked exceptionally hard as I progressed into my senior schooling. I took every opportunity I was given and gave it my absolute all. This ended up paying off in the end, as from this dedication, I was given citizenship, sporting, and academic awards. I was also made School Vice-Captain of my high school, and this gave me more confidence to feel as though I could have an influence on the indigenous culture within the school. This all lead to me applying for University at the University of Canberra (Bachelor of Education – Majoring in PE and Indigenous Studies).

As of 2021, I graduated from Forbes High School, being awarded with the Senior Citizenship award, 3rd in my HSC, PD/H/PE distance education course and Caltex Ampol All Rounder recipient. This made me feel confident going into my first year of university, giving it my all and yet again getting rewarded in return. I was awarded with the RSL Australia Veterans Scholarship, which I was so incredibly lucky to receive. This has given me the flexibility to be able to work and study, as well as pursue my growing passions in my spare time. I also got to meet and speak with the Governor General at Hyde Park where my RSL Australia scholarship ceremony was held.

I would now say that I am excelling at Uni and have been very fortunate with the support group that I have around me. I love going back to Forbes and running into old teachers and seeing my close friends to let them know how I'm going at Uni. I also love my family very dearly and make time to see them when I come home for visits, as I am 1 of 6 children with a massive extended family. I wouldn't have made it this far if I hadn't been from the countless amounts of support from my Family, Teachers and Friends, all which people I am very grateful for.



### FROM TOP:

AVCAT CEO Len Russell, 2023 RSL Scholarship winner Matilda Langham, and RSL Australia National Board Chair David Nathan.

Scholarship Presentation Ceremony program

AVCAT CEO Len Russell, 2023 RSL Scholarship winner Brooke Mitchell, and RSL Queensland Senior Manager Jenna Passlow.

AVCAT CEO Len Russell, 2023 RSL Scholarship winner Abigail Paduch, and RSL Victoria State President Dr Robert Webster.



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# Vivian Bullwinkel thought she was going to die.



The 26-year-old Australian army nurse had escaped the fall of Singapore in February 1942, and had survived the sinking of the SS Vyner Brooke, clinging to a life raft before making it ashore at Radji Beach on Banka Island.

There, 22 Australian nurses and a British civilian woman were forced to wade into the ocean and shot by Japanese soldiers. Bullwinkel was the only survivor.

"The Japanese took out tommy-guns, set up a machine-gun, and ordered us into the sea," Bullwinkel told reporters after the war.

"There was no mistaking their vicious intentions ... We all knew we were going to die..."

"When we were thigh deep in the surf they opened up a murderous fire, mowing us down like a scene I saw in a film as a child.

"The women around me shrieked, stiffened, and sank. I was hit here, in the left side, under the ribs, falling unconscious in the water.

"I can't swim a stroke, I can't even float, but somehow I felt my body being washed about in the waves.

"I lay still, partly because something told me I would be killed if I moved, and partly because I did not care anyway."

Wearing the uniform in which she was shot, Bullwinkel told reporters, "I am sorry I am hazy in parts about all this. I have tried so hard all this time to drive these scenes from my mind."

When one correspondent began to apologise for asking her to recall the horrors she had experienced during the Second World War, she replied, "No. This story is one that must be told everywhere."

Bullwinkel spent three and a half years as a prisoner of war in and around Sumatra. She went on to testify at the war crimes tribunal in Tokyo, and dedicated the rest of her life to ensuring the nurses killed at Banka Island were not forgotten.

More than 80 years after the Banka Island massacre, Bullwinkel has been immortalised in a bronze sculpture by Brisbane artist Dr Charles Robb at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Her nephew, John Bullwinkel, was one of three generations of the Bullwinkel family at the dedication ceremony.

"It's a great honour," he said. "She wasn't one to hog the limelight ... She was humble. She was compassionate. And she was very self-effacing. She was always trying to help people ... and she was very loyal, and very loyal to her colleagues, in particular."

Bullwinkel's sculpture now stands in the grounds of the Memorial, opposite a sculpture of her friend, wartime surgeon and fellow prisoner of war, Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop.

On the base are 22 stainless steel discs, representing the victims of the Banka Island massacre. They are arranged on the base of the sculpture as a reflection of the stars that would have been visible in the night sky on 16 February 1942.

For her nephew John, it's particularly poignant.

"We're very proud that she's being remembered, together with the other girls who died on the beach," he said. "I think she would have appreciated that. For her, it was always to do with her comradeship, loyalty, and compassion, and not wanting them to be forgotten."



ABOVE: Shirley Bourne, *Matron Vivian Bullwinkel* (1962, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 71.2 cm) AWM ART28389.  
LEFT: Vivian Bullwinkel sculpture at the Australian War Memorial.



CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE:  
Captain (Capt) Vivian Bullwinkel  
(left) sitting in a witness  
stand, giving evidence.

Studio portrait of Staff Nurse  
Vivian Bullwinkel, Australian  
Army Nursing Service (AANS).

Sister Bullwinkel reunited  
with her mother at Heidelberg  
hospital following her release  
from captivity in 1945.

Images courtesy Australian  
War Memorial.



# REMEMBRANCE DAY 2023

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## foreword

Hon Rita Saffiotta MLA  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Tourism

# WA as a tourism destination for veterans

Western Australia has a strong history of commemorating the service and sacrifice of previous generations. Due to its strategic geography, WA has always had a significant place in Australia's defence history, and the state saw many Australians depart from its shores to protect our country in war and conflict.

Western Australia has embraced its duty to build on the heritage of those who served our country, driving the need for remembrance through memorials, award-winning museums, and points of interest in our natural environment.

Western Australia's involvement in World War I and World War II can be discovered on tours and at many museums across the state.

Opened 100 years after the start of the Great War, the National Anzac Centre in Albany is recognised as one of Australia's significant cultural assets, and a must-visit place for people looking to honour the Anzac tradition. It represents the birth of the Anzac legend and tells their story, offering visitors a deeply personal connection with the Anzac experience and overlooking the magnificent King George Sound.

In Perth, Kings Park and Botanic Garden boasts more memorials, statues and honour avenues than any other park in Australia. Its iconic State War Memorial, along with other memorials throughout the park, honours the fallen from all wars in which Australia has participated and hosts one of the largest Anzac Day Dawn Services in the State each year, attracting thousands of people.

Rottneet Island, Perth's island paradise, was a prime location to defend Fremantle Port from potential enemy seaborne attacks during World War II. Here, you can view two 11-metre 9.2-inch naval guns on Oliver Hill, the only intact emplacement of its type left in Australia. After viewing the battery, take a guided tour underground to explore the tunnels that burrow into the sandy hillside, used to house the gun's engine room and ammunition supply.

WA's rich display of memorials and artefacts respectfully reflects the state's gratitude toward those who have courageously shaped Australia's place in today's world, while educating the future generations.



For over 60,000 years, the Margaret River Region has supported on of the world's longest, unbroken human occupations, resulting in an immensely deep cultural knowledge and connection to the land.

It's the traditional land of the Wadandi (Saltwater) People.

Nestled in the South West of Western Australia, the Margaret River Region is a living and breathing embodiment of ancient geography and Wadandi song lines.

Natural beauty, abundance of space, fine wine, produce and fresh coastal air make a holiday here the remedy to modern life.

Journeying through this region, you'll encounter a diverse tapestry of tales and locales. To the north, charming coastal towns like Busselton, Dunsborough and Yallingup beckon, each with its unique appeal.

Margaret River itself, both a town and a river, finds its place nestled a few tranquil kilometres inland from the ocean. To the south, Augusta marks the region's grand finale, where two rivers merge with two oceans in a spectacular union of water and land.

Let us now immerse ourselves in the region's often-called gateway: Busselton. Its enduring allure has firmly established it as a beloved holiday destination, attracting generations of families to its serene shores. This coastal gem, boasting progressive urban development, has remained steadfast in preserving its core identity. Here, holidays are not mere escapes but cherished rituals, woven into the very fabric of life.

At the heart of Busselton stands the iconic 1.8-kilometer Busselton Jetty, a poignant symbol of days gone by, with its original timber framework once serving as the bustling hub of regional exports. Today, it bears witness the leaps of children and teenagers into its shallow waters during weekends and school holidays. As the sun descends, casting a warm, golden and bubble gum-hues glow upon the foreshore, families gather to savour freshly caught fish and chips. Athletes and enthusiasts eagerly partake in the annual Jetty Swim, navigating its length and unwavering passion and determination. Early risers embarking on morning strolls along the jetty are rewarded with breathtaking vistas of the Geographe Bay and a dolphin or two, a sight that evokes profound awe and appreciation.

From the very moment you set foot in Busselton and on its foreshore, the reasons behind its popularity among visitors become abundantly clear.

The renowned jetty, pristine beaches, lush verdant lawns, a whimsical maritime-themed playground, contemporary dining establishments, and crystal waters combine to form an oasis of enjoyment and everlasting memories.

Whether you're planning a family vacation, a weekend retreat with friends, or a romantic escape, Busselton promises an indelible experience. Here, cherished traditions and timeless pleasures converge, crafting something truly unique in the Margaret River Region.

Courtesy of the Margaret River Region: [margaretriver.com](http://margaretriver.com)

# Discovering a Subaquatic Wonderland: *Unveiling the Busselton Artificial Reef Trail*

Stretching an impressive 1.8 kilometres into the ocean, the Busselton Jetty, a renowned landmark in the southern hemisphere, has taken on a new identity as a gateway to an extraordinary underwater world.

Nestled beneath the waves, a mesmerising sculpture park awaits, offering visitors an immersive experience like no other. This marvel of art and conservation, installed in June, not only captivates the senses but also brings forth a trifecta of advantages.

The Underwater Sculpture Park, a brainchild of Busselton Jetty Inc., represents an intersection of art, tourism, and ecology. It offers a distinctive journey for water enthusiasts and sightseers alike, contributing to the region's thriving tourism industry and generating economic benefits. Beyond its aesthetic allure, the park serves as an artificial reef, attracting a plethora of marine species and sea sponges that work harmoniously to maintain a cleaner ocean and absorb carbon, thus yielding environmental advantages.

Managed independently by the non-profit organization Busselton Jetty Inc., each visitor's entry fee allocates a substantial 25 percent of gross revenue to the Jetty Maintenance Fund, a unique and sustainable business model. The previous fiscal year alone saw a contribution of \$1.1 million to the City of Busselton, responsible for the maintenance of the historical jetty.

Over its 158-year existence, the jetty has naturally transformed into one of Australia's most splendid artificial reefs, boasting a rich tapestry of marine invertebrates across its submerged timber and steel structures. The underwater sculptures have further invigorated this vibrant habitat, as evidenced by the swift colonisation of the first sculpture – a replica of the SS Pericles shipwreck – by marine life within hours of its installation.

The Busselton Jetty Inc.'s call for sculpture submissions resulted in over 60 artistic proposals, from which 13 outstanding designs were selected. With a clear emphasis on local talent, all 13 chosen artists hail from Western Australia, a majority from the southwestern region. This deliberate localisation fosters a connection between the artworks and the surrounding marine environment.

A diverse array of sculptures awaits discovery, each crafted with meticulous attention to detail. Among these captivating creations, the Shark and the

Crab stand out, a collaborative effort by Shaun Williamson and David Gaze. These life-sized sculptures, constructed from mild steel, pay homage to the local marine life while facilitating the growth of marine organisms.

The park is anchored by the SS Pericles Replica, an awe-inspiring homage to maritime heritage and history. This steel-hulled replica mirrors the ill-fated ship that met its demise off the coast of Cape Leeuwin in 1910. As a catalyst for the Underwater Sculpture Trail & Artificial Reef Project, the SS Pericles Replica embodies the intersection of history, education, and marine life preservation.

Diverse in form and function, the underwater sculptures include the Southern Right Whale by Alan Meyburgh Visual Artist, Ophelia the octopus by Brendan Booth, the Bronze Mermaid by Cerys Heyring, the Mermaid's Muse by Daniel Fisher, the Lighthouse by David Barbour, the Diver's Helmet by Gavin Cochrane, the Postmaster by Georgia Zoric, the Seahorse by Jake Coghlan, Stella the Stingray by Melanie Maclou, and the Queen of the Bay by Scott Michell. Each sculpture weaves a story, inviting visitors to explore the depths and engage with marine conservation in a novel way.

The Busselton Jetty Inc. continues to collaborate closely with the City of Busselton, aiming to enhance the jetty's end-of-the-line experience. Future plans encompass the addition of periscopes for surface-level viewing of the sculptures, as well as QR codes linked to live webcams, enhancing accessibility, interaction and education for all visitors.

As the underwater sculptures shimmer and sway beneath the waves, the Busselton Underwater Sculpture Park transcends the boundaries of traditional art galleries. With a vision of fostering marine appreciation, ecological awareness, and artistic immersion, this innovative project stands as a testament to the powerful union of creativity, conservation, and community engagement. The potential for the world's longest marine trail beckons, offering a unique opportunity to showcase the wonders of the ocean and underscore the significance of preserving its health for generations to come.





# Kalgoorlie RSL

Kalgoorlie RSL was formed after WW1 and has continually served the Veteran community of Kalgoorlie.

The community of Kalgoorlie has sent off sons and daughters to serve Australia and the Commonwealth in all theaters of war and peace. Members of our community served as far back as 1857 in the Indian Rebellion through to modern times. Each person is respected and recognised for their service. The RSL offers veterans and their families care, assistance and advocacy all year.

Each year ANZAC Day is observed without fail at the Kalgoorlie cenotaph and memorial as well as Remembrance Day. This sculptured monument made by Pietro Giacomo Porcelli in 1923 stands at the top end of Wilson Street, outside the Kalgoorlie train station. It is from this point many sons and daughters left their homes never to return. The "digger" with his rifle faces the station on a column of Bulla Bulling granite. This symbolises the patriotism and steadfast attitude of Kalgoorlie service personnel. Because Kalgoorlie is very much a multicultural community, we accept all veterans of allied countries to join with us on our days of commemoration and service.

In 1987 the 2/16 Battalion, Royal Western Australian Battalion received the honour of the Freedom of the City of Kalgoorlie. This they have exercised several times with serving members and veterans marching from the train station to Hannan Street and halting in front of the Kalgoorlie Town Hall.

Our committed continual service to the veteran community of Kalgoorlie is at the center of our obligation to the people who served.

## TIM MOORE

*Community and Media Liaison Officer  
Kalgoorlie Returning & Services League  
of Australia WA Branch*



Veterans of the 2/28th Battalion and 24th Anti-Tank Company construct timber framed houses in Kalgoorlie, 1946-1948. Image courtesy State Library of Western Australia 7506B/3.



## Initiative and resource learned during military service allowed veterans in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia to overcome a housing shortage after the Second World War.

A cooperative scheme to build houses commenced when 22 members of the 2/28<sup>th</sup> Battalion and 24<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Company Association, pooled £1300 of their own money to salvage building materials from the waning mining town of Wiluna in the northern Goldfields. A parcel of land in Kalgoorlie was obtained from municipal authorities and the local repatriation committee agreed to provide interest free loans.

The foundation stumps of the first home were put down on 20 September 1946. Employing skills in carpentry, electrical, plumbing and painting gained during service, the men worked together on weekends and in the evenings (following their shifts on the local mines). Three houses were completed within the first three months and a ballot was held to determine the owner of each property. The secretary of the scheme offered: "We hope...that the critics will be kind, remembering that the houses have been built mostly by mugs, out of second-hand building material...Such as they are we are proud of them."

By December 1947, members of the group had each contributed about 900 hours of labour. These hours were recorded and each man received credit towards the cost of their own property, to the effect that most were expected to pay between £300 and £350 for a three bedroom home valued at £500.

The scheme was successfully completed in May 1948 with 23 homes constructed, providing housing for 44 adults and 39 children.

The Goldfields War Museum in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Western Australia proudly collects, conserves and shares the stories of military veterans from our region.

The museum can be visited at the Boulder Town Hall, Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm or on Saturday from 9am to 1pm (excluding public holidays).

Stories are regularly uploaded to our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/CKBHistoryandHeritage](https://www.facebook.com/CKBHistoryandHeritage)



Interior of Goldfields War Museum, Boulder Town Hall, Western Australia. Image courtesy City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

**City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder**

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[www.ckb.wa.gov.au](http://www.ckb.wa.gov.au)

 CKBHistoryandHeritage



# Golden Quest Discovery Trail

Road trip. Is there a more evocative phrase? Two words that bring images of blazing through wide open, beautiful country to mind. Adventure. Experience. Making memories that will last a lifetime.

How lucky are we then to have one of the world's most stunning road trips right here in Western Australia?

The Golden Quest Discovery Trail ticks all the boxes that a perfect road trip adventure should tick – breathtaking landscapes, a glimpse into enthralling, enlightening and occasionally dark history, and warm hospitality from true blue locals.

That sounds like a big ask – we're talking about a big bit of story-laden bush here – but the GQDT has been proving it's up to the job since 2003. Since then, tens of thousands of travellers have trusted it to deliver the perfect itinerary and simply loved the results.

All you need, then, is your vehicle – any two-wheel drive will do, but if you can go with a 4WD all the better – and a yearning to get out there.

Check out the GQDT website, free-to-download app or purchase the guidebook and you'll see the impressive itineraries that have been devised – a three-day trail, a four-day drive and the one to pick if you want five days on the road.

Each option starts in Coolgardie. Today, this charismatic outpost, steeped in history, is a comfortable, friendly stop for travellers, but it once reigned as the third biggest settlement in WA, and the biggest in the bush. Gold made it boom and it was key in Australia becoming what is today.

It's the perfect place then to begin a journey which will take you to some equally iconic overnight stops. Your destinations vary depending on which option you pick – Menzies and Laverton are on the longer trips – but all itineraries include stays in Kookynie and Leonora-Gwalia.

All these outposts have their own stories to tell, but a favourite has to be Kookynie's proudest boast. The tiny town – population 12 – is home to ex-pacer named Willie Strike More, a horse who used to race at Gloucester Park in Perth and was sent away when he retired. Like all good residents he drops into the town's pub every day for his lunch. Rock up at the right time and grab a bite alongside him. Willy the Horse has an ever-growing Facebook page so those who meet him can follow his antics.

Other highlights along the way include the Niagara Dam, Laverton's Outback Gallery, the Gwalia Museum in Leonora and the eerily beautiful Lake Ballard, a huge salt lake 40 minutes from Menzies that's home to 51 sculptures, an army of steel giants that stand silently guarding this jewel of the bush.

The GQDT website, guidebook and free app provides comprehensive directions and advice, including important tips on respecting Indigenous communities and lands, as well as sorting out where to bed down at the end of the day. Comfortable, friendly and affordable accommodation is provided by Outback Parks and Lodges and should be pre-booked if required.

The places you'll go and the things you'll see will never leave you, but it's sensible to also remember that the country you'll be driving through is real. This is no theme park joy ride, so it goes without saying that those travelling the trail need to respect the land they're crossing. While most roads are sealed, some are not, so leave your metro driving habits at home. And watch the weather – a change in the elements means more here than remembering to get your washing in on time.

Don't worry though – the GQDT has all the information and resources you need to work alongside nature in this ruggedly beautiful part of the world. Stay sensible, make sure you've got loads of water on board, don't bug the driver, take regular breaks and make sure you've loaded your Spotify with some good old driving anthems and you'll be golden.

Ultimately, though, all three tours have to come to an end, but once they do your adventure is only just beginning – welcome to Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

This unique bush capital is unlike any other city on earth. A place that boasts a, let's just say, colourful history, here you'll find a modern, vibrant bolthole that still has echoes of the truly wild west that built it.

Indigenous culture sits comfortably alongside settler history in a city that was built on overcoming adversity and succeeding against the odds. While you're here, make sure you hit up the Hannans North Tourist Mine, take the tram tour and visit the Super Pit, but the list of things to experience just goes on and on.

Those on a tighter schedule can also make Kal their base, and follow one of three day-tours or two overnight trips that take in many of the gems the Goldfields has to offer. Each is a delight, an experience, an adventure, and each will make you want to come back for more.

The good news? There's so much here in this big red land that, when you do, we'll always have something new to show you.

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[goldenquesttrail.com](http://goldenquesttrail.com)





# This Story Australia Western Australia 2023

This October, registered charity This Story Australia travelled once again to Western Australia to interview veterans and preserve their personal stories in curated documentaries. CEO Jeff Hughes was in Perth in June to interview 104 year old WWII veteran Arthur Leggett and have a series of meetings with RSLWA and the State Library of WA.

With the help of LotteryWest and the State Library, Jeff interviewed a dozen veterans from across the state, providing valuable assets to the State Library and the families of our diggers.

This Story Australia was founded by Jeff and partner Rachel Dutton in Brisbane with a mission to preserve the personal stories of our veterans before we lose the chance. In the following three and a half years it has been increasingly evident that providing a media platform for veterans to speak and share their truths is an invaluable opportunity as veterans transition out of the military back into civilian life.

Afghanistan veteran Josh Hawkins states "I have seen first-hand the effects of PTSD on a few of my mates and unfortunately, they are no longer with us. This Story Australia is breaking the stigma of not being able to talk about our thoughts and I only wish something like this was in place years ago."

Vietnam veteran Jon Fallows says "Sharing our stories helps us; it helps the healing process and it helps people listening to understand a little bit of what we went through."

This Story Australia has interviewed over 60 veterans from Queensland, NSW, the Northern Territory, ACT and Western Australia. CEO Jeff Hughes states "We are not funded by DVA or the government and to be honest raising funds is not easy. But when we can provide families with a keepsake that commemorates the service of their loved ones, it is worth every penny."

This Story Australia also provides a fee for service option but is seeking help to ensure that they can offer this service to any veteran who would like to share their story. If you would like to talk to Jeff about corporate sponsorship or a donation, please get in touch directly at [jeff@thisstory.com.au](mailto:jeff@thisstory.com.au). For more information visit [www.thisstory.com.au](http://www.thisstory.com.au)



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:  
Arthur Leggett with Jeff Hughes.  
Jon Fallows on This Story Australia.  
Josh Hawkins on This Story Australia.

OPPOSITE PAGE:  
Jon Fallows.





Mayor Hamblin at the recent Freedom of Entry event that was held to celebrate the City's close ties with HMAS Stirling.

## The City of Rockingham is a Navy town

Australia's largest naval base, HMAS Stirling, lies on our doorstep just across Cockburn Sound and there is a distinct Royal Australian Navy (RAN) presence in our community.

We enjoy a strong relationship with Defence and we are proud to be home to thousands of Defence personnel, veterans and their families.

Our close ties date back to when HMAS Stirling was commissioned in 1978. In the 45 years since then Australians from our local community, and across the country, have called Rockingham home while serving.

With so many veterans living here, it's crucial there are adequate support services in place to assist them. The City welcomed the Australian Government's announcement earlier this year regarding plans to establish a new Veterans' and Families' Hub.

With the RAN's presence set to grow even more in Rockingham in the near future, I hope this hub will be the first of many new services that our veterans can access in the years ahead.

Recently the City celebrated its bond with Defence by hosting an historic Freedom of Entry Parade for HMAS Stirling. People lined the streets to enjoy this once in a generation event, and it was pleasing to see how much our community respects and appreciates the contribution Defence and veterans make.

Should the opportunity ever arise, I strongly encourage you to come and Rediscover Rockingham.

With 37 km of spectacular coastline, Rockingham is renowned for its safe, calm waters, pristine beaches, marine animals and abundance of aquatic activities available in the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park. Here you'll find Penguin Island and the breathtaking scenery of Cape Peron.

When you visit you'll find out exactly why our City is known as 'the place where the coast comes to life'.

**DEB HAMBLIN**

*City of Rockingham Mayor*



# RSLWA win for Rockingham veterans

The Returned & Services League Australia WA Branch Incorporated (RSLWA) is delighted to have been awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs, to deliver a business case for a new Veterans' and Families' Hub in the Rockingham area.

RSLWA CEO Vince Connelly said the grant was a step closer to delivering support to more than 8,000 veterans and their families living in the Rockingham area.

"Our research indicated many veterans want to access services like health and mental health supports, and things like financial advice and wellness activities, but find it difficult to do so close to home," he said.

"We understand first-hand the tangible benefits to veterans and their families that can be achieved through a project such as this having operated Veteran Central for the three years."

RSLWA will lead a consortium of some of the veteran community's most experienced service organisations including: Legacy, Soldier On, Fortem, the Air Force Association (Western Australia Division) Incorporated trading as RAAFA, the Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA) and go2health alongside the City of Rockingham, Oqea and Rocky Bay.

Legacy WA CEO Matt Granger said they were proud to be associated with the Veterans and Families Hub and look forward to contributing to its ongoing success.

Solider On CEO Amy Cooper welcomed the announcement, saying it would assist more members of the veteran community to access vital services they need and deserved.

"It's pleasing to see the Government recognising the value of these services through its expansion of the Hub network," she said.

ASASA-WA Branch president David Thomas said the DVA grant was an exciting development and they were excited to be part of the consortium that would evaluate a hub in Rockingham.

"Collaborating with other ex-service organisations will lead to some exciting opportunities and I'm sure that ASASA will find working with RSLWA to be productive and rewarding with an outcome that benefits all veterans and families in need," he said.

Redimed CEO Dr Hanh Nguyen said they were thrilled to be part of the consortium led by RSLWA to provide specialised medical services for veterans in the southwest metro region of WA.

"As a consortium, we understand the pressing healthcare challenges faced by veterans, particularly in areas such as skin cancer and rehabilitative care," he said.

Fortem Australia regional manager Lara Chambers said they looked forward to working with RSLWA and the consortium to achieve comprehensive holistic care and support that would improve outcomes for veterans and first responders.

New partnerships are also expected to be formed in this next stage of developing how, and where, the hub will operate. Options under consideration include a shopfront-style presence, a co-location with an existing likeminded organisation, or a standalone presence.

"We will be considering innovative ways to collaborate, such as use of outreach and regular visiting services and ancillary services such as a café, childcare or a tennis court," Mr Connelly added.

"The possibilities at this stage are very exciting indeed."

Detailed consultation and engagement activities will be taking place over the coming months with businesses, veterans and serving members to support the development of a solution that truly meets local needs. If you are interested in talking more about the Rockingham Hub, please email [rocky@rslwa.org.au](mailto:rocky@rslwa.org.au).

The business case will be assessed by DVA and additional grant funding of up to \$5 million will be made available by the end of 2023 to enable the RSLWA-led consortium to progress the project to operations in 2024, or sooner depending on the location and service model.

This grant award comes just a month after RSLWA received a DVA Wellbeing Grant of just under \$150,000 to roll out the RSL Active Program across Western Australia with pilot programs in Albany and Kalamunda.



# Widely considered the birthplace of the Anzac legend, Albany has a deeply rooted connection to World War 1.

In late 1914 the first two convoys departed from Albany's shores taking more than 41,000 Australians and New Zealanders to war, with many never to return.

Sitting atop Mt Adelaide, the National Anzac Centre overlooks the harbour from which these convoys departed, creating a strong sense of place looking out across the magnificent views of King George Sound.

The National Anzac Centre allows visitors to explore this story through a layered and interactive experience, creating a cultural pilgrimage to honour the bravery and sacrifice of those who fought in the Great War.

On entry, visitors can select a character card which unlocks the interactive experience throughout the Centre.

These cards allow each guest to discover the unique journey of one of the 32 featured individuals by immersing themselves in their story.

By sharing their stories, visitors can gain a deeper understanding of the impact that war has on individuals and communities, and the lasting legacy it has left on our society.

The Albany Heritage Park surrounding the National Anzac Centre offers natural, cultural, historical and adventure-based experiences free of charge to add depth to the stories presented in the Centre.

Taking in the views from the Padre White Lookout, paying a visit to the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial, or exploring the Barracks Building will enhance each visitors understanding of the Anzac legend.

Albany has since become one of Australia's top heritage destinations, providing visitors with a deeper appreciation of the impact war has on society as well as at an individual level.

Book your visit today, by visiting  
[www.nationalanzaccentre.com.au](http://www.nationalanzaccentre.com.au)



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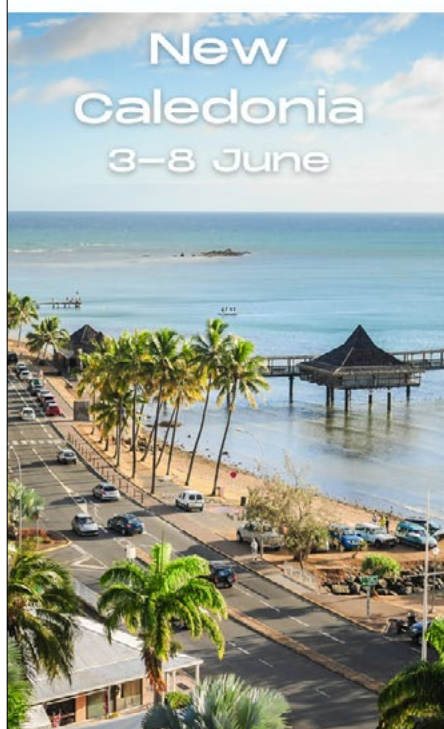
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# Remembering the 'Quarantine Heroine'

A FOREWORD FROM  
GUNNEDAH SHIRE MAYOR JAMIE CHAFFEY

What can any of us hope for except to make a difference?

Annie Egan, who left her home in Emerald Hill in Gunnedah Shire in 1914 to train as a nurse, made a difference.

She might only have lived to the age of 27, but Annie's courage in continuing to nurse patients infected with the Spanish Flu even after she had contracted it herself was testament to her dedication. When she was admitted to the North Head Quarantine Station in Sydney in 1918, she was denied a priest to administer the last rites to her and other Catholics.

Her pleas caught the attention of the nation and sparked public outrage. While the Federal Government was forced to back down and allow the last rites, it was too late for Annie, who died on 3 December, 1918.

Bravery often comes without a gun, and can come in the form of a young woman who leaves her home to offer comfort in the final moments of others.

Gunnedah Shire is proud of Nurse Annie Egan and, when we were approached by Allan Miles OAM to offer support for the WW1 Nurse Annie Egan Memorial Project in recognition of Annie's selfless service, Gunnedah Shire Council whole-heartedly agreed.

The memorial was unveiled on 14 November 2021 in ANZAC Park in Gunnedah, following dedication of an "Egan Family Remembrance" Plaque at the homestead "Rosewood", Emerald Hill NSW, the Egan Family home the day before.

Gunnedah Shire has a proud tradition of support for our people who served, with a program of hugely-attended commemorative events on ANZAC Day every year. Among the memorials that stand as tribute to those who served is one in Tambar Springs that is believed to be the earliest memorial erected in country Australia to World War I servicemen.

We will always remember them.



## Paying Our Respects

The Gunnedah region commemorates its war heroes in many memorials in the town and surrounding villages, with Tambar Springs War Memorial being one of the first memorials to WW1 in Australia.

For more information contact the Gunnedah Visitor Information Centre on 02 6740 2230.

[www.visitgunnedah.com.au](http://www.visitgunnedah.com.au)



# Welcome to Gunnedah Shire

Gunnedah Shire, in north-west New South Wales, is loved for many reasons.

It is known as the Koala Capital of the World, the home of the biggest agricultural field days in Australia, the site of magnificent murals, and a beautiful place to visit.

Gunnedah continues to hold a special place in its heart for the men and women who have served in conflict - and there have been many of them. There are permanent tributes throughout the Shire, from the Gunnedah Memorial Pool, built as a war memorial, to the Water Tower murals that commemorate the Vietnam War.

The village of Tambar Springs is also home to what is believed to be the first memorial to World War 1 servicemen erected in New South Wales, and possibly Australia. The memorial dates back to December 1918 and is made from Italian marble.

Gunnedah is not just a stopover, it is a destination. It is the land of the Red Chief, a Shire where creative small businesses thrive, a town young people come home to and then stay to raise a family, a place where farmers and miners meet. It is a hub for people who love the land, but also want great opportunities for their business and their families.

Gunnedah is located in north-west New South Wales, an hour from Tamworth and at the heart of many journeys. The Namoi River flows through the Shire, providing a beautiful setting for everything from Australia Day citizenship ceremonies to impromptu summer picnics.

The township of Gunnedah is the centre of a sprinkling of small villages offering country hospitality and magnificent scenery.

With a wide choice of accommodation, it is a great place to stay and spend a few days, visiting the giant silo mural of poet Dorothea Mackellar and the Vietnam War mural at the Water Tower Museum, seeing the canola in flower, bushwalking, fishing and shopping.

On the fringes of Gunnedah Shire is Lake Keepit, which is nearly the size of Sydney Harbour and home to a huge range of activities.





To find out more about everything there is to do and see in  
Gunnedah Shire, visit [www.visitgunnedah.com.au](http://www.visitgunnedah.com.au)  
or call the Visitor Information Centre on **(02) 6740 2230 | 1800 KOALAS.**



# The koala, despite being a national and international icon, is in crisis.

Habitat loss is one of the greatest threats to koalas. Land clearing, deforestation and urbanisation are destroying vital eucalyptus tree forests that provide koalas with homes and food.

As a result, koalas become vulnerable to predation by dogs and vehicle strikes, with growing evidence that increased stress from these factors is impacting their long-term health and wellbeing. In recent years the effect of climate change, including unprecedented droughts and bushfires, has driven some local koalas populations in NSW to near extinction.

IFAW's unique and holistic approach combines response, rescue/ rehabilitation, release and post-release monitoring; recovery and landscape restoration and integrates animal welfare and wildlife conservation. We have supported rescue organisations in Australia for 40 years, with a dedicated team in-country that includes both rescue and policy expertise, reliable partners ready to ramp up their efforts, IFAW is positioned to make immediate and lasting contributions to ensuring a future for koalas and other native species.

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# The Crucial Role of Zoological Koalas in Preserving Genetic Diversity and Protecting the Species

Koalas, those iconic marsupial's beloved around the world, face a multitude of threats in the wild. Their population numbers continue to dwindle due to deforestation, the spread of diseases such as Chlamydia and retroviruses, and the introduction of diseases from feral dogs and cats, notably Bordetella. In addition to these challenges, inbreeding in the wild and regional differences among koala populations pose significant risks to their genetic diversity and long-term survival.

As wildlife keepers, our commitment to koalas extends beyond the bounds of zoological institutions. We recognise the importance of maintaining disease-free populations and ensuring that exhibited koalas do not mix with their wild counterparts while ensuring healthy, strong genetics. This approach aligns with the guidelines set forth by the Zoological Association of Australia (ZAA). Yearly breeding decisions are made under these guidelines, with a strict emphasis on avoiding unnecessary breeding and promoting genetic diversity through inter-facility collaboration. We understand that diseases can be passed on through genetics and direct contact, emphasising the need for strict biosecurity to limit transmission between populations.

One may wonder why zoological koalas are just as important as their wild counterparts. The answer lies in the bigger picture plan for koala conservation. By maintaining exhibited koalas with clean bloodlines, we contribute to the long-term genetic viability of the species. This genetic diversity is crucial for the species' adaptation and resilience to changing environmental conditions. With experts predicting that by 2050, wild koalas could be extinct, being

able to provide these healthy bloodlines will increase the likelihood of the survival of viable koala populations, in the hope of preventing them from slipping into extinction. In the first instance, however, we all must work together to provide wild koalas a chance to thrive through conservation efforts. When and if the government decides it is time for zoological facilities to step in with our insurance populations of koalas, Oakvale and many other institutions are ready and willing to support the conservation efforts.

To counter these immediate threats, we need frontline support in the form of veterinarians and wildlife carers for wild koalas. Zoos play an indispensable role in long-term management, contributing to genetic diversity and safeguarding the species.

One crucial aspect of our mission is education. We engage with the public through school group visits, private encounters, and daily educational talks. Our goal is to raise awareness about the challenges facing koalas and the vital role played by zoological institutions in their conservation. To increase the likelihood of the survival of koalas, we must embrace a holistic approach.

While our exhibited koalas are essential for genetic diversity, we have created the "Save Our Wildlife" campaign, which supports other wildlife foundations in their bid to help save species from extinction. We do this by channelling donated funds towards organisations like Tilligary Habitat to protect and conserve the local wild population. Together, we can work towards a future where zoological and wild koalas thrive, preserving these iconic creatures for generations.

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Established in 1979, Oakvale Wildlife Park is a premier destination for local and international visitors alike. We provide a hands-on experience with our Australian wildlife and our cuddly farm animals.

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- Under cover picnic area
- Splash Bay Water Zone
- Café and fully enclosed eating area
- Koala Country
- Corporate functions
- Farmyard feeding
- Birthday parties

The dedication to wildlife conservation has become a key focus at Oakvale Wildlife Park. In 2017, the 'Save our Wildlife' campaign was started to aid in the conservation of endangered species around the globe that are threatened or vulnerable.



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# Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary wins at NSW Tourism Awards

The Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary won gold in the prestigious 'Tourism Attraction' category, with the Awards ceremony this month at White Bay Cruise Terminal in Sydney.

Port Stephens Holiday Parks Section Manager Kim Latham attended the ceremony and accepted the award on behalf of the Koala Sanctuary, Port Stephens Council, and the very special koala population that call Port Stephens home.

"On behalf of all Koalas, and especially ours in Port Stephens, we graciously accept this award that will continue highlight the plight facing all Koala in Australia today," said Ms Latham.

"Winning this prestigious award will further spotlight the tireless conservation and preservation work that is undertaken everyday by our passionate and loyal Sanctuary staff," she continued.

Now in its 33rd year, the NSW Tourism Awards celebrate business excellence, acknowledge business innovation, and reward exceptional customer service.

After the win, the Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary now goes on to represent NSW in the 'Tourism Attraction' category at the Australian Tourism Awards in early 2024.

## About Port Stephens

The Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary is a partnership between Port Stephens Council, the NSW Government and volunteer care group Port Stephens Koala Hospital. Its focus is on the conservation and protection of local koala populations.

A decade ago koala population numbers in Port Stephens were in the thousands, but today, they've dwindled to the hundreds. Ongoing financial support is vitally important to support population growth for the threatened species.

The Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary is open daily from 9am to 5pm (except Christmas Day).

For more information about the Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary visit: [portstephenskoalas Sanctuary.com.au](http://portstephenskoalas Sanctuary.com.au)



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Duty Nobly Done Battlefield Tours is an Australian owned and operated battlefield tour business dedicated to providing guests with an engaging and memorable visit to the Western Front battlefields.

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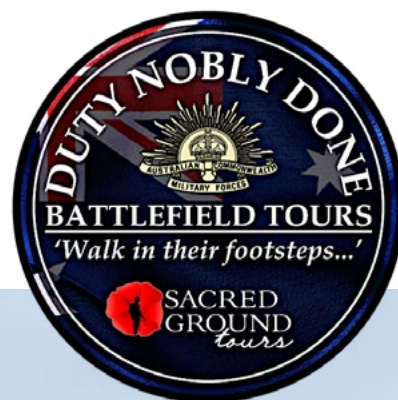
The 'Anzac Day on the Western Front' tour is especially popular as it includes the poignant 'Dawn Service' at the Australian National Memorial. Guests will walk the ground recaptured by the Australians in a tremendous 'feat of arms' on Anzac Day 1918. The grateful villagers of Villers-Bretonneux will never forget Australia and you will never forget this special occasion!

Through following the Anzac battalions across the very ground they fought on, and telling the stories of those courageous Australians, guests will get a real sense of not only where and how the battles unfolded, but the personal cost. The many beautifully maintained cemeteries that dot the landscape give mute testimony to the tremendous bravery and sacrifice of the soldiers of many nations who clashed on the battlefields of France and Belgium.


As they cover all the major Australian battlefields, guests will have the opportunity to visit their fallen soldier's grave and pause for reflection. If they have no known grave, extensive research will uncover where they fought their last battle so guests can walk that sacred ground where their soldier relative forever rests with their mates.

Each guest embarks on this pilgrimage for reasons they may not yet be able to understand beyond some sense of that restless Anzac Spirit passed down by their relatives. It will be different for each person, but we believe you will find what you are looking for with Duty Nobly Done Battlefield Tours.

Head to [www.dndbattletours.com.au](http://www.dndbattletours.com.au) for more information, and details of the 9-Day Tour in September.








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# Jelena Dokic

— INTERVIEW —

Greg Ross interviews  
Jelena Dokic.



PODCASTS: [www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews](http://www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews)

Photo: © Julian Kingma.

**Greg T Ross:** Welcome to the Last Post Magazine, and we are so pleased to have you in this. You're, of course, a former world tennis champion, I think at one stage reaching number four in the world, you won on all surfaces and reached the quarterfinals of Wimbledon when still a teenager. But of course now you're a commentator, and more importantly too, an author, how did the writing thing come about for you, you felt you had to get the truth out?

**Jelena Dokic:** Well, look, it was almost a little bit by accident, the author came through and I just retired from tennis. And I wasn't doing very much at the time and I felt like I wanted to tell my story and I felt like it could help maybe someone out there as well, I even say at the end of Unbreakable, if it helps one person in some way, then for me, that's mission accomplished, and that's what I wanted the book and telling my story ultimately to do. Obviously, it's done so much more for me and for others, which I'm really grateful for, I had no idea what impact it would have, I had no idea that it would be such a big and important step and part in my healing and my journey and that it would start a lot of conversations and it would create a lot of changes in sport and in society and the way that we view a lot of the things that I talk about and that I've gone through, like child abuse, and domestic violence, and mental health.

Obviously, it's come out now exactly actually six years ago, but it's done so much and it continues to do so much, my story, and I'm so grateful for that, I'm grateful for the way that it's been received... the day that Unbreakable came out is the best day of my life, and there's a reason I say that because I was really pretty much just existing up until then and I started living the day that I told my story, found my voice, and was able to share it. And that just shows you the power of sharing our stories and finding our voice, but also removing the shame and stigma around really important issues and normalizing that conversation, not just for me, but for others as well.

**GTR:** Yes, so true Jelena. And one thing that strikes me about this book is its brutal honesty, and that is a champion thing for anyone to reveal themselves to the public. And I know being a writer myself, some people ask, "why do you write that? Why do you tell people about yourselves?" Because I think when you have a story worth sharing, and yours is certainly a story worth sharing, we are talking obviously about the book, your latest Fearless, which you did with Jessica, but it offers strength and hope. It's your second book, I believe, Unbreakable 2016, but this one itself, it's stark, it's naked of any delusion, and it offers strength and hope, as I said, through truth telling. How important is it for you, Jelena, to not only speak up through this book, but to continue to do that throughout your life?

**JD:** It's very important. Unbreakable came out in 2017, exactly six years ago now, it was my memoir, it was my life story, it was my autobiography and I told it with absolutely complete honesty and rawness. And there are parts in the book that a lot of people find very hard to read and confronting, but unfortunately, that's what sometimes happens behind closed doors, and that's what the truth is in someone's life. And it was important to share that, and like I said, I wanted just one person out there if they connect with that story or if it resonates with them or it can help them in any way, that would've made me my world, that's what I wanted to do.

But Fearless is different, it's obviously six years on, I do still talk about a lot about mental health and domestic violence, but it's a book of hope, it's about continuing that healing journey. I say that with Unbreakable, I was a victim and survivor, but now through the six years after Unbreakable, it's victim, survivor, thriver.

**GTR:** Mm-hmm. Yes.

**JD:** I've come a very long way, but I've done it through truth telling, I've done it through finding my voice, I've done it through sharing my story, but I've also done it through connecting with other people. Because so many people resonate with that, it's about making a change, not just in tennis and sport, but in society, in the way that we view telling the tough stories. This is also really about shattering the myth of perfection, and also this is about

vulnerability because in tennis sport and society in general, being perfect and silence was golden as well. And we still sometimes have this where we view athletes and maybe people with a public profile that they're supposed to be perfect, whatever that means.

**GTR:** That's the problem.

**JD:** Yeah, and we forget that we're human beings. But also silence was golden, as long as you said all the right things and almost you feel like a little bit like no vulnerability, like a little bit like a robot. But if you said anything that was different to that, you were shamed, you were stigmatized, you were not perfect for the, let's say, media, social media sponsors, society. So I really wanted to shatter that myth because actually, there is so much strength and courage in being vulnerable.

Being vulnerable takes guts, it takes so much strength, so I think we need to change the way that we view that. But also being vulnerable is living your most honest, open, and authentic life and being true to your emotions, and I really found that with Unbreakable and continue to do it with Fearless.

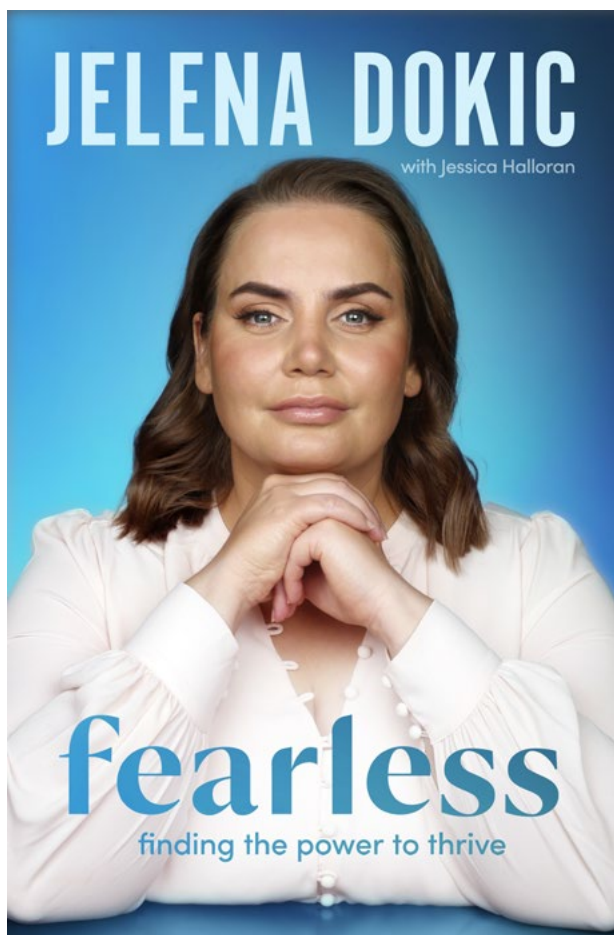
But in Fearless, I talk a lot about that healing journey, I talk about finding meaning and purpose, I talk a lot about reinventing myself after my tennis career, which was really tough to now be a commentator, speaker, two time bestselling author, trust me.... So it's a lot about how I got there, how I found my self-worth and self-belief to actually believe that I can do that and how I live my life through gratitude and kindness.

But ultimately, I want it to be a book of hope, I want people to come out of a feeling really positive, I want people to know that they can build themselves back up from zero. And it's about continuing to have that persistence and resilience to continue healing, get over your trauma, but most importantly, that you're not defined or defeated by your past or anything that happens to you and that you can leave that in the past and move forward to the future and create a great life.

**GTR:** Yes, well said, Jelena. And I think obviously, some writers are encouraged not to reveal everything, yet those that do reap the rewards through strength. And I think truth is the greatest strength because you may have been talking about vulnerability, but once you reveal the truth, there is no vulnerability because there is nowhere for people to target you, you've revealed the truth and that in it's the greatest sense is the greatest strength that anyone could ever have. You mentioned during the book obviously, if we go back to your tennis career and your father's abuse, do you think you would've achieved less, more, or the same without that abuse?

**JD:** That's a question, it's all what if, I don't like to think that way, that is a part of healing of not going back and even thinking about stuff like that. I don't think it really matters, these are the cards I've been dealt in life, this is the kind of childhood I had, the abuse I faced being a refugee twice. When you've almost taken your own life by the age of 22, I don't really think it matters if you would've done more or less, at one stage it was all about, will I ever live a normal life again? So would I have maybe had a longer career? Probably, because when you're dealing with so many mental health issues, I was battling depression, anxiety, and PTSD, you certainly can't be an athlete and certainly not for a long time, and I probably wouldn't have retired at 29 due to injuries and my mental health.

But would I have done more or so on? To be honest with you, I don't really think it matters, that's all something, what if this happened? And you can't think like that, that is the positive thing of where I am today, the things like that I don't really think about and it doesn't really matter to me. So I'm very proud of still being able to be world number four, a grand slam semi-finalist, and a doubles finalist as well under the circumstances. Not just with my father behind closed doors and all the abuse that I was facing, but also once his outburst became public and the scrutiny that I faced because of him and the media, that was really, really tough on me as well, but only because of his actions.



Fearless: finding the power to thrive by Jelena Dokic.  
Published by Penguin, \$34.99, September 12 2023.

I look at it that way, I think I've still done incredibly well under the circumstances, but I want my legacy to be what I do now. I want my legacy to be my two books, I want my legacy to be helping other people. I want my legacy to be something that whether I can create change and if we can start these conversations and look back in 20 years time and go, that made a difference. It's people like Grace Tame that have changed the law, it's the Me Too movement, it's Simone Biles and the US gymnastics team and what they've uncovered that's all come with Unbreakable and since unbreakable.

**GTR:** That's right. That's very important that you mentioned that because, of course, in the book, you talk about living to an ideal and that's latched upon the pretense of humans sometimes to conveniently wax over the truth to suit a certain ideal or image. And you talk about the Me Too Movement, of course this a great example because we all have people that we admire or think we admire when we don't really know them, and yet the truth has to come out before we can attempt to heal, we can not heal as a species unless we know the truth. Your contribution is great in many ways because you help the human race in a lot of ways by people understanding that the truth is not always pretty, but it must be dealt with just like the good things.

**JD:** Well, look the truth, of course it's not always pretty, but neither is what happens behind closed doors, but it's the reality. So I think if you look at it, I personally know athletes as well that have been through stuff, I know athletes that struggle with mental health and they've been afraid to talk about it because if you do, you were considered to be weak or that you are giving that edge away. It's the same whether you're in sport or not, even in society in general, in workplaces and it is so wrong, people have suffered in silence for a very long time, in fact, people have died in silence for a very long time.

Nine Australians commit suicide every single day, that's in Australia alone, and a million people take their life

worldwide every single year, that is a lot. And we don't hear that number often in every single day, but that's because for a very long time we didn't talk about that and silence was golden, now we're really shattering that myth of perfection and that we shouldn't talk about things. And I'm glad that we are because a lot is going on in the world, even right now as we speak, and a lot of people are struggling.

Well, life in general, the circle of life is unfortunately loss and life is not all sunshine and rainbows, and it'll be filled with ups and downs and losses and defeats. And I think that's important to know and to know at the same time, it's okay to talk about that, but also most importantly, it's okay to say, "I'm not okay, I need help," that's where truth and vulnerability comes forward.

Getting professional help, for example, saved my life, but if I wasn't honest and open and truthful about it and vulnerable, who knows if I would've got there? So I find so many positive things to it, and I think it's just about how we tell those stories and how we talk about them. And I love seeing a lot more inclusivity today when it comes to telling stories like that and having inspirational women on covers and on stories and then we are telling stories like that, I love that.

For example, also a very big person who I look up to is Dylan Alcott as well, and look at what he's been able to do and achieve. And to have the final of the Australian Open on Rod Laver, and it wouldn't have happened if people like him didn't continue to speak up and push and look at how far we've come. So it is very important that we tell stories like that and actually realize that there is so much good and so much strength and so much courage that comes out of stories like that, and also to help others.

**GTR:** Very true, Jelena. You were always destined once you've picked up a tennis racket to be a great player because as you note in the book, hard work and competing are part of your DNA. So that hard work and competing, have you found that in this book with the hard work and competing and going about talking about this book? It's hard work for you now or you liked competition, so there's that spirit in you that is always up for a fight, is that spirit now with you as you talk about this book?

**JD:** For me, I've always worked hard. I think as an athlete and as a professional athlete, you do have to have a lot of discipline and you do have to work hard. And that's always been a part of me from a very young age, no matter what I do, I want to give it 100%. I always go into everything, I give my heart and soul into, you can probably see that with my books as well, not just because I don't hold anything back. But I think a lot of people, if you really listen to me or my interviews or the way that I commented and then you read my books, you can see it's my words and I've worked very hard to bring that through and for people to really get to know me. And it makes me so happy every time someone meets me and go, "I feel like I already know you because I've read your two books," and that's great and that's what I want.

But I put 150% into whatever I do, whether that's commentary, whether that's speaking, whether it's writing, I really believe in that. And I think that I probably wouldn't be here today even after my tennis career if I didn't go out there and work really hard, I talk about that in Fearless. And at the beginning of my commentating career, I had people say no, I've had doors shut, I've continued to work hard, I took every single little opportunity, whether it was on radio, whether it was 30 seconds in front of a camera, whatever it was, the smallest tournaments or matches. I accepted any offer that came through because I really believe in working hard and working your way up and I really believe in not having an ego. And just because maybe I was a good tennis player doesn't mean I'm going to be good at everything, and I really wanted to prove that with my hard work and with my qualities and that I'm capable of doing that.

There is a big part in the book when I talk about commentary, where I do talk about hard work and that ultimately at the end of the day, I do believe even if you're not maybe great at something and maybe you don't continue doing that, I do believe in giving it your all 150%.

And you know what? If it doesn't work out, that's fine, you know you've given it your all, I really believe in that.

**GTR:** That's right. It's far better than to not give all and be left wondering what would've happened if you had given all, so that's exactly right, and it's good for mental health, it's good for a lot of things to put in. I know sometimes I have days where I put in 150% and I always feel better than days I've put in about 70%, so it's one of those things, and bless you for that. You talk about in the book, Jelena, you talk about body shaming, you talk about a whole lot of issues, and then you go on to talk about acceptance and gratitude. Does gratitude come from acceptance?

**JD:** I think everything is connected, but in a way, yes. I think for me, gratitude, I remember even when I was growing up, I was quite always humble and grateful. But I think as you go through life and especially tough individual and competitive sports like tennis, sometimes you can lose a bit of that because a lot of it turns into results and money and that kind of world sometimes isn't easy. So for me, a big part of my healing and my mental health was gratitude and it was kindness, and that's the way I try to live my life because I really am a really grateful person at my core and I really do feel like it really helps me live a much happier life.

As much as I work hard and give it my all, and I still have goals that I want to accomplish and things I want to try and do, at the same time, I stop, I take a moment, I breathe, I enjoy where I am, I make sure I enjoy the big wins and the small ones as well. Even if something maybe doesn't go right or maybe I don't succeed or get something, I'm still grateful at my core going, "that's all right, I'm grateful for the opportunity, I'll try again."

So I think you have to be really grateful with what you have and where you're at, if you're not, then there's no happiness there, that's what I've discovered. So I think to really be able to be happy and live with joy and happiness, you've got to be grateful for what you have and where you are to start with, and that's what I am.

Acceptance is a big part of my life in general because certain things, to move forward, I learned that you have to accept for what it is, and sometimes you're not going to get answers and closure and you won't be able to change people and the way that they maybe are towards you or the way that they are in general. And you've got to accept that for what it is and move forward, leave maybe all of that toxic stuff in the past, accept it for what it is that it's not on you and move forward. I think it's a big part of, I believe in acceptance, to be honest, even more than in forgiveness because I've written about that in Fearless.

I have friends that have gone through horrific things, and it is very hard to forgive people that do certain things to you, but if you accept the circumstances and that you are not to blame and that it's not your fault and that a lot of things were not in your control, but also that you can't change people and circumstances, you accept it and you move forward,

I found that that really helps and you get a lot further along. But living with gratitude, to be honest with you, it's been such a massive turning point for me to live that way and to also kindness as well. I didn't want to be a bitter, resentful, hateful person, I saw that in my father for a very long time and I really wanted kindness to be at my core. So practicing those two things really does make me happy, it's got nothing to do with work or anything, it's just got to do with being a good person and being grateful every single day.

**GTR:** Jelena, it's so true, and it's a complex connection between acceptance, gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, and all that sort of stuff, we could probably do a separate interview on that, I'm sure. But you've been through a lot in life, escaping the war in Yugoslavia, correct me if I'm wrong, around when you're about eight or something?

**JD:** Yes.

**GTR:** So with that, and then you'll climb to the peak in sport, you've been through a lot, and now as an author. And we see you as an important cog in the revelations that are needed to inspire for a better future for all human beings. So

we thank you very much, we thank you for writing Fearless, and of course-

**JD:** Thank you.

**GTR:** ... Unbreakable, your first book too. And we hope there are many more books to come, Jelena, and we look forward to hearing your comments on cricket, not on cricket, on tennis in the near future, so wonderful stuff.

**JD:** I don't know how good I would be at commentating cricket, but thank you. Yes, tennis, a big passion of mine, so thank you for that. And I'll continue to try and do the best that I can, fight for others as well, and to just have a better world and just really fight for all those good qualities and that we all can find peace and love and humanity, be there for one another, that's what it's about. And continuing to talk about those tough stories because, unfortunately, people do go through it that, and we can't help them if we don't talk about it and start those conversations.

Hopefully, we can continue that, and if you and I have a conversation in a few years time, we'll be further along and hopefully things will be even better. I think we've come a long way in the last five to 10 years, especially in Australia, and I'm really proud of that, and hopefully we can continue.

Jelena Dokic was a prodigious tennis player who made the quarter-finals of Wimbledon at the age of just 16. She was heralded as Australia's greatest tennis hope since Evonne Goolagong. She had exceptional skills, a steely nerve and an unrivalled fight on the court.

At 17 she reached the semi-finals at Wimbledon. By September 2000 she became an Olympian and finished fourth at the Sydney Games. By 18, she was in the world's top 10. By 19, she was world No.4, holding her own against Monica Seles, Martina Hingis and Lindsay Davenport. She was the world No.9 in doubles.

She went on to win her first WTA singles title at the Rome Masters in May 2001. She was also a French Open doubles finalist the same year. A shoulder and wrist injury prematurely finished her tennis career in 2013. One of the only female players to have won a WTA title on all four surfaces Jelena now spends her time mentoring young players.

She has a vast amount of knowledge to share - her other career highlights include making her Fed Cup debut as a 15 year old - the youngest player ever - and winning both matches. She also won the Hopman Cup with Mark Philippoussis at 15. As well as mentoring she also enjoys doing media work.

She has worked as a commentator on both Fox Sports News and Channel Seven's tennis coverage. She currently lives in Melbourne.

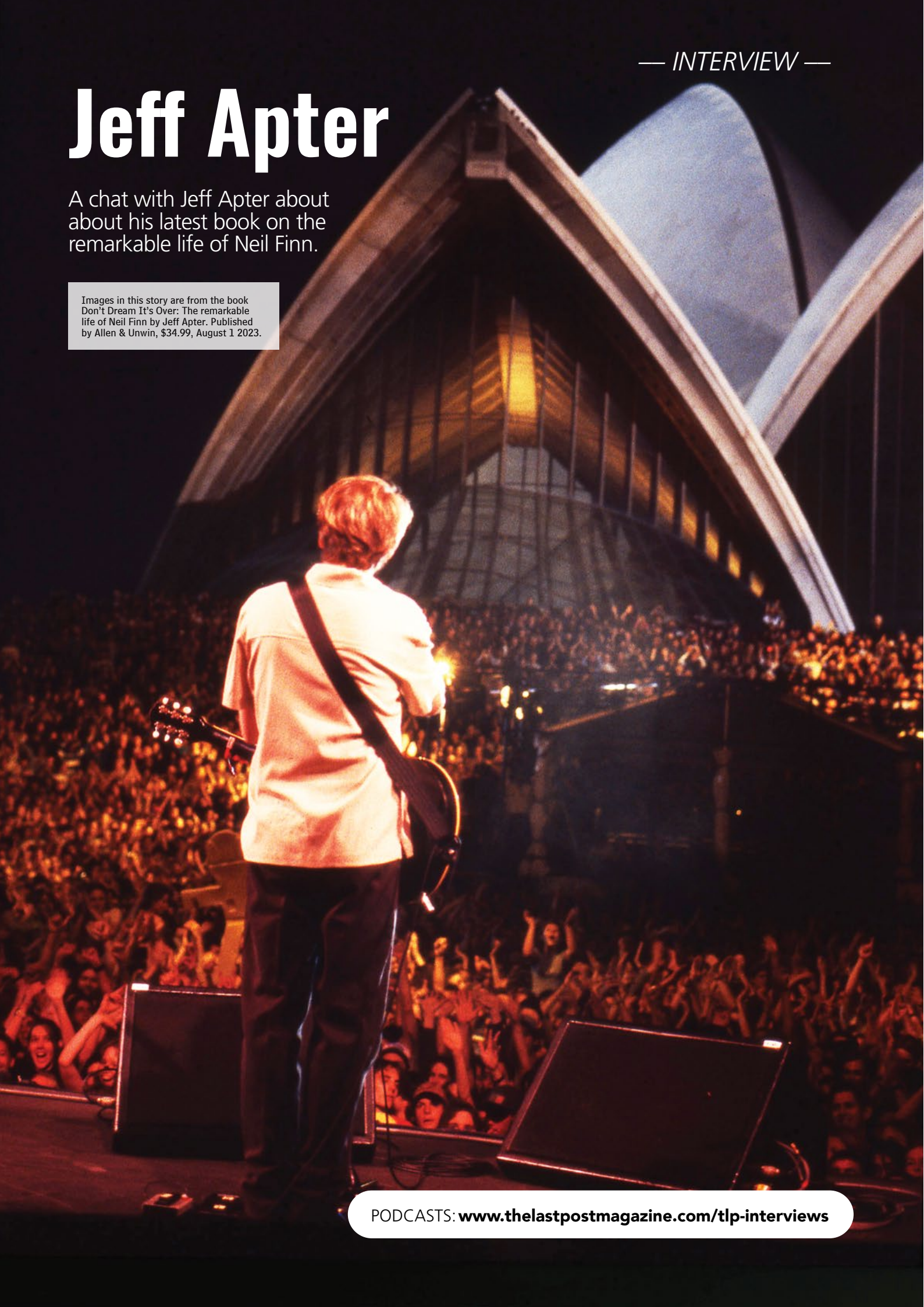
"I WANT MY LEGACY  
TO BE HELPING  
OTHER PEOPLE."

— INTERVIEW —

# Jeff Apter

A chat with Jeff Apter about about his latest book on the remarkable life of Neil Finn.

Images in this story are from the book *Don't Dream It's Over: The remarkable life of Neil Finn* by Jeff Apter. Published by Allen & Unwin, \$34.99, August 1 2023.



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### Jeff Apter

As author, co-author and / or ghostwriter, Jeff Apter has worked on more than 30 biographies. His subjects include Keith Urban, George Young (Friday On My Mind), Malcolm Young (The Man Who Made AC/DC), Daniel Johns (The Book of Daniel), Angus Young (High Voltage) and John Farnham (Playing to Win). As ghostwriter,

Jeff has worked with Mark Evans (Dirty Deeds), Michael Browning (Dog Eat Dog), Kasey Chambers (A Little Bird Told Me) and Richard Clapton (Best Years of Our Lives). He also worked on 2015's Helpmann award-nominated live show, A State of Grace: The Music of Jeff and Tim Buckley and was on staff at Rolling Stone for several years.

**Greg T Ross:** Jeff Apter, welcome to The Last Post podcast series. We're here to discuss or have a chat about your remarkable new book, *Don't Dream It's Over: The Remarkable Life of Neil Finn*. What led you to writing this one, Jeff? What led you down this path?

**Jeff Apter:** Yeah, I can pinpoint it precisely. It was just 44 years ago, Greg. I was a suburban teenager at the time. I was raised in Padstow, way out in the west of Sydney, and back in my time, this is in the '70s, it was a really far-flung part of Sydney suburbia. A friend of mine said, "There's a band playing called Split Enz. They're going to be playing at a venue in the city midweek during winter." And this is before *True Colors* came out, so it's 1979. I was 17. We snuck into the gig. There was maybe 100 people there. And firstly for me, coming from just a very working class kind of environment, Jimmy and the Boys were the support act. Now, anybody who remembers them will have in mind the fact that there was a transgender keyboardist and a guy out the front in bondage gear. That was a bit of an eyeopener for a kid from Padstow.

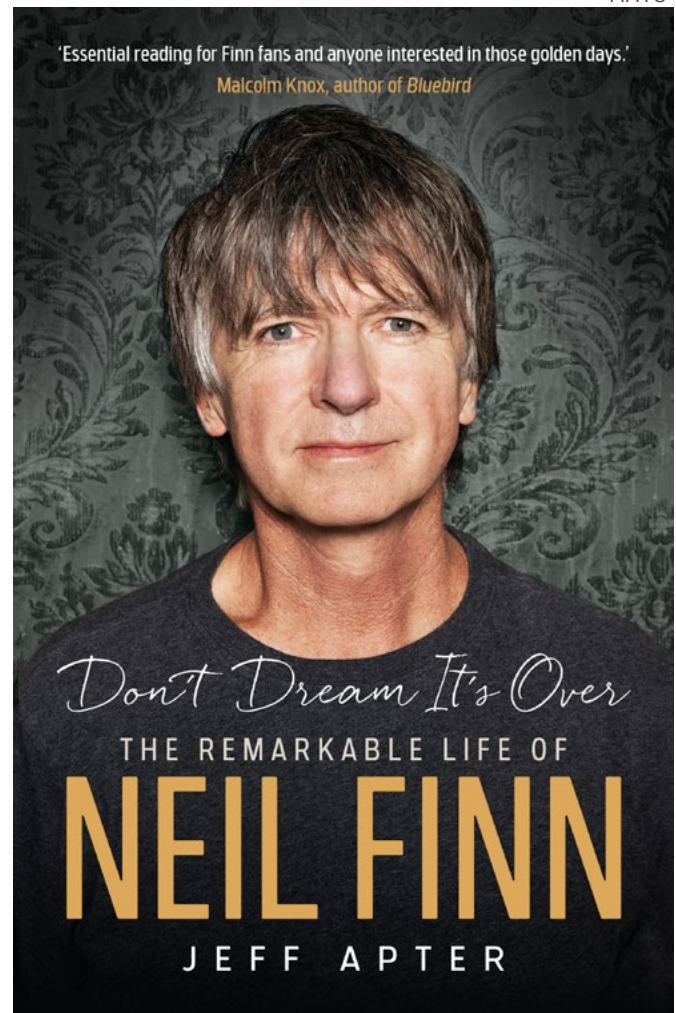
So I'm thinking, "Wow, I wonder what the main acts like," and when Split Enz came on, I remember, you could just really tell something was just about to happen with this band. They looked great. They were still sort of art school-ish. They had the matching suits on and punky hair styles and a bit of Max Factor on the face. But there was something about the way they played. They had real conviction on stage. They were really energetic and almost aggressive on stage. They were really a sight to see, but you could just tell the songs were coming together, because apart from, say, I See Red, they hadn't really had a hit song before. And Neil's presence in the band by this time, he'd been in the band for a couple of years by now, so his presence was starting to become more significant, I guess.

And I remember going away from the gig going, "Wow, something seems to be happening to this band." And what? Within six months, they recorded *I Got You, True Colors*, and they'd gone from being an art school cult band to Top of the Pops, on the Countdown every week for months and months on end, and then having international success.

So when the opportunity came up to write this book, I started flashing back to all that. And I've been lucky enough subsequently to have charted Neil's many career moves and musical moves in the last 40 years. So to me, it was a great book to write. A real joy to write.

**GTR:** Yeah, fantastic stuff, Jeff. And of course that was an exciting time for Australian music too. The beginning of the '80s and the end of the '70s was really something special, and I'll talk to you about that period in a moment. And I suppose if we go back from that period, Jeff, to a couple of years previously, as you just mentioned, in 1977 I do remember hearing this news when Neil ... and of course, the whisper was out that he couldn't even play guitar. But when he joined Split Enz in London in '77, that phone call that Tim made to him, how did that change Neil's life forever?

**JA:** Well, I find it really interesting, and I start the book by recalling this conversation. Neil, at that time, he was only 18, and he was in his first band. They were called After Hours, and they were just about to go into the recording studio



and make their first record. So he's back in New Zealand. It's a big moment for him. Meanwhile, Tim and the band have been together for five years now, and they're in the UK and things are happening for them, but members are dropping out. I think Phil Judd had left the band and they needed a guitarist. And they realized that Neil had been to all their early shows, their first half dozen shows, snuck in, he was only 12 at the time, and he was their biggest fan. He knew their music inside out, and it just seemed logical to offer him the gig. He was a very easy fit into the band, and obviously everybody knew him because he was Tim's younger brother.

But you're right, he didn't know how to play the electric guitar. And funnily enough, when Tim called him and sent out the SOS call, "We need you over here in the UK," thinking it's a no-brainer. I mean, he's always loved Split Enz, and who wouldn't want to come to London? And Neil went, "Hang on, I'll call you back." And Tim said, "What?" And of course, Neil was feeling loyalty to his band-mates. He was concerned, because they were all very excited about going to make their first record. But eventually the logical thing was that Split Enz was an established band, an international band, they were already in the UK.

So it seemed a natural thing for him to do, but it did take him a while to fit in. The funny story that I hadn't known about until I wrote this book is that not only couldn't he play electric guitar, which was a big problem, but they figured, "Well, we better get someone to show him the ropes," and they got Phil Manzanera from Roxy Music. It'd be like saying, "Oh, Eric Clapton's not free, but we'll get you Phil Manzanera to give you a couple of lessons." It was fantastic. So he started with a bang, working with this guy. But even the early shows, they were a bit careful about Neil. They turned his amp down and in rehearsals they would say, "Right, time to take a break. Okay, someone needs to go down and get the sandwiches." And everybody would look at Neil because he was the kid in the band. So he was sandwich boy for a while. But like I say, it took him a couple of years, but once he fitted in, wow, sparks flew.

**GTR:** Yeah, an incredible journey, and something that when you think about it now, seems almost predetermined. And why not would that have taken place? But a beautiful part of the book when you detail all of that. Well, I guess music had been in the Finn family too, Jeff, with the sing-alongs and everything. I guess that was always in their blood. And Tim, of course, taking to fame before Neil with Split Enz, and Neil being a big fan of the group, how much influence was the upbringing and the Finn family, I guess, with the music?

**JA:** Oh, it was huge. Yeah, absolutely. Like you said, the family sing-alongs on Fridays. And the Finns, this is Dick and Mary, their parents, were very sociable people. Neil and Tim had two elder sisters, so they were quite a big family. They would have Friday night sing-alongs where all the locals ... they lived in a relatively small place. Te Awamutu was a relatively small rural suburb, I guess, but the Finns seemed to be the center of a lot of local activity. People would come and gather, they had their Friday night singalongs, but also when they went on holidays, they'd go in talent quests and they'd sometimes travel with these two Christian brothers who were actually siblings, the Durning brothers, who taught them all about ... they were great harmonizers and they taught Neil and Tim how to sing. Stuff like that really does seep into your DNA. I think Neil had two choices in life. It was music or the church, and I think he took the right path.

**GTR:** Yeah, that's right. And of course, I guess at that time Tim had been influenced and friends with Mike Chun and Phil Judd, et cetera, two extraordinary talents. And Neil had seen all this unfold. So I guess Tim's influence had been a predominant thing for Neil, but it must've come as a shock, a pleasant shock, I imagine, to Tim to find out his younger brother was so talented.

**JA:** Yeah, it's a complicated relationship, the Finns, and it has been for 40 musical years. I think Tim was as thrilled as anybody when they had a huge hit with I Got You, but at the same time, a little voice in his head saying, "Why didn't I write that song?" Because it was Tim's band. And Neil always acknowledged that. He always readily acknowledged Split Enz was Tim's band. Not his band, Tim's band. And Neil probably felt a little bit of guilt too about the simple fact that it was one of his songs that really broke them internationally after, what, seven or eight years of struggle.

So yeah, it has always been a complicated relationship, and then of course later on in Crowded House, it got a little trickier still. But they've always remained really tight. Away from the stage they've always been very, very close siblings. And I think it took them a long time, but they gradually learned that perhaps they shouldn't be in a band together, because you're talking two massive talents; Neil as a songwriter, a real craftsman, and Tim as a performer. Tim's a great front man, and as we might touch on, his time in Crowded House was sort of wasted because half the show he was up the back playing keyboards, and that's not where Tim Finn belonged.

**GTR:** No, no, no. You could almost feel the uncomfortable aura about that. There was something about that. But we spoke about Tim's influence on Neil, growing up and looking on from the younger brother angle. But of course, the great thing about Neil is his individuality. He was always keen, Jeff, to make his own mark, wasn't he?

**JA:** Yeah, he was. Yeah. I think as excited as he was to be in Split Enz, he probably saw it as a stepping stone as well. And again, I recounted in the book the conversation; as Split Enz start to fall apart, Tim pulls Neil aside and said to him probably the best advice he ever gave him. It was, "Take Paul," Paul being Paul Hester, who'd only recently joined Split Enz. He said to Neil, "You and Paul, you're close in age, you're friends, you're close. Do something together. Don't drag out Split Enz for as long as it's going to go. Kill it off. Give it a mercy killing and go and do something new." And that's what led to Crowded House, which of course commercially was Neil's biggest achievement.

**GTR:** Yeah, that was an unreal story about Crowded House, and we'll get to that in just a moment. I think if I could ask you, Jeff, and I remember this time vividly, Melbourne, early

1975, and of course South Side Six and Matthew Flinders where the beer swilling would go on and the loud groups would play, ACDC, Billy Thorpe, et cetera, et cetera. So how different were Split Enz to this mob of Australian guitar thrashing when they had-

**JA:** Well, I don't think it's possible to define how different they were. That was part of their appeal, though, the simple fact that they were different, but they were different wherever they went. When they went to the UK, that was the tail end of punk, and Split Enz were a lot of things, but they weren't really punk. Their music was well-crafted. They wrote quite long, epic, sprawling songs. They looked a bit punk, I guess, but they weren't. It wasn't like they were gobbing on each other or sticking safety pins through their cheeks or anything.

There's actually some funny stories in the book that I recount that punks would go to their shows in the UK and go, and Neil overheard them leaving the show going, "Do you think they're punk? Do they qualify as punk? Are they acceptable?" But in the beer barns, of course, they were a million miles apart from the denim and T-shirts of Bon Scott and Billy Thorpe and people like that. But I guess for those who bothered to pay attention, that was part of their appeal. And let's face it, they were tailor-made for Countdown. Absolutely tailor-made, maybe not musically, because their songs were a bit more advanced, but visually they were a band that were really savvy. And most of them were art students, so they really got to exercise that creative part of their brains, particularly Noel Crombie, who while he wasn't much of a musician, he had a real vision for the band. He was the one that designed their suits. He was the one that came up with a lot of visuals. And later on, he was the one that directed a lot of their videos. So they were really tailor-made for that.

So it just took a while for the world to catch up with them in some ways, because they were misfits wherever they went, but then suddenly Countdown, color television, MTV, all these things happened and they were just perfect.

**GTR:** Yeah, very well said, Jeff. And bless Noel Crombie. And I do remember around 1974 when I first became aware of Split Enz, and I was taken by their difference. I guess the thing is, unless you've got extraordinary talent, to be different is the calling card to success, I suppose, and you've just outlined that very well.

1977, I think they had some songs that gained airplay here in Australia. My Mistake and stuff, was that around-

**JA:** They made My Mistake, sure, yeah. Give It A Whirl. Things like that. And I See Red, of course was a little bit after that. Yeah.

**GTR:** Brilliant song. Brilliant song. But of course, Jeff, the big breakthrough really came, of course ... as you just mentioned, you saw them in '79 and were taken with them, and then the rest of the Australian public that hadn't seen them live or didn't know them or True Colors, and I Got You preceded that. I remember my twin brother telling me about I Got You. He said, "You've got to hear it. You've got to hear it." And when I heard it, I was just so taken. Rolling Stone once said, you probably know about it, that Neil Finn was writing songs that Paul McCartney wishes he could be writing.

**JA:** Yeah. Well, there's that conversation, isn't there, where someone said to Paul McCartney, "What's it like being your generation's greatest singer-songwriter?" And allegedly, he said, "Well, I don't know. You better ask Neil Finn." But of course, in later years Paul McCartney dialed that back a little bit, because I think he considers himself the guardian of that particular accolade. His ego hasn't deflated after all these years, that's for sure.

**GTR:** That's right. Yeah, exactly. And I suppose coinciding and then following on a few years afterwards with I Got You and True Colors, it began an extraordinary run of great songs and great albums from Split Enz until, as you detail so brilliantly in the book, Don't Dream It's Over, things began to strain at the edges a bit. And of course, they then got Paul McCartney in on drums. When Paul and Tim and Neil



left Split Enz or Split Enz dissolved, do you think that they wanted to start something similar to what they started, they needed a bass player, or how did Crowded House start, actually?

**JA:** Yeah. Well, like I said, Tim had given Neil this bit of advice, and basically Tim was going. Tim had had success with Escapade, his solo record. He'd fallen in love with Greta Scacchi. He was going. He was heading to Europe. He was going to the UK. That's where he was going to base himself and start a solo career. So as far as he was concerned, Split Enz was over. And I think Neil tried to drag it out for a little while, but the reality was it's Tim's band and it's dead. It's dead. It's a dead shark. Those later records hadn't had anywhere near the same impact as True Colors, and it was time to pull the pin.

What happened then was a guy called Nick Seymour, brother of Mark Seymour from Hunters and Collectors, he'd approached Neil at the final Split Enz gig, I think in Melbourne, and basically started getting in his ear saying, "If you're going to form a new band, I play the bass." I'm a good player. I think we could really work together." And really got in his ear and eventually auditioned and got the gig. But Nick was to Crowded House what Noel Crombie was to Split Enz. He was a visual artist. He designed costumes. He worked on videos and stage settings. And he played the bass. I think Neil identified that quality in Nick pretty early on.

But there was a period in between. There was another guy called Craig Hooper. Craig was in a band called The Reels. And Neil was sort of toying with the idea ... they formed a band called The Mullanes. They just came up with the name, it was Neil's middle name, but they were going to go on tour anyway and they just needed a name for the posters. They were doing this little pub tour of the East Coast here in New South Wales, and Neil was thinking about something a bit harder, like two guitars, bass and drums. And if you listen to some of the recordings of that one-off Mullanes tour, they're playing some older Split Enz songs and they're playing some Crowded House songs under development, they're playing covers, and it's a bit harder, a bit tougher, a bit more rock and roll. But eventually that changed, and Craig had to leave the band for various reasons. The Reels were calling again, and Neil decided on this three-piece, which was just perfect.

Neil did things really smartly. Instead of getting an Australian record deal and then shopping it internationally and hoping that ... say you sign a deal to Sony Australia and you hope Sony in the US pick it up. He went straight to America. He started auditioning the band for US labels, and he got a deal with Capitol, which was the US home of the Beatles and the Beach Boys, the best label you could ever imagine. So that was in place, and they relocated to LA for a while to make that debut record. Even though that record contained Something So Strong, and of course Don't Dream It's Over, it took a while to connect. They went out

and Neil had a bit of agency, I guess because of the Split Enz connection, so there was curiosity factor. But they were quite different. They were more like the Three Amigos of pop. They were quirkier. They again were sort of oddballs, but with Neil's songs right at the center of all this.

And eventually, I think Don't Dream It's Over was maybe the third single from that first record, and that's the one that connected. It's a timeless song. It's one of those once in a lifetime songs that if I was a songwriter and someone said, "Give me a list of 10 songs you wish you'd written," that would definitely be on it. Everything about it is perfect, from the openings chords, which I think Neil calls the classic Maori fireside strum that's heard in mere New Zealand parties, to the keyboard solo, which was inspired by Whiter Shade of Pale.

Everything about the song is just perfect, and it fitted so well in America at the time, and I think became a number two hit. It was held off by George Michael and Aretha, I Knew You Were Waiting For Me, that big song. But a massive hit, and suddenly everything had changed. They'd gone from being a band that probably got a couple of hundred curious people because of the Split Enz connection to being a band playing to 5000 people in theaters and appearing on daytime TV shows in the States and really exploding. So it was a great moment, and it was everything that Neil had worked up to. This is what? 1985/86?

**GTR:** That's right, yeah.

**JA:** So it had been almost a decade in the making. He joined Split Enz in, what, '77? So it'd been a long time coming.

**GTR:** Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

**JA:** It was fantastic. What did The Beatles used to call it? The toppermost of the poppermost. You couldn't get bigger than that. You could not get bigger than that.

**GTR:** No, that's right. That's right, indeed. And I remember when the first Crowded House album came out, Jeff, and I bought it and loved the album. I remember listening to it while driving around country New South Wales. Loved the album. And then it was no surprise, I guess, when success in America followed, but they did have the Americans in the palm of their hands there, and I do remember them being on television. You mentioned daytime telly with Jane someone or other.

**JA:** Joan Rivers, you're thinking of, aren't you?

**GTR:** No, no. Joan Rivers, I remember that she loved them too. Jane. She used to be on American breakfast television with this guy Brian someone or other. Anyhow, I do remember-

**JA:** Oh yeah.



**GTR:** Yeah, you remember. And I remember seeing them performing on this American television show, and Paul Hester in particular had them rolling about, and I thought-

**JA:** Oh, he's hilarious. Yeah, yeah. When I interviewed Craig Hooper, who'd been in the Mullaners, he said that he would come home from rehearsals in pain, and his girlfriend said to him, "What's wrong?" He said, "I laughed so much, because Paul is just the most naturally funny guy I've ever met in my life." He was Hester the Jester, and that was one of the key points of difference with Crowded House, is that they could go and play rock and roll shows, but they could also strip it back to bass, acoustic guitar and a drum with a snare, a really simple format, and go and play on daytime television and be really musical and really funny too. So they really had a lot going for them. They were really quite unique in that way.

**GTR:** I remember seeing Paul driving around Hampton when I lived in Hampton, and he'd be in one of his big American cars playing the music loud, and, "There's Paul Hester. There's Paul." Some beautiful cars. So it was an extraordinary time for the group with followup albums, et cetera, et cetera. But if we jump back to Paul Hester and his friendship with Tim, very close. And of course you detail so brilliantly in the book that they did have their moments backstage and et cetera, et cetera, and Paul left, I think. How much did Paul's death affect Neil? What happened there?

**JA:** Well, it affected both of them. They were both very close with Paul. Yeah, it was huge. It was probably the greatest tragedy of Neil's career, I think, is losing Paul. What happened is they were on tour in 1994, promoting their album *Together Alone*. They were in America doing yet another big tour, and Paul's partner, who was back in Melbourne, was pregnant. And I think Paul had just had enough of being Hester the Jester. There were many sides to the guy. He wasn't just this comic character. And I think in the same way that Neil had issues over time with the band being seen as purely a comical three-piece, I think Paul also had problems with being seen as that funny drummer. And in the middle of the tour, he just went, "I can't take it anymore. I'm going home." And literally it was almost overnight. He said, "I've got to go. I can't do this anymore." He just, I guess, had a breakdown and went back to Melbourne, and that complicated things.

Paul and Neil would then have these occasional very public reunions. Paul, of course, as most people know, worked on shows like *Live at the Chapel* and *Music Mass Sessions*, sort of like Jules Holland does in the UK, these great music shows. Neil will come and perform on

them, and of course Paul would get behind the kit, and it happened two or three times, and they were just great, really lovely reunions. When Crowded House played their big show at the Opera House, their big farewell, Paul, of course, stepped up to the kit.

So they didn't lose touch at all, and they remained friends, very close friends. Paul went away and did some of his own things. He ran a cafe in Melbourne. He had a couple of bands of his own. And clearly things turned very dark for him, and he took his own life. And when Neil and Tim got word of that, they were in London, about to play a show at the Albert Hall as the Finn Brothers, and it turned into a musical wake. Nick Seymour joined them, and it was a very profound and really powerful moment, really powerful statement.

But I don't think Neil has ever played a show since then, and this is back in what, 2005? He's played a lot of shows since then. I don't think he's played a show where he hasn't acknowledged Paul's role. I saw them quite recently here in Wollongong, six months ago or so, and there's a nod to Paul Hester in every Crowded House show. Neil hasn't ever let his legacy slip. And I think that's really profound, and it's a testimony to the kind of relationship they had.

It was complicated, and quite often, Neil is certainly no pugilist, but occasionally they'd come to blows. They were two young guys in this strange ... And being in a band, particularly a successful band, I've seen it from close range with a few people, it's a very strange thing. You're living in this weird kind of cocoon. You're on the road all the time. You may not feel like playing to 10,000 people in Atlanta that night, but they're there and you've got to do it. And while there are fantastic moments, what did someone say? It's 23 hours of boredom and one hour of excitement, being in a touring band? It's really true. So that took its toll on both of them.

But yeah, I think the relationship was really strong and profound and deep. And like I say, yeah, Neil's never ever denied the opportunity, since Paul's death, to acknowledge the role that he played, both in his career and in his personal life. They were very, very close. In fact, Paul lived with Tim too for a long time, so it wasn't just Neil that he was very close to, it was Tim as well. So I think as deep as that loss is, Neil's found a really good way to keep honoring Paul's legacy and his legend.

**GTR:** Yeah. Yeah. It was interesting reading in the book too, *Don't Dream It's Over: The Remarkable Life of Neil Finn*, where these guys lived. And I thought, "I've probably walked past that place a few times," so that's great detailing too.

**JA:** You wouldn't have missed them. You would've heard them.

**GTR:** Yeah, that's right. That's right. And that would've been a beautiful thing. The Crowded House of course continued to reappear and release albums, and what's your take on Neil's songwriting? Has it changed? Has it matured, if it could possibly mature? I don't know. How do you view his songwriting now?

**JA:** Yeah, he still has magic moments. I keep thinking about these people. They're reappearing for their 50th anniversary tour. I'm not going to name any names, but there's people who've come out and now are getting into their 70s and 80s, and you go, "When was the last great song they wrote?" You're sort of scratching your head. I think if you look back over things that Neil has done over the past 10 years, like the most recent Crowded House record, some of his solo stuff, scratch beneath the surface and there's still some really great songs there-

**GTR:** Actually, Jeff, sorry to interrupt, but you're right when you say scratch below the surface, because I think if we use Time On Earth as an example, I saw it in a shop. I didn't know they even had an album out. And of course I bought it, and Don't Stop Now-

**JA:** Great song.

**GTR:** Yeah, a fantastic song. And there was another song recently from an album of theirs which I did discover which I've fallen in love with too. So yes, continue on, but of course you do have to scratch below the surface and you'll find them.

**JA:** Yeah, that's right. But the problem of course is your peak as a commercial entity is short-lived, but Neil has found a way to keep writing quality songs without sacrificing anything. One of my favorite later Crowded House songs is Silent House. It's on that Time On Earth record. It's a co-wrote that Neil did with Natalie Maines from the Dixie Chicks, and it's a really powerful song, and I think Neil was thinking very deeply about Paul Hester when he wrote that song.

**GTR:** Yes, that's right. Yes.

**JA:** It's not a slice of bubbly Crowded House pop, it's a very dark rock and roll song, but really profound. And yeah, some of his solo records, the work he's done with his son, Liam, the later work that he did with Tim on The Finn Brothers, particularly the album Everyone Is Here, there's some great songs on there. It feels like he's one of the ones that hasn't lost the muse, and perhaps part of that is because he hasn't bothered becoming a celebrity. He doesn't go to A-list parties or walk the red carpet or anything like that, which unlike a lot of his peers, they do that and probably got a little ... I always think of someone like Rod Stewart. Rod Stewart, you go back to the period of, say, Maggie May, Reason to Believe, even some of the early solo records, just great. Top of his game. And he could write songs, but he could really deliver them. But then he got too sucked into celebrity. He hasn't made a great record of his own creation for what, 40 years?

**GTR:** About right. About right. I do remember-

**JA:** Neil didn't surrender to that. Neil really never showed any interest in becoming a person in the spotlight. He saw himself as a singer-songwriter, a musician first, and he's maintained that.

**GTR:** Yeah, he's been able to keep going despite the changes or because of the changes. And he's encompassed the family brilliantly, hasn't he? Of course, with Tim, and I suppose we spoke about earlier the memories of his childhood and his family's musical tastes and abilities. So he has now incorporated Liam and of course his family into what he's doing, and it's all worked perfectly.

We're running out of time, Jeff, but if you could summate on that and just let me know your feelings about that and what you see the future for Neil?

**JA:** Well, I think it's great. What he's done, and just to explain to people who don't know, is that the latest version of Crowded House includes Liam and Elroy, his sons, on drums and guitar. And I'm sure Neil's wife, Sharon is probably on the road with them in some role, because Neil also formed a band with her, the Pajama Club. So Neil's found a way, because he's now an empty nester, and he's always been very much about family, and he's found a way to keep connected with his sons, who are both top shelf musicians. Both really good players. It's not a token gesture to bring them into the band. He really acknowledges their ability as musicians. So Neil's found this perfect sweet spot of family and career by bringing the boys in. I said to someone, it's like the coolest version of The Osmonds you could ever imagine.

**GTR:** I think what you should do, Jeff, when time comes, you should write a book about the most important influential members of the Australia and New Zealand connection. The musical connections, the most important. And Tim and Neil would be right up there, Neil particularly.

**JA:** Oh, absolutely. And I see Tim's about to play shows at the Opera House, so his popularity hasn't waned at all either. So yeah, they just found a way, and I think a lot of it is about not bowing to trends or not trying to be someone they're not. Neil in particular, I think, is a very regular guy in a very irregular career, and I think he's found a way to juggle all that.

So there's nothing to stop him continuing to make really great music for the rest of his life, and I think that's not something you could say about a lot of his peers who have resorted to doing certain things just to maintain attention and celebrity. Neil's different to that. He joined Fleetwood Mac, for God's sake, I think partly because of his relationship with Mick Fleetwood, they're just good friends, but also because he probably thought, "I wonder what it would be like to be in Fleetwood Mac for a while. To be in someone else's band." Think about that. Because he spent the last 45 years being in a band that either he created or his brother created, and to suddenly be in a band that it's someone else's baby altogether must have been ... and it was great. I didn't see them live, but I've seen footage of them, and it looked fantastic. Neil fitted in perfectly, his musicianship was top shelf, and Mick Fleetwood very generously would give Neil a solo spot every night to perform Don't Dream It's Over with Stevie Nicks. It was just fantastic. The crowd responded as strongly to that as they did to any Fleetwood Mac classic, so-

**GTR:** That's right.

**JA:** ... his musical ability. So I think he's the kind of musician ... I think of people like the late Robbie Robinson who died recently. People who they're always musicians. They're just musical. It's in their DNA. They're just going to keep making music, and it's just going to be good quality, interesting music. The worst thing you could say about Neil Finn is that he makes interesting music, and the best thing you could say is he writes stuff that becomes the soundtrack to your life.

**GTR:** Very, very-

**JA:** And they're not bad parameters, are they?

**GTR:** No, that's right. Very well said, Jeff Apter. And of course, we thank you so much for sparing the time to talk with The Last Post and readers and listeners about your magnificent book Don't Dream It's Over: The Remarkable Life of Neil Finn. Mate, it's so well written. It takes you right into the guts of the life of the man, and of course, you feel a part and you feel blessed to have been alive on the planet at the same time.

**JA:** Yeah, yeah. Look, that's how I felt as a 17-year-old and that's how I feel many, many years later, Greg.

**GTR:** Thank you so much, Jeff Apter for your time.

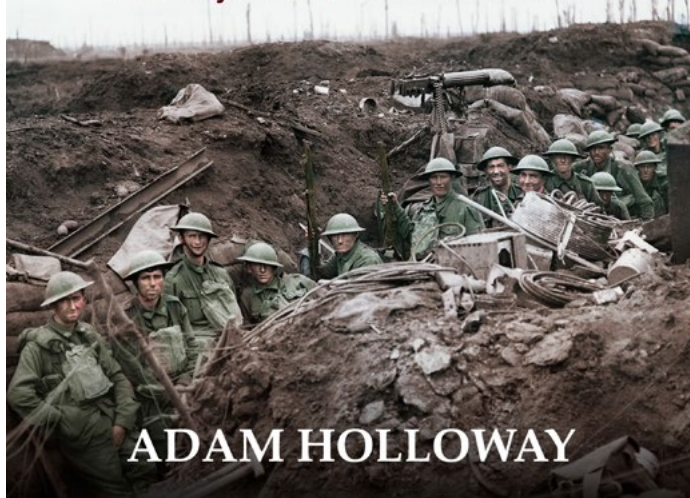
**JA:** Absolute pleasure. Thanks again, Greg. Good to talk to you again.

**GTR:** Thanks, mate.

*These young Australians were everywhere,  
fighting in almost every battle.*

# DUTY NOBLY DONE

**An extraordinary account of  
11 family members in the Great War**



**ADAM HOLLOWAY**

They answered the call for  
God, King and Country;  
they fought for each other.

Set amidst the tragedy of the First World War comes the true story of one extraordinary Australian family. This is the account of 11 young Holloway men who went forth in a procession of courage and sacrifice, each determined to do his duty. They were brothers; they were cousins; they were mates.

From the world-famed Landing at Gallipoli, through the nightmarish landscape of the Western Front, to the final battles on the Hindenburg Line, these men were there. Told through their shared experiences, this story portrays the conflict on a personal level, describing in remarkable detail how it felt to fight in the worst conflict the world had known; a conflict that would change these young men and Australian society forever.

***“This is the finest modern account of Australia's involvement in the Great War.”***

– Brigadier Arran Hassell CSC, Commander  
8th Brigade, Australian Army,

Adam Holloway on tour with  
his book *Duty Nobly Done*.  
Published by Big Sky Publishing,  
\$34.99, November 1 2018.

## **Excerpt from Chapter 13 “Buying the Farm”, Duty Nobly Done by Adam Holloway**

As darkness descended, the enemy's star shells shot into the night sky. In the flickering light, Chick could see Bassett's foot tapping on the trench floor. Still a bit shaken from the events of the night before, Bassett gave him a tense smile. Chick felt calm. Walter Besgrove was standing next to him in the trench fixing his bayonet.

As the time for the attack approached, Chick shook hands with Bassett and Besgrove — ‘Good luck fellas!’ As part of the first wave, they climbed out of the trenches in the darkness and crawled out some 30 yards from their line, where they lay on the jumping-off tape. Chick wrinkled his nose as his face lay just above the shell-churned earth, laced with the putrid odour of unburied dead. He gazed ahead, noting that a number of corpses were visible in various states of decay, illuminated by the different coloured flares launched by the Germans. It was an eerie scene as the swirling dust was caught in the lights arcing over no man's land.

The shrieking and howling of British artillery filled the air and the first shells crashed into the German trenches some 200 yards ahead of them. A sheet of flame rose along the length of the line. Chick prayed there would be some Germans left when he got there as he scrambled to his feet and charged across the heavily pitted ground. Before the men could cover half the distance, German shells began to slam into no man's land. To Chick it was a glorious sight. The area all around them was lit by exploding shells and flares and, as each flash pierced the darkness and dust, Chick saw the silhouettes of his mates as they trotted along, bayonets to the fore. Bassett and Besgrove were beside him and moving well.

Now heavy and accurate machine-gun fire began to sweep no man's land. Several rounds buzzed past Chick's ears and a few men folded and fell lifeless close by. The din was terrible. He was breathing hard from the exertion, but his blood was up and he felt no fear. More star shells burst above, the battlefield now as light as day. As they neared the German trenches where their own barrage had lifted, the men began to cheer loudly and shout encouragement to one another. Through the broken barbed-wire entanglements and dust, a line of ragged sandbags was just visible — the German parapet. Some startled Germans peered over at the charging Australians, their eyes growing large in horror. But it was too late; the men from the 15th had arrived.



Photo: Jefferson Santos.

# The Bigger Picture of Music

While the healing aspect to music such as its effect on the mental health, on the recovery illness process, and its meditative response on upon the listener cannot be denied, as a life-long musician having performed on stages all over the world, I have found that there is an underlining component to the reason why this is so, as at its core, music is something that is bigger than you and I, and is an integral element in keeping society well and connected.

We all experienced how important music became during the pandemic, and how we all missed and craved to be out at a live concert with others, and the proliferation of live streamed concerts via the internet and many other similar platforms that were used to bring us all together as we made our way through lock downs and whatnot. It also showed the importance of music on mental health.

Music and its lyrical subject matter, can also provoke much food for thought, causing us to question the most fundamentals of life's existence, challenge us to think beyond our self-imposed beliefs, and force us to see beyond the everyday view.

As a musician, there have been multiple occasions when I have been performing onstage where I have experienced a total losing of myself into the moment, or what American psychologist Abraham H. Maslow called a 'peak experience', a subject he discussed in-depth in his book, 'Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences' (1964). It is a deeply inner experience that transcends the usual everyday moments of being. It's difficult to describe or put into words. Those in the creative arts such as musicians tend to be more open to these types of experiences and more frequently as do those in sports and religion, but they can also be experienced by any individual at any time in their lives depending on the circumstances they find themselves in. Observing a painting can induce a peak experience in someone if that person connects with something in that painting on a deeper level and is open to the experience.

While each stage performance is subject to the conditions at the time, for example, some nights, the nervous system may be more tense than it is on other nights, depending on the feel of the room and the audience you're about to face. Or the adrenaline rush is at such a heightened state, it propels the performance itself. It doesn't mean the performance is any less meaningful, or you're any less connected to the performance or audience, it's just that the conditions aren't as conducive to creating this state of unconditional 'oneness' with the music, with the instrument, with the audience where you are totally at ease and at your most comfortable in your own skin. You're no longer thinking about your performance, it's happening as if you're no longer the one playing, but rather it's playing you. For want of a better word, you're flying. Soaring. That's how it feels to me. It's as if you're in some kind of time warp, where the boundaries of time don't exist anymore, except the present moment. You may only experience it in a flash of the moment, but the effect is long lasting and unforgettable.

During a recent interview I conducted with guitarist Andy Powell from British rock group Wishbone Ash, the above point was brought home.

"I think when you're playing music and if you're playing it well, you transcend time and space, you're just in the zone" he said. "Music is the gift that keeps on giving, and there's no ageism in music. If you look at orchestras, you might see a 70-year-old lady playing a violin next to a 33-year-old man. It's an incredible thing playing music because it does keep you having a very young approach to life." Touché.

JOE MATERA

**A tale of music and mayhem from  
the man behind rock and roll  
superstars Cold Chisel**

# RINGSIDE

**ROD WILLIS**

Ringside: A tale of music and mayhem from the man behind rock and roll superstars Cold Chisel. By Rod Willis. Published by Allen & Unwin, \$34.99, October 31 2023.

**At 18 Rod Willis jumped on a boat for London,  
the Mecca for music and fashion in the 1960s.**

A decade on, after working in the US and Europe with UFO, Savoy Brown and Fleetwood Mac, he returned to Australia. A burning desire to find an act he could take to the top led him to an unknown band by the name of Cold Chisel. Little did Rod know, when he took on the role of manager, that it was the beginning of a remarkably successful 32-year relationship. Along the way he would be instrumental in establishing the trailblazing Dirty Pool Management Agency, which would change the local music industry forever.

Ringside takes you behind the doors of the studios and beer barns that were the breeding grounds for bands like Cold Chisel, and reveals how Cold Chisel became the biggest band in Australia.

After initial struggles, they struck paydirt with the 1980 album *East*, one of the highest-selling Australian albums of all time. Rod guided 'Chisel' until 1983 and their unforgettable *Last Stand* tour.

In 1996 Rod steered Cold Chisel back into the studio and onto the stage: a remarkable—and seemingly impossible—return that would lead to the 1998 *Last Wave of Summer* album and the groundbreaking *Ringside* tour of 2003.

During his 50-year wild ride, Rod would encounter everything and everyone, from The Beatles, notorious groupies and mobsters to music industry legends, while witnessing the creation of a musical catalogue that has become an integral part of the great Australian songbook.





Roger Langford (far left) and David Sinclair (far right) from Warner Music with Ian Moss, Don Walker and Rod Willis at the Breakfast At Sweethearts cover photo shoot at the Marble Bar, Hilton Hotel Sydney (January 1979) Cr: Phil Mortlock.

# Forgetfulness

I was in the black-books for a while

With a bad odour, brought  
out of hatefulness,

Yet I had done nothing wrong,  
short of forgetfulness.

Good riddance to the outsider,  
you said, let him be gone,

Yet I had done nothing wrong,  
Short of forgetfulness.

Oh, how unlovable I was,  
how beastly it seems,

Oh, how offensive, a nauseous mess,

Yet I had done nothing wrong,  
short of forgetfulness.

Whatever led to the stink in the nostrils

And for you to bear a grudge,

Whatever led to the poison and  
for the creation of bad blood,

Had nothing to do with me.

Oh, how loathsome it was, and  
unwelcome, all the stress,

That was created by my forgetfulness.

In the fields below, the church  
bells ring, sounding

Pestilential at best,

Crying out for the abhorrence  
of forgetfulness.

**GREG T ROSS**



## I scored a buckwheat rental (Lupe Fiasco is a genius)

I'd not been long on  
the island  
when I scored a buckwheat rental  
under sea-grape trees,  
at Long Beach, near Negril.  
Now the nights are warmer  
and ice-cream vendors  
and children and  
trans shipment dudes frequent the  
streets and car-parks and I  
ventured to visit  
bars and restaurants and saw Micky Dolenz  
flagging a taxi  
and I heard Wet Wet Wet's Sweet Surrender  
and a bit of Fat Larry. A slow pace, to be sure.  
I took you  
on a bamboo craft, up the Great River.  
I took you  
to Rick's Cafe.  
I took you back to my place  
above Secrets  
where we'd eaten Escoviche shrimp  
and I'd stolen  
a napkin after telling you  
about the car accident and  
Boy & Bear.  
And listening  
to your stories of Solange  
and how, to you,  
Lupe Fiasco is a genius.

GREG T ROSS

# Big Mummy

We walk on planet Earth,  
but trees are rooted in Earth.  
For many years this disturbed us.  
We had no real understanding  
of our place.  
The notion of spirituality was born,  
and several religions came into being.  
Burying bodies underground or setting them ablaze  
implied that we belong here.  
And by learning to sail, fly, make artificial light, and gunpowder,  
we thought we'd gained some control,  
felt we had some power.  
But it was nothing compared to tsunamis, hurricanes,  
fires, volcanic explosions, earthquakes.  
The delicate relationship with Earth remains as it was.  
She still threatens to cast us off,  
waiting out our time.

JEREMY ROBERTS

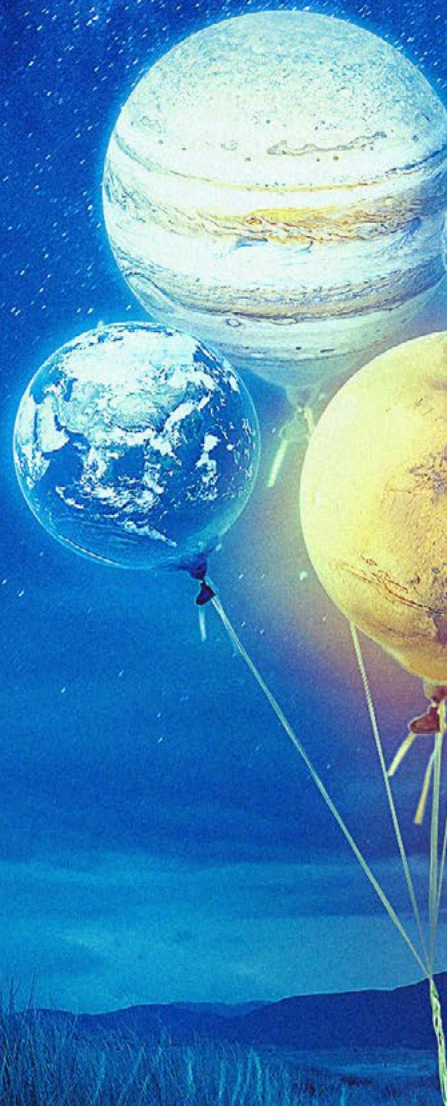






Photo:  
Simon Schuster.

# State Memorial for Barry Humphries AC CBE

A State Memorial for Barry Humphries AC CBE will be held at the Sydney Opera House on Friday, 15 December 2023.

The late Barry Humphries passed away in Sydney on 22 April aged 89, following a celebrated seven-decade global career. We knew him for his iconic characters including Dame Edna Everage and Sir Les Patterson, as well as being a renowned author, actor and satirist.

The State Memorial will bring together dignitaries, family, friends and fans of the late Mr Humphries from across the country and around the world to celebrate his extraordinary career and achievements.

It will be co-hosted by the Australian and NSW Governments, and in partnership with the arts community from across the country, including Mr Humphries' home state of Victoria.

# foreword

Hon Mark Butler

Minister for Health and Aged Care



Our commitment to the health and wellbeing of older Australians continues, with the largest investment in bulk billing in the 40-year history of Medicare, the release of the landmark Australian Cancer Plan, and new protections against shingles.

The Albanese Government continues to take steps to improve the lives of older Australians and this month we have taken a huge leap forward.

On 1 November, we tripled the incentive that general practitioners receive to bulk bill children under 16, pensioners and other Commonwealth concession cardholders.

This is the largest investment in bulk billing in the 40-year history of Medicare.

This will make it easier to find a bulk billing doctor for around 5 million children and their families and 7 million pensioners and other concession cardholders.

Doctors' groups have called this a 'game-changer' and GPs right around the country have said this will help them maintain and even shift back to bulk billing.

In our major cities, a doctor will get 34% more for a standard bulk billed consultation of under 20 minutes.

In regional and rural Australia, a doctor will get around 50% more for the same visit.

Bulk billing is the beating heart of Medicare and the Albanese Government will continue to strengthen it.

This month we also released the landmark Australian Cancer Plan, aiming to improve prevention, screening, treatment, and management of all cancers for all people in Australia regardless of their background or where they live.

The Plan has been developed by Cancer Australia, in consultation with the states and territories, First Nations communities, clinicians, researchers, people affected by cancer and support organisations.

The Plan covers all cancer types, across the whole cancer journey, from prevention and early detection to treatment, recovery and end of life care.

While cancer outcomes in this country are generally among the best in the world, that's not true for some people, simply because of who they are or where they live.

Our Australian Cancer Plan responds to patients' concerns that the health system is hard to navigate and will ensure no one falls through the gaps.

We're also investing over \$800 million to provide nearly 5 million Australians with the best protection against shingles.

Everyone aged 65 years and older, First Nations people aged 50 years and older, and people with specific medical conditions can get a free shingles vaccine to protect themselves from this debilitating virus.

This will be one of the most comprehensive and widely available shingles vaccination programs in the world.

Two doses of the vaccine dramatically reduces your risk, and provides around 10 years of protection.

It usually costs up to \$560 but for almost 5 million people, we're making it free.

Almost everyone knows someone who has had shingles and the debilitating pain that shingles and its complications can cause. It's particularly frustrating to see people suffering when it is something we can prevent.

These three measures are just some of the ways that the Albanese Government is making healthcare more accessible and affordable, including for older Australians.



# STATE OF THE ART WELLNESS CENTRE opens at St John of God Richmond Hospital

Mental health care for veterans and first responders improving as state of the art wellness centre opens.

The first stage of the St John of God Richmond Hospital development was unveiled in August, with the opening of the campus' new wellness centre.

It is part of a \$65 million redevelopment that will deliver contemporary mental health care that builds connection, improves lives and transforms the way care is provided, particularly for first responders and veterans.

Officially opened by Patron the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove, the wellness centre contains a new gym; a group room for yoga, meditation and meetings; exercise

physiology treatment rooms and a large indoor swimming pool with shower facilities.

St John of God Richmond Hospital Director of Strategy and Engagement, Karen Burns, said it represented the first class standard of care that veterans and first responders deserved.

"We need to be giving these people, who dedicate their lives to the service of others, every opportunity for recovery and rehabilitation when they are suffering as a result of that service," she said.





## — INTERVIEW —

PODCASTS: [www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews](http://www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews)

**GTR:** Good afternoon, Janja Bojanic, psychologist and Allied health manager at St. John of God Hospital in Richmond. Janja, tell us about the stuff you're doing there. It sounds exciting, it sounds almost revolutionary in the treatment of post-traumatic stress. What is it that you're doing and what is it that you're doing that's so different from what's been done previously there?

**JB:** Yeah, thanks Greg for talking to me. It really is exciting. It's exciting from a clinical perspective, but it's even more exciting in terms of the outcomes that we are getting for our clients. So our Richmond Hospital really, we've specialized in PTSD treatment, but really in adult occupational trauma and the clientele that we really see is our veterans and frontline responders, and we've made a very targeted treatment pathway to specialize dealing with and treating that specific type of trauma and those trauma injuries. And so we write and we develop and we deliver all of these really targeted programs and interventions.

**GTR:** Yeah, yeah, fantastic stuff.

And just if we just go back for listeners and readers to previously, I mean, how long has it been going for? Five years, is that correct?

**JB:** Well, our trauma programs at Richmond actually started in the early 1990s.

**GTR:** Wow.

**JB:** We've had a long history with particularly the Vietnam veterans. We were the first hospital in Australia to develop a specific inpatient PTSD treatment in response to the needs of our Vietnam veterans. And we've continuously evolved since that time. Really in 2018, which is probably where the five years is, we really redeveloped the way we deliver care and we moved away from this one-size-fits-all model to developing a treatment care pathway with our clients so that people get targeted treatments when they need it and we do a comprehensive assessment. We've also redone how we do some of the programs, but we also have developed and collaborated with other clinicians and organizations to make new programs to target really specific things like anger and PTSD or anxiety PTSD or complex PTSD.

**GTR:** Yeah, I guess having, in your role, you see this more often than I do, but through the magazine I've had dealings with people that have approached me because of the magazine that suffer post-traumatic stress and they describe

the symptoms to me, and they're all variants of course, but there is a few, there's a backbone of this anger that can erupt. And so your treatment, I guess is just, you look at different ways, different pathways, I guess, to treating all of this?

**JB:** Yeah, absolutely. So we have everything from our inpatient stay we, which is our Xavier ward. That's the one that was developed in the early 1990s.

On that ward what we really look at is: most of the time when people first come to us, they're not traveling really well, and the Xavier ward looks at symptom stabilization, teaching people what is PTSD? Why is it so difficult for them to manage?

We do family sessions there as well to help alleviate some of the barriers when they go home to help educate their family, friends, loved ones. And a lot of that is also run by a very comprehensive multidisciplinary team that will also look at medication management. Then we try and assist people in the discharge to do the programs in a more community-based way. And so we'll work with each individual around what are their core areas and what are their goals for treatment. And so that's where we implement the more specific treatments there.

**GTR:** I do know that the trauma recovery program at Richmond Hospital there is very orientated towards the individual. You touched on that earlier by saying of course that it's not a one-size-fits-all approach and that personal approach becomes very, very important to feelings of self-worth and confidence in what's being done to the individual. Do you see the individual evolving and responding to this special treatment?

**JB:** Absolutely. We try and meet the individual to where they're at. The trauma recovery program specifically is extremely intense. We run it in a residential format. Most of our clients live rural, regionally, interstate, and so coming somewhere once a week is not really a practical option. And we offer it in an intensive format so that we can actually do the trauma processing element in a safe space for them. They're allocated an individual clinician as well, so they can help build the rapport, work through that trauma, but there's also the group processing as well, and they make these beautiful, meaningful connections with other people who are in similar situations. That connection element is such a strong part of that healing journey for them.

**GTR:** Yes. I was just going to say, I thought, Janja, the connection

# Janja Bojanic

part would be particularly important for people going through this, I guess because they may be feeling disconnected, I guess.

**JB:** Absolutely. So many times we hear people, particularly on their first admission or their first group saying things like, "I thought I was the only one. I didn't think anyone could understand. I couldn't even understand." And they find a real sense of safety and home here at our hospital and with our programs and with each other. With the clinicians, but also with the other clients because they find a space where they can let the mask down and don't have to explain things. Everyone around them knows exactly where they're at. And because we specialize in the adult occupational trauma, all of my clinicians are really aware of those cultural elements of working within the military and what the discharge and medical discharge processes are and what working in these frontline organizations are. So they don't have to start from scratch with us to talk about what that was like and what those cultures are like. We all work primarily within there, so they absolutely do connect in a different way, but that's such a core element of the program.

**GTR:** Yes, yes. Well said. And of course, if we do go into that area of the first responders, we know that the jobs they do are particularly stressful and being human beings, we can't consume all that stress without doing something, I guess to our psyche. Did you know with your history, obviously you've worked in trauma before, et cetera, and this must be, you must be so aware of the first responders' vulnerability to this type of stress, Janja. Tell us a bit about the first responders and your respect for the jobs they do.

**JB:** Immense respect for our service personnel. These are the veterans and frontline workers that put their lives on the line every day doing jobs that most of us can't even comprehend. And I really feel that the passion for working with them comes from that deep respect for people who do that for the community and acquire this injury as a result of the work. They're predisposed to high volumes of trauma and we know that that's the thing that causes post-traumatic stress disorder, but it affects them in such a profound way. It affects not only them, but their family, their friends. They lose their jobs as a result of these injuries, they lose a sense of self identity. And these are some of our strongest, bravest, and most resilient members of the community. And it's because of that, that they do those jobs and it's because of their commitment to those jobs that they acquire this injury.

**GTR:** Yes, families and the general community as well as the people that you're treating must be so thankful for this thing that you're doing here. I guess it's a very holistic treatment also that includes music and a lot of other things that I guess by design are there to relax. Is that how you see it? With the holistic approach?

**JB:** We make a holistic approach because we know that's what the evidence tells us to. So we have a very comprehensive exercise program. We have a state-of-the-art Wellness Center where we do yoga, gym, swimming. We have exercise physiologists embedded into our program because we know the importance of movement with mental health. We have dieticians involved in our programs because we know patients are often prescribed a lot of medications and can develop things like metabolic syndrome or have significant shifts in weight.

We have music therapy embedded into our program as an adjunctive therapy. We have occupational therapists, we have social workers to make sure that we try and address a lot of those psychosocial things that are involved in impacting people's mental health. We have counselors, registered nurses, psychologists, we have a really comprehensive team to make sure that we can meet the needs of the clients. We see in a really... Art therapy as well, that they can experience therapy in multiple modes other than just talk therapy and that there's a place for a lot of these adjunctive therapies within that treatment.

**GTR:** Yeah, well said. Again, I think you spoke about the importance of physicality and music, both obviously important sections of the mind-body experience in a positive way, and that in itself is a beautiful thing. So yeah, how does it make you feel to see this, this must be a good thing for you to go into what is a job, it's work, but knowing that you're improving the lives of fellow human beings?

**JB:** It's such a rewarding job and I know my entire team feel this huge sense of passion and drive and come with a resounding commitment to every single day of work because we know the impact we can have. And when we see clients at their worst, being able to instill hope and let them know that life can get better and that this doesn't have to be their every day forever, it's so powerful to watch that transformation, to watch people move from that inpatient through to the outpatient, and some of our patients have achieved some wonderful, wonderful, wonderful outcomes. People have gone on and had other careers and lives and you know that the treatment works, and so it just

motivates you to just help them all, help everyone.

**GTR:** And it's been so successful that it could be used as a template for treatment in that section too. What about this program STAIR? What's that about?

**JB:** So the STAIR program, what it stands for is Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation, which is a little bit of a mouthful. So STAIR is much nicer, and most the time when I say all those words, people are like, "What is that?" It's based on Marylène Cloitre's work, who works closely with the VA in the US, and it was a program developed specifically for complex PTSD.

It really works on assisting clients with emotion regulation skills as well as interpersonal, which is what we know that they struggle with the most, dealing with big emotions that feel out of control and overwhelming. And also how do we deal with relationships and communicate effectively? And so we've adapted that program somewhat and really embedded a lot of self-compassion within it, but we run it also in a residential format because of our location. We're located pretty rural in terms of where Sydney is, but again, a lot of our clients don't live nearby. And so we've tailored the program to suit our clients and it's been such a success and it's our most successful program at the moment with our highest demand. And that demand has grown simply by word of mouth from the clients who've been in the program who have just shared their outcomes with other clients. And that's just how it's grown. It's beautiful.

**GTR:** Wonderful. And you mentioned obviously the emotional side of things, I guess compounded by the fact of feeling of lack of control by some sufferers from this, I imagine, and through the program you bring about this controlling of the emotions? How does that actually work?

**JB:** So what we do is we teach clients skills, adaptive skills, helpful skills to manage and control their emotions more effectively. So we teach people about emotions, which surprisingly most people aren't so aware of. We teach them about the things that make managing emotions more difficult. And one of those predisposing factors to not being able to manage skills effectively is just not knowing the skills to use when we experience big emotions. And so we teach them skills to match each level of emotion. It's a skill-based program, so they actively practice the skills with us and when they leave the program, they have a very comprehensive list of skills that are tailored to their physical reactions, their thoughts, their behaviors, what

they struggle with the most. And we give them basically a toolkit at the end because they've practiced those skills in session and they problem solve what will get in the way and how to manage and what to do. And in that they'll also feel more control because they'll know what to do with the emotions when they come up and they know the helpful skills to use at that time as well.

**GTR:** That's interesting. Well, it's made me feel a whole lot better because I was once told that I had emotional intelligence and I thought, oh, because I'd never thought of it, and then I've always been interested in... So that then becomes emotional intelligence, I guess. And it would help in every way in life too, I suppose. So that's wonderful. Absolutely wonderful. Now just briefly too, Janja, I'm thinking we have obviously Phoenix, we have Uni New South Wales, and the Uni of Melbourne. How are they involved with this?

**JB:** Yeah, so in 2014, St. John got formalized a partnership with UNSW and they appointed a professorial chair for the trauma programs, and that's my colleague, professor Zachary Steel, who undertook that. And so what we do there is really a lot of research around our programs to make sure that they do what we say they do, that they're effective and that they work. The Phoenix and the University of Melbourne... So when we developed the trauma recovery program in the early 1990s, that then became that template for other hospitals to use in terms of a trauma processing therapy that was then taken up by DBA and Phoenix are the body that research and provide the regulation around that. So there's multiple hospitals around Australia accredited for that, but that's where the link comes in. So we really focus on clinical excellence here at our service, but ensure that we have a lot of research backing what we do.

**GTR:** Well, talking of templates, in your role, I guess in any role that deals with a lot of individuals, do you find, obviously each case is different and yet there's a backbone of mutual, I guess, feelings, symptoms, et cetera, et cetera. Do you have to take on each individual completely different or can you learn from each case to adapt to each new case?

**JB:** Good question. In terms of diagnostic criteria, like if we're just looking at diagnosing this injury, we very much look at it like an injury. Yes, we have core symptoms that'll guide us in terms of clinicians of what we need to address. With how our programs run, they're broad enough and flexible enough to address the individual needs of the clients. And

that comes from that care pathway and really moving away from the one-size-fits-all.

So where it used to be everyone's going through this pathway, now by looking at each individual and their needs, for example, some people have a lot of issues managing and regulating their anger and it's causing a lot of problems in their life, particularly with their family or even so far as to cause legal issues for them, so they might need that targeted approach for that. And so they might do that program because that's a specific targeted intervention for that, whereas we know people with PTSD suffer a lot with anger, but people might not have the need to do the targeted intervention and the other program might be enough.

We have targeted sleep programs where we look at things like nightmares and not everyone would need that either. What we try and do is actually do look at each individual and try and make a care plan for them and put them through the pathway that's going to assist them the most with what's going to increase their quality of life and align with their treatment goals and what they want their outcomes to be.

**GTR:** Very well said. And it once was said that patience, the ability to show patience, cures everything almost. Do sufferers from post-traumatic stress, do they lose patience? Is that one of the symptoms of this anger they get angry with themselves or...?

**JB:** Yeah, angry with themselves and angry at everything else. I think patience is difficult. Anger, problematic anger is part of PTSD. We know that their level of physiological arousal is much higher than what we would consider normal, And so a lot of people describe themselves as being very short fused.

**GTR:** Where something as simple as waiting in a queue can bring upon that feeling.

**JB:** Absolutely. Absolutely. Because they're probably feeling very overwhelmed standing in the queue. It's not going to take very much to push them into what we call the red zone.

Once we do encourage, in terms of how clients see themselves, one thing I say to them all is, "the best gift you can give yourself in this journey is patience at yourself, and know that it's not going to be fixed overnight. It doesn't mean you won't get frustrated, but you need to be patient." This didn't happen overnight for a lot of these people. They had a high load of trauma. They often have suffered

with the symptoms of PTSD for years before they really understood what was happening or noticed that there's a problem. And the other one is just "don't lose hope," which can seem so difficult at times as well.

**GTR:** Yes. So how do you get patients? Do they ring you? Do they go online? How do you get these people there?

**JB:** Yeah, I mean we do have a website. We also regularly send out information. So a lot of people, they contact us mainly online or call the hospital directly because they know that's where we specialize in. Absolutely all the information is located online and they just need to book in an appointment with one of our psychiatrists to get a referral into the programs.

**GTR:** That's good. So they go to the St. John of God website? The hospital in Richmond?

**JB:** Yes.

**GTR:** Okay, that's fine. Wonderful.

**JB:** St. John of God website, select Richmond.

**GTR:** Yeah, that's right. So everyone listening and reading this will know that's what you do to apply or get some treatment for what is a very seemingly increasingly common condition, I guess with the added stress of responders, frontline responders and veterans in the community. Janja Bojanic, psychologist and allied health manager at the trauma recovery program at St. John of God Hospital in Richmond, it's been an absolute pleasure speaking with you and I hope that we've managed to cover all the things, or at least a lot of the things that you do there that make this trauma program so unique and so admired throughout Australia and indeed the world and how it has acted as a template.

Is there anything else you'd like to say before we go?

**JB:** No, thank you for having me and for helping us spread the word. I think knowledge is definitely power and what we really try and do is just make sure people know that there's treatment and there's hope there and that they're not alone. And we're certainly an organization who knows how to work with clients to deal with this injury.

**GTR:** Well, we wish you a good afternoon and evening too, Janja, and thank you so much for your time.

**JB:** Thank you, Greg.

***"As our defence personnel continue to make sacrifices to serve our country, we need to ensure their families are remembered and cared for, well into the future. Whatever you decide, whatever you can give, please know that Legacy is an extremely worthy organisation. When you include Legacy in your Will, your gift is sure to make a real difference for our veterans' families – for generations to come."***

- Noelle



# The truth about inflammation:

## *All you need to know about 2023's hottest health topic, from causes to cures*

Inflammation is the scourge of modern life, judging by all the supplements, workouts and diets that promise to fight it. But what precisely gets inflamed, and why – and is it always a bad thing?

To understand what can go wrong with our bodies, it helps to remember that they haven't evolved much since we were hunting and gathering a few thousand years ago. Our greedy response to sugar, for instance, worked well when we could only get it from wild berries; now that it's combined with salt and fat into foods we can't stop eating, it can be a problem. Or consider our stress response: if the only time your body reroutes resources from the immune system to your fight-or-flight system is during the occasional sabre-toothed tiger attack, that's fine. If every mean tweet, upsetting headline or twinge of worry about the mortgage sends your systems into panic mode, your body never gets a chance to recuperate.

Inflammation, one of the least understood and most debated topics in health, works a bit like this. There are hundreds of cookbooks that promise to deliver an "anti-inflammatory diet", with supplements, gels, teas, workouts, saunas and cryotherapy chambers offering the possibility of even more dramatic results. But inflammation, at its core, is a vital part of the body's immune response – not something to try to eliminate. It is a complex biological process that occurs when the body detects harmful stimuli and its purpose is to protect you and kickstart healing. Sometimes this process gets out of control, leading to chronic inflammation that damages rather than heals. The tricky part? Our understanding of this process is evolving: there is a chance that, if you tweak your knee on a five-a-side pitch, you will still be given medical advice that was flipped on its head a decade ago.

So how much do we really know about inflammation – and when should you let it work its magic?

### **What is inflammation for?**

Inflammation is the immune system's response to any traumatic event in the body tissues – from a demanding workout to a scraped knee to a bout of flu. Your immune system releases white blood cells to protect the area, and you will probably experience some redness, warmth and swelling in the affected spot – occasionally with soreness and pain where the process

stimulates nerves. When you are injured, this happens in the affected spot. When you have flu, swelling and pain occur in the respiratory system, but might also contribute to the muscle and joint pain or headaches you experience.

"This is acute inflammation – it's part of our defence system, and we all have it, happening in varying degrees and duration depending on what has caused it in the first place," says Tim Spector, professor of genetic epidemiology at King's College London. "It's only a problem when it goes wrong, usually by overreacting in some way." Crucially, though, acute inflammation is usually what you want to happen, and trying to prevent it might cause even more problems. We'll come back to this.

### **What is going wrong?**

Chronic inflammation is more of a worry. This happens when the body continues to send white blood cells on the attack in the absence of any threat. This disrupts normal bodily functions and can result in healthy tissues and organs being attacked. Autoimmune disease can bring it about, and so can foreign agents entering the body: it could be a serious problem, even if it's not immediately evident.

"I think we are realising that chronic inflammation is part of many diseases we didn't think it was previously involved in," says Spector. "Nearly every disease is associated with some disorder of inflammation and it's now considered a key part of ageing. So chronic inflammation really is an issue and something we should be trying to reduce."

It tends to be less obvious than acute inflammation – it often causes fatigue, but any pain will be less localised. Crucially, the causes still aren't fully understood.

The most immediately dangerous and obvious autoimmune disorders occur when the immune system mistakenly targets and attacks the body's cells, thinking that they are foreign invaders; or when a defect occurs in the systems that usually mediate acute inflammation. But these are breakdowns in the body's communications systems, and deal


with problems that don't actually exist – like an overzealous guard dog barking at shadows. Chronic inflammation can also be a result of the body's failure to deal with genuine problems – ranging from infectious organisms to industrial chemicals – and this is where we have to consider whether 21st-century living is promoting levels of chronic inflammation that didn't exist before.

### **A modern problem**

"Our modern environments have been markedly transformed, from the food we eat to the air we breathe, to how we move and relate to others," says Dr Shilpa Ravella, assistant professor of medicine at Columbia University Medical Centre. "Our immune systems are constantly triggered in this new environment, leading to chronic and often low-level inflammation that is linked to various kinds of disease."

Many inflammatory issues start in the gut, where a huge amount of the trillions of bacteria, viruses, fungi and other organisms that make up every human's microbiome live. Scientists are still unravelling the complexities of the relationship between us and these microbes – but it's well accepted that one of the key interactions between them and our immune cells involves "training" our bodies to distinguish harmless food and germs from their more toxic counterparts. Keeping the bad stuff out without sending our immune systems into overdrive is a fine balance, but one where our foraging-friendly gut errs on the side of tolerance – offering a muted inflammatory response compared with other areas of the body. "Sometimes, this response can go awry, with genes and the environment colluding to disrupt the balance, creating food allergies, coeliac disease, inflammatory bowel disease or other problems," explains Ravella.

What causes this disruption? For most people, ultra-processed foods (UPFs) are likely to be a factor. Defined by researchers as "snacks, drinks, ready meals and other products created mostly or entirely from substances extracted from foods or derived from food constituents with little if any intact food" and often highly convenient and palatable, these form a substantial proportion of the typical



western diet. A review published this year concluded that “evidence on the association between UPF consumption and inflammation is still limited”, but there is certainly evidence – in mice, at least – that artificial sweeteners and additives can alter the makeup of microorganisms found in the gut, making it a more inflammatory environment.

While they might alleviate pain, it appears that both ice and complete rest may delay healing, instead of helping

Other factors may conspire to leave us chronically inflamed. As explained above, life is full of long-term stressors that have been linked to increases in inflammatory markers. Sleep loss and the disruption of circadian rhythms can be a factor: bad news if you are staring at a screen well after sunset. There are less easily avoidable environmental factors to worry about too: recent studies, for instance, suggest an association with long-term exposure to air pollution.

#### **If it's not broken ...**

So how do you deal with all this? First, do not try to prevent inflammation when it's actually doing you good. If you are injured in a sporting context, for instance, you might find a well-wisher suggesting you use the popular Rice protocol (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation). But while it might alleviate pain, according to a 2015 blogpost by Dr Gabe Mirkin – the originator of the acronym – “it appears that both ice and complete rest may delay healing, instead of helping. Applying ice to injured tissue causes blood vessels near the injury to constrict and shut off the blood flow that brings in the healing cells of inflammation ... anything that reduces inflammation also delays healing.” Rest doesn't prevent inflammation – but a bit of movement can get blood to the affected areas, meaning that doing some very low-intensity exercise after an injury can help the healing process.

Hampering your own body's attempts to fix itself also applies to other forms of anti-inflammatory pain relief, including ibuprofen, one of the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs. A study presented last year suggests that taking anti-inflammatories for conditions such as osteoarthritis might worsen inflammation in the knee joint over time, with regular NSAID users showing worse cartilage quality than a control group. In another study (admittedly, conducted on ultramarathoners), ibuprofen use was related to elevated indicators of inflammation. More research is needed, and the occasional ibuprofen tablet is unlikely to do lasting damage – but it is worth keeping an eye on.

#### **Modern solutions**

Of course, this still leaves you trying to limit chronic inflammation. There are a number of ways to do this, but one of the most effective is to start at the gut. “Reduce processed and refined foods while also limiting added sugars and sugary beverages,” says Dr Sunni Patel, a wellness coach with more than 15 years of clinical experience. “Focus on consuming whole, minimally processed foods that are rich in nutrients and have

anti-inflammatory properties. Include plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins such as fish, poultry, beans, legumes and healthy fats. What you cook with also makes a difference – emphasise herbs and spices with anti-inflammatory properties, such as turmeric, ginger and garlic.”

There is also some evidence that the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA have anti-inflammatory effects – so try to eat a mixture of foods that are high in those, including fatty fish such as salmon or mackerel, flaxseeds, chia seeds and walnuts. Avoiding excess alcohol is also important – among other things, booze disrupts your gut bacteria.

What about not eating at all for periods of time? Part of the rationale for intermittent fasting is that it mimics the sporadic availability of food that would have been the norm for much of human history, and some research suggests that it can help to limit inflammation. “It goes back to this idea that if you give your body the time it needs to repair itself, it will help autophagy – or the destruction of damaged and unnecessary cells,” says Spector. Early research is promising, but more studies are needed.

What else? “There is some evidence that exercise can reduce inflammation and responses to stress,” says Spector. “Partly because it can help to prevent obesity, which causes inflammation in itself, and partly because it comes with its own benefits.”

Exercise doesn't have to be too strenuous – a 2017 study conducted by the University of California San Diego School of Medicine found that even one 20-minute session of moderate exercise can stimulate the immune system, producing an anti-inflammatory response – but older research suggests that resistance training also helps, implying that the best bet is a mixture of both. If you can, take your walks where there is greenery. “You can change your relationship to the microbes living on, in and around you by increasing your contact with the natural world,” says Ravella. “Forest bathing – essentially, taking a walk in the woods and being mindful of what is around you – can help us de-stress, but also exposes us to bacteria, viruses and fungi that can boost our own.”

De-stressing in other ways is helpful, too – and so is sleep. “If you can get your circadian rhythms in order by going to bed at a regular time, that allows repair to occur and makes blood sugar spikes less likely,” says Spector. “It all helps.”

If all this seems a lot to remember, the best advice is to do what a hunter-gatherer would do: go on long walks, occasionally indulge in some strenuous physical exertion and try not to worry too much. Oh, and don't eat anything that you don't recognise as food. We aren't that evolved, after all.

**JOEL SNAPE**  
*The Guardian*

# Age Discrimination Commissioner leaves valuable legacy

Former Age Discrimination Commissioner the Hon Dr Kay Patterson AO completed her term as Commissioner in July this year after being appointed in 2016.

Her work has played an important part in raising the profile of key issues facing older Australians including age discrimination in the workplace; elder abuse in the community; and older women's risk of homelessness.

During her term, Commissioner Patterson has increased community awareness of elder abuse and available supports. She has advocated for implementation of recommendations from the Australian Law Reform Commission's 2017 report, Elder Abuse: A National Legal Response, and helped to raise awareness of the National Elder Abuse phone line (1800 ELDERHelp – 1800 353 374) through numerous campaigns. The Commissioner has released elder abuse awareness resources in 20 languages. She has also been a leading voice in calling for the harmonisation of Enduring Power of Attorney laws and the development of a National Register.

Commissioner Patterson has advocated for older women at risk of homelessness, releasing a paper on this issue in 2019 and continuing to call for solutions to this multi-faceted problem.

The Commissioner has campaigned against age discrimination in the workplace, launching the in 2021. She partnered with the Australian HR Institute on several surveys looking at employers' attitudes to older workers. The most recent survey found one in six organisations will not consider hiring people aged 65 and above while only a quarter are open to hiring those aged 65 and above 'to a large extent'. The Commissioner has engaged with different industries to foster age inclusion in the workforce and has served as Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Mature Age Employment since 2018. She is also a member of the Council of Elders, which was established

by the Australian Government to consult with senior Australians and provide advice about aged care reform and ageing generally.

During her term, Commissioner Patterson has challenged ageist beliefs and promoted positive intergenerational relationships. Her reports 'What's age got to do with it' (2021) and 'Talking about my generation' have provided deeper insights into ageism across the adult lifespan. The Commissioner's latest 2023 'Changing Perspectives' project evaluated the effectiveness of educational intervention in reshaping perceptions about ageing and delivered training to more than 300 aged care and community workers across Australia. The Commissioner has also been a supporter of The Centenarian Portrait Project by Teenagers, a national arts initiative which promotes intergenerational friendships.



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Former Age Discrimination Commissioner  
Kay Patterson AO.  
Photo by: Matthew Syres.



# Eureka win for researchers behind new anti-cancer strategy

Chemotherapy and radiation are two common treatments used to destroy or stop the growth of cancer cells, to prevent tumours from spreading.

But these treatments can also affect healthy cells and damage the cells' DNA, leading to debilitating side effects, including nausea, fatigue and hair loss.

WEHI scientists Associate Professor Tim Thomas and Professor Anne Voss have led groundbreaking research in developing a new class of drugs that can put cancer cells 'to sleep', without the harmful side effects caused by conventional therapies.

Their pioneering work was recently recognized at Australia's most distinguished science awards, the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, with the pair winning the 2023 UNSW Eureka Prize for Scientific Research.

## Breakthrough treatment

The new class of drugs developed by Assoc Prof Thomas and Prof Voss have an unprecedented ability to stop cancer cells from reproducing and spreading – without damaging the cells' DNA.

Prof Voss, Joint Head of WEHI's Epigenetics and Development Division, said the pair felt honoured to be Eureka Prize recipients.

"This win is a testament to the collaborative power and the unwavering commitment of so many colleagues that has underpinned our work towards finding better treatments for a disease that still impacts millions of people worldwide," she said.

"The best anti-cancer treatments currently available to patients can still impact their quality of life.

"This new class of drug compounds stop cancer cells from dividing and proliferating by switching off their ability to continue the cell cycle. This stops the cancer cells in their track, preventing them from spreading.

"Crucially, in arresting tumour growth, the new compounds don't damage the cells' DNA, a critical difference between this new class of compounds and standard cancer therapies."

The research, spanning over a decade, involves a collaboration with the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (MIPS) and the Cancer Therapeutics CRC (CTx).



Professor Anne Voss (and Associate Professor Tim Thomas) have received the 2023 UNSW Eureka Prize for Scientific Research.

## New cancer weapon

Assoc Prof Thomas said this novel class of drugs has the potential to be an entirely new strategy towards fighting cancer.

"Our research has already shown great promise in halting cancer progression in models of blood and liver cancers. This is a significant step forward in combating the global health challenge of cancer."

After further drug development collaboration with the CRC for Cancer Therapeutics and Pfizer, drugs based on the work of Associate Professor Tim Thomas and Professor Anne Voss are now in clinical trial for the treatment of cancer.

"THIS NEW CLASS OF DRUG COMPOUNDS STOP CANCER CELLS FROM DIVIDING AND PROLIFERATING BY SWITCHING OFF THEIR ABILITY TO CONTINUE THE CELL CYCLE. THIS STOPS THE CANCER CELLS IN THEIR TRACKS, PREVENTING THEM FROM SPREADING."

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For more than 100 years, medical researchers at Melbourne's WEHI – the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research – have been making life-changing discoveries to improve the health of our community.

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**03 9345 2929 | [kiley.h@wehi.edu.au](mailto:kiley.h@wehi.edu.au)**



After pioneering research by Associate Professor Tim Thomas and Professor Anne Voss, a new class of drugs that can treat cancer without the harmful side effects of conventional treatments, is now undergoing clinical trials.

# VAD is a gift

NSW is joining other Australian states and NZ in allowing terminally ill people to access voluntary assisted dying, bringing comfort and choice at the end of life.

Navy veteran Dan Colgan\* holds his fingers a centimetre apart. "Dying is just this much of it," he says.

The 63-year-old West Australian father of four and grandfather of two has incurable brain cancer. He has been approved for voluntary assisted dying (VAD) and can now access medical assistance to end his life – on his own terms.

Dan describes VAD as a gift.

"Now the dying has been taken care of, we can focus on the living."

By the end of November, NSW will become the final Australian state to allow VAD. Only the ACT and Northern Territory are yet to pass laws.

## Dan's story

A year ago, Dan collapsed while playing hockey. He woke up in an ambulance following a violent seizure. After three months of testing followed by brain surgery, doctors told him he had a glioblastoma multiforme; an aggressive, fast-growing cancer with a life-expectancy of just 14-months.

"I felt shocked at first, completely floored," Dan said.

Having watched his father's long battles with cancer, Dan told his family "That's not how it's going to be for me." He stopped traditional treatments and is now pursuing his own care regime.

## The VAD option

Dan first heard about VAD from his brother-in-law, a GP.

"He said to me: 'If you decide to pursue VAD then make it a priority – you will likely encounter lack of understanding and even opposition' and that proved to be true."

Dan said the first GP he approached was "like a deer in the headlights" when he raised the topic of VAD. "She almost ran out of the room."

But another GP pointed him to the VAD care navigators, a group of nurses and social workers who guide people through the process. "I was expecting to have to fight to get what I wanted," Dan said. "But from the first conversation



ABOVE: Dan's wife Laury is supportive of his choice. "I'm absolutely onboard with VAD for Dan. I'm pragmatic and emotional in equal measure and I back his decision 100 percent," she said.

to the last, I was respectfully and gently guided through the process. I was encouraged to ask questions and proceed at my own pace."

After a series of requests and assessments by two independent doctors, Dan's VAD application was approved. "I experienced an overwhelming sense of calm knowing the manner of my death was largely in my control" Dan said.

## Accessing VAD

For all the benefits VAD brings, it can be hard for some to access. It can be challenging to find a doctor willing and able to do the assessments and many people are unaware the option exists.

Dr Linda Swan, the Chief Executive of VAD advocacy group Go Gentle Australia, says it's important people know their rights.

"Some laws forbid doctors from raising VAD with their patients – so you need to start the conversation yourself. Remember, you are within your rights to ask to see another doctor if yours can't or won't help you," she says. "The VAD care navigators are the best place to start," she said.

Despite getting the green light for VAD, Dan wants to be one of the 7% of people with glioblastoma alive after five years.

"You don't know until the last minute whether you'll go ahead with it. But I believe being approved for VAD has extended my life. It has certainly extended my quality of life.

"I could have spent my last months in fear and worry about myself and my family. Instead, I have gained self-determination and choice. Nothing has been taken away."

Dan joined the Royal Australia Navy as a 15-year-old Junior Recruit in January 1976. He served in a variety of ships and establishments before his final posting to Defence Force Recruiting. Dan completed his service in January 1989 in the rank of Petty Officer Writer.

## How do I access VAD in my state?

From 28 November, voluntary assisted dying is available in all states to eligible terminally ill people. Contact the Care Navigator Service.



**Victoria**  
vadcarenavigator@petermac.org  
(03) 8559 5823 or 0436 848 344

**Queensland**  
qvadsupport@health.qld.gov.au  
1800 431 371

**Western Australia**  
VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au  
(08) 9431 2755

**South Australia**  
health.VADCareNavigators@sa.gov.au  
0403 087 390

**Tasmania**  
vad@health.tas.gov.au  
1800 568 956

**New South Wales**  
VAD is available from 28 November.  
Details at [health.nsw.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying/](https://health.nsw.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying/)



# Associate Professor Cleola Anderiesz

## Chief Executive Officer National Breast Cancer Foundation



Cleola is a senior executive leader with over 20 years of experience across the academic, not-for-profit, and public sectors.

Cleola has qualifications in science and health economics, a PhD, a Senior Executive MBA, and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and holds extensive national leadership experience in strategy development, program design and implementation, and building productive cross-sector partnerships.

Cleola has worked as a medical researcher nationally and internationally in the field of reproductive biology. After leaving research, Cleola spent six years in the not-for-profit sector and 15 years with the Australian Government in a range of national leadership roles.

During her public service career, Cleola established and implemented national cancer initiatives spanning research, clinical trials, data, service development, and clinical practice. Cleola planned and managed the conduct of Australia's first national audit of cancer research funding, and designed and implemented Australia's first national collaborative cancer research scheme, bringing together 13 organisations to co-fund over 300 national cancer research projects totalling \$113 million.

During her career, Cleola has contributed to the development of a range of clinical practice guidelines, policy reports, and data publications. She provided executive leadership in the development of a national framework for health professionals, service providers and policy makers to support the delivery of evidence-based, best-practice lung cancer care, and has led national initiatives in shared follow-up and survivorship care, regional cancer care, and professional education.

In 2018, Cleola led the implementation of the Australian Government's first health Mission – the Australian Brain Cancer Mission, consolidating and developing over \$47 million in funding partnerships. As Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Cancer Australia, Cleola provided senior executive oversight of a ministerially requested enquiry into lung cancer screening in Australia, and supported the development of Australia's first national Pancreatic Roadmap.

Cleola is an Honorary Principal Fellow at the Melbourne School of Population & Global Health at the University of Melbourne, and has held positions on a variety of international, national, and state committees including membership of the International Cancer Research Partnerships (ICRP) Clinical Trials Outcomes Evaluation Committee, a member of Canteen's National Reference Group for the Australian Youth Cancer Framework, and the Australia Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) Cancer Monitoring Advisory Group.

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## Resolute Ready – A Global Initiative for Military, First Responders and connected families.

**INTERVENTION IS PREVENTION.**

# Resolute Ready International GLOBAL RECOGNITION AWARD

We are immensely grateful for this acknowledgment of our commitment to making a positive impact on the global community. This recognition underscores the dedication and hard work of our team at Resolute Ready International. We are honored to be recognized for our contributions, and it motivates us to continue striving for excellence in everything we do.

### **Endorsement written by The Global Recognition Award:**

At a time when mental health's importance is increasingly recognised, the forward-thinking approach of Resolute Ready sets a benchmark. Their commitment to providing immediate and accessible care has justly earned them a 2023 Global Recognition Award. The company's virtual hub is a significant innovation, offering a lifeline by connecting military, first responders, and communities with global service providers. This platform is not merely a service; it is a critical infrastructure for those often marginalized by traditional health systems.

### **Remarkable Reach and Responsiveness**

The impact of Resolute Ready is evident through their impressive early metrics. With over 7,000 website hits and engagement from eight countries in their first month, they have shown a remarkable ability to meet a global need. They've pinpointed a gap in the market and responded with precision and empathy. The company's work, such as aiding an ADF member in the UK, illustrates their profound life-saving impact.

### **Expansion and Client Growth**

The growth of Resolute Ready is underscored by the addition of over 80 service providers to their network in a relatively short time. The proliferation of their Community Engagement Liaisons across key global regions is a testament to their expanding influence. This is not just quantitative growth; it reflects a deeper, more impactful service model that is setting a new standard in the industry.

### **Unparalleled Industry Position**

Standing as the sole global directory for mental health service providers, Resolute Ready rightfully earns a 2023 Global Recognition Award. Their exceptional online rating echoes the trust and efficacy emblematic of their services—qualities that are indispensable in the mental health sector.

### **Acknowledgement and Engagement**

Recognition has come naturally to Resolute Ready, whose commitment to mental health is personified by their team of Community Engagement Liaisons and Ambassadors. These individuals are more than representatives; they are the core of a commitment to fostering a supportive network for mental health services.

### **Final Words**

More than innovating, Resolute Ready has charted new territory. By offering a model of connectivity and support, they have merited a 2023 Global Recognition Award. This recognition goes beyond celebrating the company's success; it underscores the profound significance of accessible mental health care. As a vanguard in the industry, Resolute Ready is redefining the provision of mental health services, setting a new precedent for the entire sector.

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Resolute Ready Camilla Cooper Partnership Advisor/Communication Strategist E:support@resoluteready.com

Submit your service at:  
[resoluteready.com/submit-your-service](https://resoluteready.com/submit-your-service)

Explore the services in the Virtual Hub:  
[resoluteready.com/hub](https://resoluteready.com/hub)

Resolute Ready is a global initiative aimed at supporting veterans, first responders, and their families who suffer from service-related trauma. This article highlights the core information regarding the program's mission, its origin, and its initiatives to address the critical issue of veteran homelessness.

## Origin and Mission

Resolute Ready was born out of a decade-long struggle faced by a veteran and his family, characterized by trauma, anxiety, depression, and isolation. Recognizing the urgent need for early intervention, Resolute Ready International was created to provide timely support to mitigate the impact of service trauma. It aspires to end the intergenerational cycle of suffering that affects not only veterans and first responders but also their families.

The initiative's importance is underscored by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide in Australia, with over 5,899 submissions highlighting the need for comprehensive support. The initiative's goal is to provide a single location where individuals can find the assistance they require, at any time, anywhere, through a virtual hub.

## Addressing Veteran Homelessness

Veteran homelessness is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. Here are strategies to address this problem:

### Targeted Outreach and Engagement:

Identify and reach out to homeless veterans through outreach programs, shelters, and service providers, providing immediate access to basic needs like shelter, food, and clothing.

### Access to Affordable Housing:

Increase the availability of affordable and supportive housing options for veterans and implement rental assistance programs.

### Comprehensive Support Services:

Offer a range of services addressing mental health, substance abuse, medical care, employment assistance, and life skills training, along with case management.

### Employment and Training Programs:

Collaborate with employers to create job opportunities and provide training programs tailored to veterans' skills and interests.

### Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment:

Expand access to mental health services and specialized services for veterans struggling with substance abuse and addiction.

### Legal Support:

Offer legal assistance to address issues like evictions and access to benefits.

### Peer Support and Community Integration:

Foster a sense of belonging among veterans through peer support groups and community events.

### Collaboration with Service Providers:

Strengthen partnerships between government agencies, non-profit organizations, and service providers to coordinate efforts and share resources.

### Prevention and Early Intervention:

Identify and address factors that can lead to homelessness before they escalate.

### Education and Awareness:

Raise public awareness about veteran homelessness and educate veterans about available resources.

## A Global Movement

Resolute Ready has garnered international support from countries like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland, showcasing the universal importance of its cause. The initiative has also formed partnerships with various organizations and individuals worldwide to ensure that no one faces service trauma alone.

Resolute Ready International is a beacon of hope for veterans, first responders, and their families, offering critical support for those affected by service-related trauma. The program's initiatives are designed to address the pressing issue of veteran homelessness and provide comprehensive solutions. This global movement is a testament to the power of connection intervention, and prevention, pledging to preserve the precious gift of life. You are not alone.

*"It is a privilege to work with the team at Resolute Ready – providing evidence-based solutions to mitigate risks associated with workplace grievances, and advance towards a fairer, more just and mentally robust workplace."*

Dr Kay Danes OAM



ABOVE: Barry Riddiford.

# Open Door Adventures on another journey with Australian Veterans

Innovation often sprouts from personal interests, hobbies, or as responses to the challenges individuals encounter in their own lives. This principle applies equally when it comes to supporting our local communities.

Allow me to introduce Barry Riddiford, a Wiradjuri Elder residing in Townsville. Barry's work as Director, Open Door Adventures, is aimed at supporting struggling veterans in their transition back to civilian life.

I find his story is truly inspiring and would like to share with you his holistic approach to addressing the well-being of Veterans and their families, encompassing physical, psychological, and social aspects, and a deep commitment to their welfare.

As an advocacy organisation we often work with older veterans and veterans with disability to help uphold their rights, and we were lucky enough to have Barry work with us as an advocate at ADA Australia for a time.

The genesis of Barry's current work can be traced back to a childhood dream and a twist of fate. As Barry

recollects, he aspired to join the Army after completing boarding school. This was during the conclusion of the Vietnam War, and many veterans were returning home. However, Barry's mother had different plans. Unbeknownst to Barry, he had been accepted into Portsea Officer Training School, a fact he only learned much later in life when his mother confessed to having burned his acceptance letter (presumably, the statute of limitations has long since passed). This redirection set Barry on a new path, leading him to become an educator, a leader, and a communicator within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities.

Barry's personal journey and the redirection of his aspirations from a military career to education and community leadership is a testament to the impact of serendipity and life experiences on our paths. His fascination with the Australian



Defence Force (ADF) and the defence community never waned, and it eventually led him to conduct a program that addresses critical mental health issues within the veteran community.

I had the opportunity to converse with Barry over the phone about his program while he was stranded on the side of the road enroute to Lightning Ridge, waiting for a caravan part. To Barry, such situations are simply part and parcel of his journey.

Mental well-being and issues like self-harm and suicide are indeed pressing concerns among veterans. Barry's program leverages the transformative power of nature and cultural exploration. By taking groups of veterans into various wilderness locations across Australia, his program allows them to re-evaluate their narratives and self-perception. This approach not only provides an opportunity for veterans to connect with nature but also to reconnect with their own identity and the shared history of Australia. The incorporation of cultural and historical exploration, community service, and challenges into these journeys creates a comprehensive and supportive environment for the participants.

On the latest trip, Barry tells me the focus on truth-telling. They are exploring Aboriginal Massacre Sites, understanding the Brewarrina Fish Traps, and visiting an Aboriginal Mission which all contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical contexts of the land. This kind of experiential learning can be instrumental in helping veterans reconnect with their own experiences and foster a sense of community and support.

Barry's dedication to making these experiences available to veterans and his work as an advocate for older veterans and those with disabilities is a vital contribution to supporting these individuals. It is heartening to see individuals like Barry, whose personal interests and life experiences have led to innovative solutions for the challenges faced by Veterans in their transition back to civilian life.

Into the future, Barry will continue doing what he can through his unfunded bush program. Currently he is planning a trip to a remote location to live with and learn from Aboriginal Elders; a canoe trip down one of the big rivers in western Queensland, and a tagalong tour across the Simpson Desert.

If you would like to learn more about Barry's veterans bush programs, offer support, or join in on a program, you can contact Barry through ADA Australia at [info@adaaustralia.com.au](mailto:info@adaaustralia.com.au).



#### Article by Geoff Rowe

Geoff Rowe is the CEO for Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia. ADA Australia has a dedicated team of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates available to support older First Nations people with aged care issues or First Nations people with disability. ADA Australia is also host to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland.



## Your say, your rights in aged care

Help with accessing aged care services

Help with aged care issues

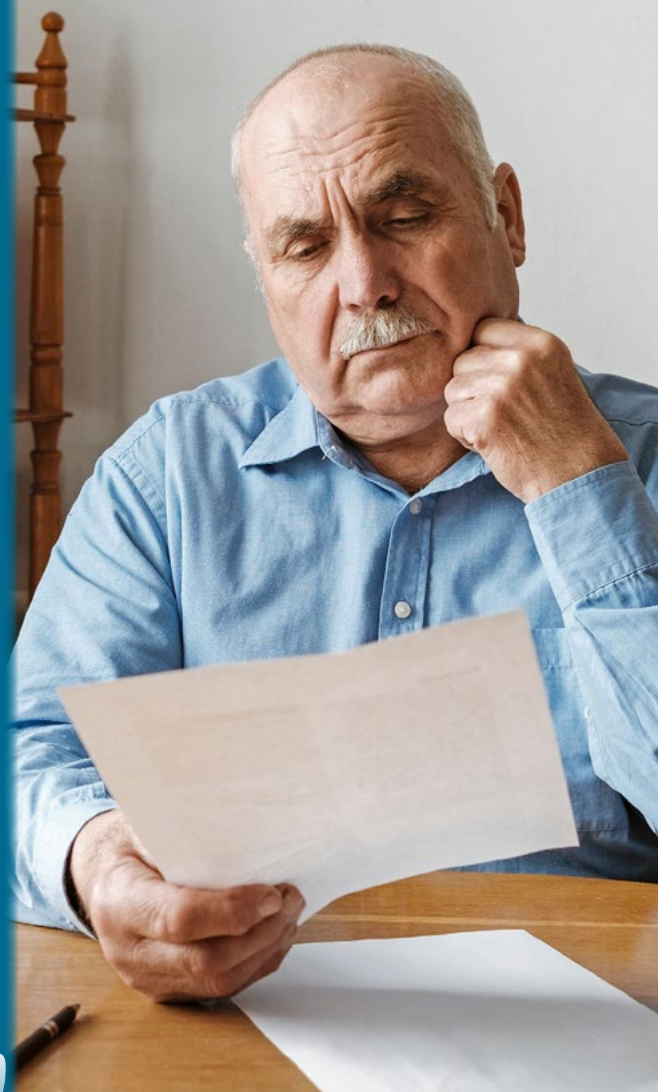
Understanding aged care costs and fees

Having a say in your care

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# The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has been running for two years. It has produced an interim report and a final report will be released to government in June 2024.

As part of the Royal Commission's investigations a number of studies and research reports have been commissioned and published. Open Door: Understanding and Supporting Veterans and their Families published a report entitled Mapping Service and Transition to Self-Harm and Suicidality. The report adds to current orthodox understandings that mental health is a principal driver of veteran self-harm and suicidality.

Open Door adopts what is known as a biopsychosocial approach to researching veteran health and wellbeing. In Australia the biological and psychological are the dominant approach and there is dearth of research that adequately addresses the social health issues of veteran health and wellbeing. Over the past decade Director of Open Door, Professor Ben Wadham, who is an Australian Army veteran has built his research around the social health issues of veterans covering the effects of the Australian Defence Force culture and systems upon service and transition and trauma and wellbeing. There are three key pillars to ADF culture. It is martial (prepared for war and the use of violence), fraternal (heavily shaped around camaraderie and esprit de corps) and exceptional (the ADF sees itself as having a very special role in Australian society). These three pillars are also heavily gendered, that is, militaries generally, and the ADF specifically is heavily masculinised. We refer to this as martial masculinities.

These three pillars, when executed professionally sit behind the ADF's high levels of military effectiveness and tactical dominance. When they are inappropriately exercised they create trauma and injury for service members. The Mapping Service and Transition report addresses this concern by looking at veterans who have considered or attempted suicide or have taken their lives (interviews with family

members or mates on these cases). The report identifies that overwhelming young Australians are excited and positive about enlisting and initial service, but that exuberance is damaged when they experience the dark side of ADF culture and systems. We identified seven key areas of military institutional abuse: physical violence, sexual harassment and assault, reputational damage, sabotage, extreme endurance training as punishment, hazing and bastardisation and administrative violence. Administrative violence is when a commander uses their rank and command discretion to target, harass, disadvantage, and abuse their subordinates. This is perpetrated through command discretion authorised in the Defence Force Discipline Act (DFDA). Both men and women were subject to all of these forms of military institutional abuse although men were principal perpetrators and victims of hazing and bastardisation and women of sexual assault. Although hazing often involved sexual violence

The principal finding from this research is that violence within the ranks is an inherent and systematic part of any military and the ADF. This occurs because the ADF trains people in the use of violence against an enemy but fails to recognise the potential is created among its own people. Because the ADF wants to optimise the potential for violence it is shy of taming it within the ADF workforce. The result is that the bright eyed recruit or cadet is traumatised and morally injured or betrayed by the institution they had respected and given so much service and loyalty to. This source of trauma leads to self-medication and substance abuse, leading to suicidal thoughts, attempts or the actual taking of one's life. The report highlights the paradox of military service, that the training in and use of violence is double edged and when abused it leads to poor morale and damage to the ADF's most precious resource – people.



Institute for Mental Health & wellbeing

## Open Door Initiative

Understanding and supporting service personnel and their families



[www.flinders.edu.au/institute-mental-health-wellbeing/open-door](http://www.flinders.edu.au/institute-mental-health-wellbeing/open-door)



Photo: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Perera

# A gift that can transform lives

**Your humanitarian spirit will be felt, long after you're gone.**

We all want to leave behind a legacy of positivity. Leaving a gift in your Will to Australian Red Cross can help transform lives for the better.

Val knows the difference that support can make in the tough times. She has formed a beautiful friendship with Allie, her Red Cross visitor. In a world where people feel lonelier than ever before, our generous supporters are helping ensure thousands of older people don't feel so alone. These days, Val knows she is loved and cared for, thanks to her friend Allie.

Everybody deserves the warmth of kindness and friendship, and your Will can help us share that with people for generations to come.

If you've already left a gift in your Will or are considering leaving one, please let us know so we can thank you.

**Scan the QR code for  
your free Wills guide.**





"THE NOTION 'PET-FRIENDLY' NEEDS TO BE UNPACKED FOR THIS SPECIFIC SETTING TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS FOR BOTH THE OLDER PERSON AND THE COMPANION ANIMAL."



# Don't leave me behind?

Forced separation of older people and their pets in residential aged care homes.

Fiona is an urban planner who focuses on the integration of 'pets' in urban places and spaces. She has long been interested in how people and pets navigate space and in the design of space to accommodate the needs of the pet.

This interest in human-animal spaces has led her to undertake a PhD at the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University. Her PhD research explores the interconnections between humans, animals, and place (or space) in residential aged care homes through a multispecies lens.

Fiona's has worked closely with Companion Animal Network Australia (CANA) on their Pet Friendly Aged Care programs working on keeping older Australians together in residential care and support in the home care packages. Following their 2023 survey<sup>1</sup>, only 18% of residential aged care facilities consider allowing residents with companion pets.

This means many older Australians transitioning to a residential aged care home are forced to leave their companion animal behind due to exclusionary 'pet' policies.

## FIONA DE ROSA

*PhD Candidate, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University*

Older people have to make the difficult decision between giving up their pet or securing a bed in a residential aged care home.

On the surface, the label 'pet-friendly' presents an opportunity for aged care facilities to include 'pets', but it's fraught with several issues, for instance: Are they referring to visiting, facility or personal pets? Are residents and their companion pets allowed to live on site together? What species are permitted? What conditions apply? The notion 'pet-friendly' needs to be unpacked for this specific setting to better understand what it means for both the older person and the companion animal.

Along with Fiona's initial work and ongoing collaboration with aged care facilities running proven successful programs keeping people and their pets together, CANA is offering proven support kits (including rules, regulations policies and more) to all residential aged care facilities considering making this move. "The kits are free to the industry. Our role is to keep people and their pets together in the interest of both," said Trish Ennis CEO CANA.

## TRISH ENNIS

*CEO  
Companion Animal Network Australia - CANA*

<sup>1</sup> [petfriendlyagedcare.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CANA-Pet-Friendly-Aged-Care-Survey-Results-OPT.pdf](https://petfriendlyagedcare.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CANA-Pet-Friendly-Aged-Care-Survey-Results-OPT.pdf)

Learn more about Fiona and Trish's work:  
[linkedin.com/in/fiona-de-rosa-403a3b26](https://linkedin.com/in/fiona-de-rosa-403a3b26)  
[petfriendlyagedcare.com.au](https://petfriendlyagedcare.com.au) | [australiacan.org.au](https://australiacan.org.au)



# me and my pet aged care

## Advocating for change to keep pets with their owners when they move into aged care.

Me and My Pet Aged Care is a brand new initiative that, immediately upon launching attracted a surprising amount of positive attention, demonstrating that pets in aged care is a topic that is very close to the hearts of many Australians.

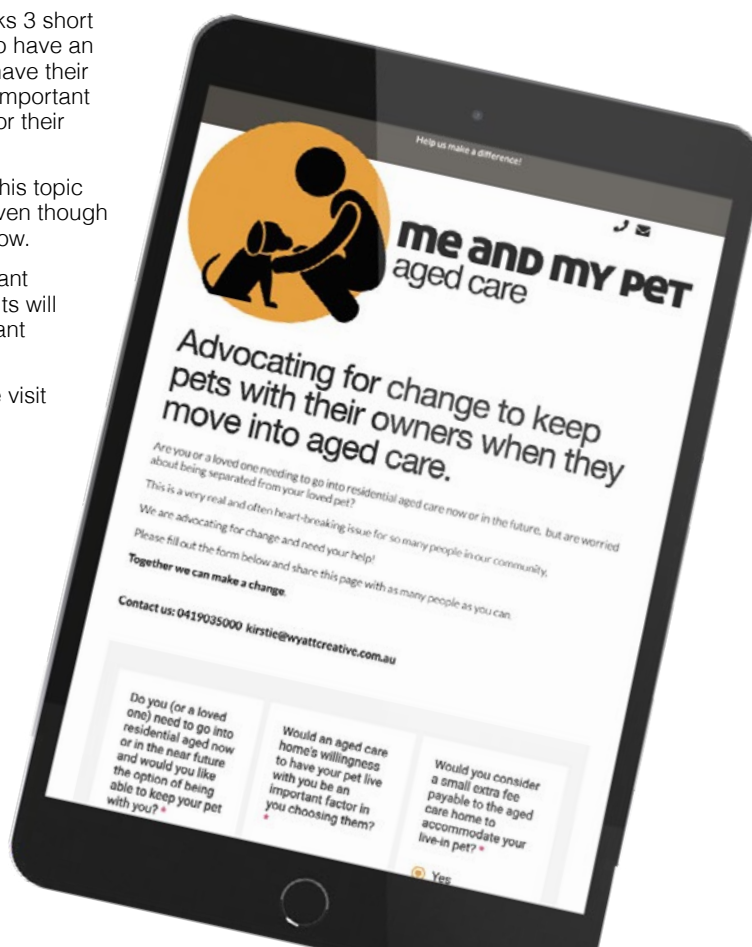
Me and My Pet Aged Care is a web page that asks 3 short questions about how important it is for a person to have an aged care home consider allowing a resident to have their pet live with them, and whether this would be an important factor in that home being chosen for themselves or their loved one.

It also asks the younger audience to think about this topic and what it might mean to them down the track even though it might not be something relevant to them right now.

The aim is to get an understanding of how important this issue is within the community, and these results will be shared with aged care homes and other relevant decision-makers.

If you see this as being an important issue please visit the website and share your views.

Together we can make change happen!



Share what matters to you by answering 3 short questions at the  
Me and My Pet Aged Care Website:  
**[meandmypetagedcare.com.au](http://meandmypetagedcare.com.au)**



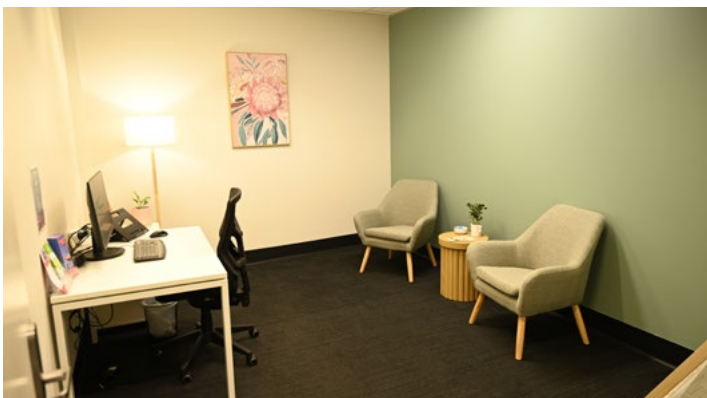
CLOCKWISE , FROM TOP:

Hub social space.

(L-R) Darryl Shipp, State Secretary of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (Queensland Branch); Lauralie Knight, Team Leader at Veterans' and Families' Wellbeing Hub, Lives Lived Well; The Hon Matt Keogh MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel; Damian Wright, Lives Lived Well Board Chair.

Hub counselling room.

(L-R) Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Althaus, Lives Lived Well Board Director; Darryl Shipp, State Secretary of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (Queensland Branch); The Hon Matt Keogh MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel; Damian Wright, Lives Lived Well Board Chair.



# New Caboolture Hub a win for veterans and families in South East Queensland

Tailored services and support are now available to veterans and families across South East Queensland, with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Matt Keogh, officially opening the Veterans' and Families' Wellbeing Hub in Caboolture last month (October).

The new Veterans' and Families' Wellbeing Hub means veterans and families living in the region have access to employment, housing, transition, advocacy, mental health and wellbeing support, along with counselling and opportunities to enhance their social connections.

The Hub is being operated by Lives Lived Well and the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (Queensland Branch).

"Between Lives Lived Well's experience in health and wellbeing support and the Vietnam Veterans Association's experience at the coal face, I look forward to seeing how both leaders in your respective fields, work together to connect with and support veterans here in Caboolture," Minister Keogh said.

"In Caboolture alone we know for every 25 residents, one is either a current or former serving member of Australia's Defence Force.

"Add in family members and you can appreciate how significant the veteran community in Caboolture is and the importance of this Hub."

Damian Wright, Lives Lived Well Board Chair, said:

"Veterans and their families in the region will now be able to access integrated and flexible support in a friendly, welcoming environment where their unique experiences are understood and supported and their military service is respected.

"Whether you need a coffee and a chat, access to wellbeing support, or you want to meet like-minded friends, you're welcome at the Veterans' and Families' Wellbeing Hub."

Darryl Shipp, State Secretary of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (Queensland Branch), said the hub would be welcomed by the veteran community.

"It is so important that our Australian Defence Force personnel, veterans and their families have a dedicated place where they can go to connect with one another and to also access the assistance they need," Mr Shipp said.

"We know having access to the right supports when you need them can make a real difference to health and wellbeing."

Veterans and families across the greater Sunshine Coast region, City of Moreton Bay, and northern Brisbane suburbs are strongly encouraged to utilise the vital services now readily available right in their local community.

There will be an Open Day at the Hub on Wednesday 22 November for those wanting to explore the new facility. The event, taking place from 10am to 12pm, offers an opportunity for to engage with the Hub's services and connect with fellow veterans and their families over morning tea. Those interested in attending can RSVP by emailing [vwc@liveslivedwell.org.au](mailto:vwc@liveslivedwell.org.au). Visit [www.liveslivedwell.org.au](http://www.liveslivedwell.org.au) for more information.



## VETERANS' AND FAMILIES' WELLBEING HUB

## NOW OPEN

### A welcoming and supportive space for veterans and their families

- Connect with fellow veterans and veteran families
- Access integrated and flexible support
- Meet a skilled and empathetic team with lived experience of veteran life
- Access wellbeing services available in-person or by phone



**Lives  
Lived  
Well**

# Chris Masters

Greg speaks with Chris about his latest book *Flawed Hero*.

PODCASTS: [www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews](http://www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews)

**Greg T Ross:** Good morning to you, Chris Masters, author of *Flawed Hero: Truth, Lies and War Crimes*, a story on Ben Roberts-Smith. Thanks for joining us here at The Last Post.

**Chris Masters:** Thank you, Greg.

**GTR:** That's wonderful. Look, Chris, of course, you've done this book and it's attracted a lot of attention. Some may say a rather brave undertaking, but of course, you go back many years to being a well-respected investigative journalist. I suppose all the journalism of decency is investigative, but you've made a name for yourself in that area with Walkleys, a gold Walkley, et cetera. You are viewed as a war historian in many facets of Afghanistan. What's your involvement with the troops of Afghanistan? Chris?

**CM:** Look, I went to Afghanistan three times. I saw different phases of the mission. I was there in 2007 for the reconstruction phase. I was very impressed by the soldiers and what they were doing. This was more the hearts and minds stuff, but building culverts across rivers that gave people access to healthcare was really saving lives. And I was impressed by the quiet bravery of the soldiers and the humanitarian aspects of the mission. I thought it needed to be better explained. Back in Australia, I remember interviewing one of the soldiers, the engineers at the time, saying that it was a humbling experience for him to help beleaguered people.

So I had a very strong sense that the mission was worthwhile. I've never ever thought we were on the wrong side. I went back in 2010 and did a couple of documentaries. Excuse me, I've got a bit of a cough. And that was with more of the mentoring task forces. So again, I saw a lot of quiet bravery of soldiers out with their fingers off the trigger patrolling, providing a protective screen in those hostile valleys I also came away from that experience quite shocked by something that I'll never forget. Two of

the soldiers I was working with were killed. And that gave me insights and I suppose a sense of grief and loss that civilians would rarely feel because I got to get on with my life and I knew those guys. And then I went back in 2011 with special forces and I remained the only journalist to have ever been embedded with Australian Special Forces.

**GTR:** That's right. We know that much about you is that you're well respected within the forces for your closeness to the story. And indeed that leads us, I guess, to when you are that close coming across some facets of our engagement there, which are less than favorable. Of course, the recent 700-page judgment after the trial, which I guess paralleled many respects with your book. But this book is about Ben Roberts-Smith. And how did you first come across these rumors, if you like, of these actions that have led you to further investigate what sounded a bit less than favorable?

**CM:** It's interesting. As I've explained, I had a favorable view of the Australian soldier. It hasn't really changed, but I'm a journalist and our job is to follow the path of truth wherever it takes you. And this took me in an unusual direction. When I was embedded with special forces in 2011, it meant that over time, it was a slow process, but over time I began to develop good relationships with many of the operators. SAS were very standoffish in the beginning, but I did come to know some of them and that important word, trust, it developed.

I think the fact, Greg, that they knew that I wasn't out to uncover a scandal, that I wasn't out to tell my story, I was out to tell their story, worked in a way. And because I was inside the tent, I had contacts that I wouldn't have otherwise had. I think many of the soldiers were quite disturbed by some features, some aspects of what had occurred through 2009, through to 2012, a long slow process. But when I came back, those rumors were really well and truly doing the rounds. The psychologists, the chaplains, the intel

### Chris Masters

Chris Masters PSM is one of Australia's best-known, highly respected, and most influential investigative journalists. His stellar career has won him five Walkleys, including a Gold Walkley, and he has produced over 100 investigative reports, mostly for Four Corners. Masters remains at the top of his game: relentlessly, fearlessly and doggedly determined to expose the truth. His 1987 exposure of corruption in Queensland led to a public inquiry and reform. His 1983 report on corruption in the Rugby league and NSW judiciary led to a Royal Commission and judicial reform.

Masters is Australia's unofficial Afghanistan war historian. He spent a total of three months embedded with Australian soldiers in Afghanistan in 2006 and 2010, including with special

forces in 2011. He remains the only journalist to embed with Australian Special Forces, and he has had unparalleled access over many years to front line soldiers of all stripes, and the officer corps including senior leadership.

He is the author of the bestselling *Jonestown, Uncommon Soldier* and *No Front Line*.

people had heard a lot of stuff. And don't forget, it was the soldiers themselves that called it out. And the ADF itself commissioned Major General Brereton to run the IGADF inquiry.

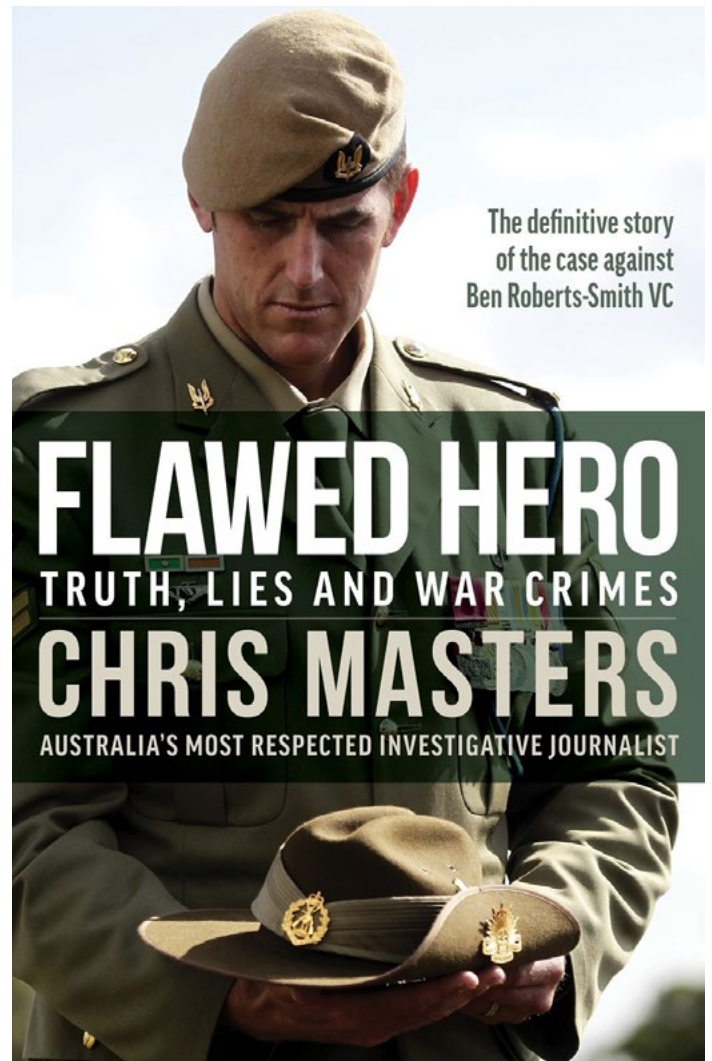
So I suppose I folded in with that and I'd heard the stories, the rumors about Ben Roberts-Smith, a famous soldier, but also a divisive character known to be a bully. But many people would've said, "Well, what do you expect? This is the sharpest, hardest soldiering there is." If you're not tough, if you can't stand up to bullying, you're not going to survive. And so I didn't take a huge amount of notice of that stuff, but when I started hearing allegations of war crimes and allegations that combat incidents had been misrepresented, I had to question Ben about that. And I guess it just went from there.

**GTR:** Yeah, indeed. And as you say, these reports first came about from soldiers, and your role as a journalist was to follow that up. But of course you talk about Ben and we, I guess, understand that many people may think that they know Ben through his featuring in the media and his Anzac appeal, but this book reveals another side of him, which may shock some people. Were you prepared for the resistance? What's the word? Were you prepared for the reaction that you received from some facets, Brendan Nelson, Kerry Stokes, et cetera, as well as the military, some in the military.

**CM:** Look, sometimes it continues to sting. And the fact that the charges against me haven't really changed in five years says to me that people aren't reading behind the headlines. Is often said, "Well, you're a civilian. You live a soft and comfortable life, sent largely because these soldiers risked their lives. You haven't exposed yourself to danger." That's a false argument, and it's not true anyway.

The other thing that they frequently say is, "That the matters that you are reporting on, how can you make a judgment as a civilian back at home when heat of battle, fog of war, decisions made in a split second when lives are at risk, how can you so arrogantly make presumptions that soldiers have got things wrong?" Well, right from the start, the matters that we dealt with were never heat of battle, fog of war moments.

There were three essential issues of misconduct that emerged from the Afghanistan mission, again as I point out, really revealed to me and others by the soldiers themselves. One was the business of planting weapons on victims to make it appear that they'd been victims of legitimate combat. And then the bleeding of junior soldiers, and then of course executions of some people who you might say were prisoners and pro-Taliban, some people who just appeared to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.



The definitive story  
of the case against  
Ben Roberts-Smith VC

*Flawed Hero Truth, Lies and War Crimes* by Chris Masters.  
Published by Allen & Unwin, \$34.99, July 12 2023.

I think among the soldiers themselves, the bleeding issue was the one that burned, because they've got a duty of care to their fellows. And they saw younger soldiers being exposed to incidents that brutalized their own consciences. They couldn't live with what they were seeing. And as one of them put it to me at some point, "If you're going to do that stuff, do it yourself." And it's true. I know in our court matter, there were a range of soldiers who had conceded that they had bad psychological history. They'd seen those things that you can't unsee, and it was really knocking them about. And that was one of the reasons I think some of those soldiers approached their regimental Sergeant Major and said, "Look, the truth about Ben Roberts-Smith is not really well known to the Australian public. He's a hero, but to the rest of us, to some of us anyway, there's a very different story."

**GTR:** It's the point that I'm glad that you brought up. Look, my father fought in the second world war, and under duress sometimes would relate stories of what Australian soldiers had done to Japanese prisoners. And I knew that that was on his conscience a great, great deal post-war. And I know that the difference here when we talk about heat of battle, Chris, is that these instances weren't heat of battle. And in many ways, according to the judgment, the trial judgment brought down and to your book, Ben was a repeat offender. Is that right?

**CM:** Yes. Well, this 700-page ruling supported our reporting that four murders had occurred. So clearly the Whiskey 108 incident where detainees were removed from a tunnel and executed. They were handcuffed at the time. No matter what the supporters would say, what was done, even if they were pro-Taliban, what was done was against the rules of engagement. Ben had to concede that himself in court, that there is a duty of care to prisoners and we are signatories to the Geneva Convention. What was done was simply wrong. What happened at Darwan, in some respects, you

might say it was even worse because the victim there was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He didn't appear to be Taliban. All of the locals said he had no connections to the Taliban, but he'd come from a different village. So therefore he stood out. He appeared to be an outsider, and as you know, the locals have good knowledge of who's who in the zoo, and as a result, he was queried and questioned. He traveled from a different village to buy shoes for his daughter. But as the evidence was revealed in court, he managed to anger Ben Roberts-Smith and ended up dead.

**GTR:** Is that something you don't want to do, anger Ben Roberts-Smith?

**CM:** Well, I suppose I managed to do that when I started this project, and when I interviewed Ben. Somebody said to me at the time, "This is like shooting Bambi." And I'll be honest with you, Greg, I didn't want to anger him. I didn't want this fight. Who would want to take on a six-foot seven VC recipient, and one that had great esteem with the Australian public? And I think that the Sacred Digger can do no wrong narrative is profound in Australian military history. So I was up against Ben, I was up against public opinion, and he became an even more powerful figure once he left the ADF in that he was employed by Channel Seven, he was the general manager of Channel seven in Queensland, and he had the support of one of Australia's most powerful media moguls, Kerry Stokes. And of course, as you mentioned, people like Brendan Nelson.

**GTR:** Yeah, about to say, did it disappoint you, Brendan's attitude?

**CM:** It did. I couldn't understand it really, and I still don't. I thought of Brendan as a friend and we still communicate to some degree, but we've had to agree that we're definitely on this different pages on this one. He would say that he could see no public benefit at all in challenging our heroes. And I would say conversely, I could see no public benefit in looking away. Soldiers need to know the truth about their own capacity and their own conduct. The ADF needs to know the truth, and I would like to think that the Australian War Memorial will lean in here as well. War brings out the best in us, but it can bring out the worst us as well.

**GTR:** Do you think in regards to the truth, it's not only Australians, perhaps mankind, humanity, shies from the truth, and when confronted with it puts up a wall to almost deny it?

**CM:** Well, there's a lot of propaganda associated with media, not just with the reporting of military conduct, but I think historically the Australia has a pretty good record in prosecuting the truth. Charles Bean did a good job of it in the first World War.

**GTR:** Yes, indeed.

**CM:** He didn't shy away from misconduct by Australians. And for what it's worth, I think more can be made of the fact that right now Australia is leading the world in at least wanting to know, getting to the bottom, of what actually happened in Afghanistan. Don't tell me that the Americans and the British and so many other nations that were caught up in that conflict weren't also involved in war crimes. There was something about that war that ended up becoming impossible. It was a demoralizing process. We were there for too long. By 2010, it was clear there was not going to be a favorable outcome. I think in Special forces itself, the sharp end of the spear where they were involved in the kill capture missions, in a sense, the bloodlust got too much. The sense of an abstract purpose was such that kill counts became everything.

And of course, when I was there, I wasn't going to see any misconduct. Nothing was going to happen in front of a journalist. The only thing I saw that gave me cause for concern was the look of hatred in the eyes of the Afghans. I did see that, and I did begin to wonder what was going wrong.

**GTR:** So I guess also with that and the truth I guess, is that if the truth is told and through people like yourself, it probably in the long run, Tim Page was a friend of mine,

war photographer. He said, "Every war photo is an anti-war statement." Is the truth an anti-war statement?

**CM:** Well, I've seen enough of war myself to know how destructive and horrible it is, but I've also traveled the world for all those years at Four Corners, had been to a lot of war zones, and I recognize that we have a defense force. Our objective is to defend the innocence. I don't think you can ban war. So I want our soldiers to be strong and capable and well led and well-trained.

I was in Indonesia in Timor in 1999, and I remember villagers coming up to me and so admiring of 20-year-old Australian soldiers, because they'd seen the Indonesians, and they'd seen people in uniform as predators, and they was kind of stunned that there would be this protective defense force looking out for their welfare. I was very proud of them.

I was also in Rwanda in the mid-nineties, and you know what a horror show that was. There's things that I saw that I'll never ever forget. Again, enormously proud of the Australians for the courageous restraint they showed against genocidal mobs. Really well-trained, really admirable. I was in Somalia as well, but not when they were there. But I certainly heard the stories of young Australians being genuinely angry at the way that women and children were being beaten up at the aid disposal points, et cetera, by the thugs. And their instincts were strong. In Afghanistan, I remember General Cantwell saying to me that he thought there was something in the Australian character that suited itself to peacekeeping operations. I'd still like to think that was true. And as I say, most of the soldiers that I worked with, they absolutely knew what side they were on.

One of the SAS blokes said to me about an incident involving Roberts-Smith that he didn't join the regiment to shoot an unarmed teenager in the back. And I just think it's worth remembering that most of these issues came out of a sense within the ADF that the integrity of the organization needs to be defended, needs to be protected.


**GTR:** Yeah, that's true. That's true indeed, Chris. And the integrity is important for future missions, et cetera. And the peacekeeping of course, I remember, and it's interesting to see that you were over there in '99 in Timor feeling quite proud of what we were doing. And I guess the ADF itself has many instances to be proud of and troops, et cetera. So it's more important than ever, I guess, that we call these things out so that we can deal with them so that future missions and future integrity of the ADF and special services isn't compromised. Ben Roberts-Smith sued the trial, now the appeal, what's your take on things now?

**CM:** Well, and I can't know what the outcome of the appeal is going to be. Of course it means that this is not over. I think that the narrative is kept alive, that nothing has yet been proved and we have to await that outcome. But I think the fact remains that in a civil case where the issue was balance of probabilities rather than beyond reasonable doubt, it was still a very, very strong case. Something like 40 witnesses, remarkable in Australian history that so many special forces operatives would be there in a public court giving sworn evidence. 20 of Ben's colleagues spoke against him. This took place over 110 days. A judge spent 10 months adjudicating on what occurred and then produced this 700-page report. So I think that that's a fact that ought to be considered, but I respect the court process. I respect the right of the other side to appeal, and we will have to await that outcome.

**GTR:** Look, Chris, thank you so much. Look, it's a book for me that I can hardly put down and I've read some great books, *Future Shock*, *Catcher in the Rye*, the book on Whitlam's dismissal. Your book, *Flawed Hero: Truth, Lies about Ben Roberts-Smith* is an amazing book. And I would recommend for anyone that's interested in this subject, *Flawed Hero: Truth, Lies, and War Crimes*, to go out and read it so that they're closer to the truth and closer to be able to make an informed judgment, Chris.

**CM:** Good on you. That's really nice to hear, Greg.

**GTR:** Thank you.



On Remembrance Day,  
we recognise the courage,  
perseverance and mateship  
of those who served, fought  
and gave their lives.

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# CELEBRATING VETERAN & FAMILY BUSINESS

Celebrating the entrepreneurial achievements of Australia's veteran and family business community, the Prince's Trust Australia is delighted to announce the 2023 Beyond Service Awards winners.

Since 2015, Prince's Trust Australia has been inspiring veterans and their families with the confidence, skills and networks to explore, start and grow small businesses across the country.

The Beyond Service Awards recognise the skills and experience veterans and Defence family entrepreneurs bring to Australia's small business landscape.

Michelle Endacott, Chief Executive of Prince's Trust Australia said "We are so impressed by the calibre of our winners and the diversity of their business interests and industries."

"These awards are an insight into the thousands of veteran and Defence family entrepreneurs operating in communities across Australia and overseas."

Congratulations to Ian Rawson, the Founder of Australian Warfighters Coffee who won the peak award for defence members and their families!

Ian has been named the 2023 Commonwealth Bank of Australia Business of the Year, and Community Impact winner.

He joins sector winners:

- Nadia Teong, Clinical Psychologist and Founder of Veterans Psychology, winner of The Power of One Award, recognising the outstanding efforts of an individual that works on their own.
- Karyn Hinder, Founder of Working Spirit, winner of The New Mission Award, recognising the application of skills, experience and/or networks developed in service to the Australian Defence Force to a civilian business.
- Hayley Boswell, Founder of Defence Kidz, winner of The Defence Family Business Award, recognising ADF partners and spouses in business.

Links to Beyond Service Award's winning businesses

- Australian Warfighters Coffee - [www.australianwarfighters.com](http://www.australianwarfighters.com)
- Veterans Psychology - [www.veteranspsychology.com.au](http://www.veteranspsychology.com.au)
- Working Spirit - [www.workingspirit.org.au](http://www.workingspirit.org.au)
- Defence Kidz - [www.defencekidz.com.au](http://www.defencekidz.com.au)



**Prince's Trust  
Australia**

RIGHT:  
Air Force veteran Ian Rawson has been named the Commonwealth Bank of Australia Business of the Year, and Community Impact sector winner in the 2023 Prince's Trust Australia Beyond Service Awards. Images by Bruneo Stefani.



A RAAF veteran of almost 20 years, Ian was searching for purpose after being medically discharged from the defence force when the idea of starting his own coffee business struck.

He formed Australian Warfighters Coffee and donates 100 per cent of the profits to veteran and first responder charities working in mental health. He also supports veterans to re-engage in employment through barista training.

The business sources coffee beans ethically and supports sustainable practices, including compostable packaging, and fair trade.

Ian started with six bags of coffee and today Australian Warfighters Coffee produces 400-500kg of coffee a week. His goal is to be the first veteran-owned product in a major supermarket.

"I'd love to try and build a place to get veterans off the street - where those who are struggling have somewhere to go while they're trying to get back on their feet. I'm trying to do that through coffee."

Visit: [www.princes-trust.org.au](http://www.princes-trust.org.au).



# foreword

Nat Cook MP  
Minister for Human Services

Every South Australian deserves to have a roof over their head and to be safe and secure in a place they call home.

The Malinauskas Government recognises the extraordinary pressure the current housing market is placing on vulnerable South Australians.

Released earlier this year, our plan for A Better Housing Future, provides an immediate response to the challenges being experienced by many South Australians.

Strong population growth, including from interstate migration, has contributed to increased demand for housing which has outpaced supply. One of the government's key platforms is building and upgrading hundreds of public housing properties, and our plan further builds on our commitment to deliver more fit-for-purpose homes for those most in need.

Unlike former governments which allowed public housing to be sold off to meet savings targets, we are growing the number of public housing properties to ensure we have a safety net for the most disadvantaged and in need South Australians.

As part of its election commitment to invest an extra \$177.5 million in public housing, the government is progressing its commitment to building 400 new homes, including 250 in metropolitan Adelaide and 150 in regional South Australia. An additional 37 houses will now be delivered through the efficient delivery of this project, bringing the total new public housing delivered to 437.

The last state budget commits an additional \$15 million per year to renew and maintain public housing properties. This funding will enable an additional 127 houses to be built by 30 June 2026.

Our plan includes the single largest release of residential land in the state's history, delivery of more affordable housing, and tax concessions to promote new housing opportunities.

Media contact: Catherine Bauer 0478 855 367 premier.sa.gov.au

We are helping more homebuyers achieve the aspiration of home ownership, including increased support to buy a home through HomeStart loan products and increasing the supply of affordable housing.

We're also reforming residential tenancies legislation and increasing support to low-income households to make sure that renters aren't left behind.

Those experiencing homelessness have not been forgotten. The government is investing \$115 million over two years to help keep vulnerable South Australians safe and prevent more people falling into homelessness.

Specialist Homelessness Services - Toward Home (CBD, eastern and southern suburbs); Adelaide North-West (northern and western suburbs), Country North, Country South and the state-wide Domestic and Family Violence Alliance - are always important but never more than when our community is facing cost of living pressures, higher interest rates and record low vacancies in the rental market. These critical services have always supported people without a home but thousands of new clients, many who have never needed assistance in the past, are seeking help earlier to prevent falling into homelessness. I am working across relevant departments with the housing and homelessness sector, prioritising the safety of our most vulnerable, as well as providing new homes and access to the market for South Australians now and into the future.

# Finding a home after care

Every year, there are a number of 18-year-olds exiting child protection who face a starkly elevated risk of homelessness. Research shows more than 50 per cent of youth exiting care will experience homelessness within four years (Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 2021). Felicity, 20, and William, 21, share this troubling reality.

Felicity and William are two young South Australians who have traversed a turbulent journey through various forms of protective care during their childhood. When William turned 16, he sought care through our Youth 180 supported accommodation service, which equipped him with the skills necessary for independent living post-care. However, as he approached the age of 18, he found himself with no place to call home.

Felicity faced potential homelessness at 18 but was among the first to find refuge in our Post Care Pathways Program. This initiative provides vital support and affordable housing to care leavers aged 18-25 facing homelessness or housing instability. Fully funded by Believe Housing Australia and AnglicareSA, the program supports hosts up to 15 young people. The program's persistent six-month waiting list emphasises the urgent need for its expansion amid growing economic challenges.

"The program transformed my life," Felicity declares. Her journey is exceptional, with numerous awards, a business and her debut children's book, "Oscar's Layers" challenging stereotypes and promoting care-experienced children's well-being. At 17, she authored "Not Held Down" and received prestigious accolades, including the 2023 Create Change Award and the 2023 South Australian Young

Australian Achiever award. She's now a valued tenant with Believe Housing Australia.

For William, access to stable housing after leaving care was supported by our dedicated team of support workers. He was able to move into affordable public housing just one week after turning 18. He subsequently found employment as a telecommunications excavator, relocated closer to his grandmother, and has courageously shared his experiences to raise awareness of the challenges faced by young care leavers when exiting the system. "I really want to be a voice for those that can't be heard," says William.

William and Felicity moved the audience to tears during their keynote speech at an AnglicareSA fundraising event last year. They shared their struggles in finding affordable housing as young care leavers during a period of soaring rental costs.

Felicity's sentiment is clear: "Young people shouldn't leave the child protection system for the streets."

The challenging transition from care into young adulthood alone when lacking support, secure housing and planning leads to homelessness and enduring societal costs. We must do better.



Article by Stacey Northover

Executive General Manager of Believe Housing Australia.

To help support expansion of our high-demand Post Care Pathways Program, please donate at [bit.ly/believehousing-donate](https://bit.ly/believehousing-donate).

RIGHT: South Australian youth care leavers Felicity and William.

## Believe. Belong. Become.

We are a Tier 1 Community Housing Provider that delivers affordable housing to about 5000 tenants across South Australia. This includes supporting young people exiting care at risk of homelessness through the award-winning, innovative Post Care Pathways program delivered and fully-funded in partnership with AnglicareSA.

To help support expansion of our high-demand Post Care Pathways Program, please donate at <https://bit.ly/believehousing-donate> or use the QR code below.



**Believe** Housing Australia



# ADDRESSING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRALIA

## Housing Veterans, One Roof at a Time



Homelessness casts a dark shadow over societies worldwide, and Australia is no exception. However, amidst this grim reality, our nation's veterans face an even more daunting challenge – finding a place to call home.

To tackle veteran homelessness head-on, Veteran Housing Australia was founded in 2022. As Australia's first registered community housing provider dedicated solely to veterans, VHA has made significant strides in addressing the housing needs of those who have served. Their approach focuses on providing safe, stable, and affordable housing options to veterans and their families.

The bleak facts surrounding veteran homelessness in Australia demand immediate action. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in 2022 alone, approximately 5,400 veterans experienced homelessness on any given night. These veterans make up 5% of the country's homeless population and are disproportionately represented among older individuals. Our resolve must be stronger than ever to find age-appropriate and suitable accommodations for those who have given so much.

The urgency of this crisis has not gone unnoticed. The Australian Government is committed to supporting our homeless or at-risk veterans by allocating \$30 million from the Housing Australia Future Fund. Veteran Housing Australia knows firsthand the enormity of this challenge and vow to work closely with state and federal authorities to construct purpose-built accommodation. These homes will cater specifically to the needs of modern veterans in high-demand areas across Australia.

Beyond government support, VHA relies on the strength of partnerships with corporations, who embrace their social responsibility, and the generosity of everyday heroes - individuals like you. With your financial support, donations of resources, and unwavering dedication, VHA can further its mission and raise awareness about the plight of our veterans. Together, we will ensure that every veteran has a place they can proudly call home.



### Michael's Mission: The Battle for Home and Family

Meet Michael, one of the many veterans whose life has been transformed by the support of VHA.

While serving in Canberra, a storm of misfortune struck his life. Absconding interstate, his partner took their children, leaving him devastated and alone. As he fought through the Family Court system, his salary was garnished for child support, leading to the default on his mortgage, liquidation of assets, and a heartbreaking existence in his vehicle – all while still serving his country. The battle for his children's whereabouts and his own mental health resulted in a medical discharge. After a long struggle and post-COVID court reopening, Michael finally found his children, but he faced a new challenge – stable housing. Without it, he was denied access to his children. The weight of child support drained his bank account, leaving nothing for food and fuel, forcing him to rely on the charity of community housing providers to survive. Michael represented himself in the Family Court, as he couldn't afford lawyers. With limited legal aid, he fought boldly, seeking any access to his children. Today, his story holds a glimmer of hope.

Thankfully now, with a small single room unit provided by Veteran Housing Australia, the courts have allowed limited day access to his children which has been beneficial for his children and Michael's health while he continues to fight for greater access to his children. Unfortunately, with the housing crisis making homes difficult for even dual income families, Michael is priced out of the market to afford suitable housing for his children and himself and is patiently waiting on the ever growing wait list for affordable public housing.

By providing veterans with secure and affordable housing, we empower them to rebuild their lives and find stability once more.

If you would like to donate or learn more about how you can support our veteran community, please visit us at [www.veteranhousing.org.au](http://www.veteranhousing.org.au).

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# ADCO Constructions

Greg speaks with Matt Galton and Tino De Giusti from ADCO about the important work they are doing for the veteran community.

PODCASTS: [www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews](http://www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews)

**Greg T Ross:** Welcome Matt Galton and Tino De Giusti from ADCO Constructions. It's a pleasure to have you here at The Last Post as part of our podcast series. Matt and Tino, could you both perhaps just introduce yourselves and tell listeners what you're all about.

**Matt Galton:** Yeah, sure. I'll kick off. So I'm Matt Galton, I'm general manager for Defense and special projects at ADCO Constructions. Been with the company now for about 16 months and it was my first foray into the private sector, having spent 33 years in the army prior to coming across to ADCO. Over to you, Tino.

**Tino De Giusti:** Thanks, Matt. I've had my whole life in construction, so I started back in the '80s as a carpenter on a commercial building site, so a little bit different back then. Not on a domestic housing development, but in the city of Melbourne on Collins Street. Just worked my way through the ranks with predominantly one builder in Melbourne for 31 years and now find myself at ADCO. I've been here three and a half years and prior to working on this Defense project, I've also had some experience working with previous builders on Defense projects at Simpson Barracks.

**GTR:** Fantastic Tino and fantastic to hear your story too Matt. Look, we're here specifically to speak about, well, not specifically, we'll start off talking about the much applauded Puckapunyal Health and Wellbeing Center for ADF members. Look, perhaps to either of you, I guess, in such a construction of such a magnificent health and wellbeing center, there must be challenges I guess, and obviously the achievements of finishing and these things would be happening throughout the build of the Pucka Health and Wellbeing Center. Can you tell us a little bit about how it went about and the relationships maybe that were formed through this building and how that's turned out to the benefit of ADF staff and et cetera?

**TDG:** Yeah, sure. I might just take it back to the tender. I think because there was some good connection in the tender with some names and previous experience that ADCO had in personnel, and I think the submission, the expression of interest let alone the submission, was very well received. And I think our option in our tender was to provide Defense and the Army a facility that was cut back a little bit through budgets and we proposed to give them back the larger swimming pool versus what they'd chopped it back to just prior to the tender coming out, which I think was a really good, I guess, give back to Army and Defense from a builder. And I think that probably went a long way for us to forging a good relationship there.

**GTR:** Okay. And Matt, what about from your side of things? I guess it's been something to come on board with ADCO to be responsible for such a brilliant thing that's being done here for the service members.

**MG:** Look, it is. And it is all above board, I can assure you, but I was the director general for capital facilities and infrastructure branch in my last role so I was actually the client at the time when ADCO put this bid in, but that was several years ago before I had any notion of even leaving the army, let alone joining ADCO so all above board. But when the tender submissions did come in, I remember that

a 50 meter versus a 25 meter pool was quite a heated topic because Army was desperately keen to have a pool that was 50 meters long and the budget for it at the time but one of the tender board chair I remember was proclaiming that one of the tenderers had come up with an innovation whereby they could actually do the 50 meter pool within the budget, and I remember at the time just making an offhand remarks saying, you've got to pick them.

So of course the board went through and did all their proper processes, but as it turned out that was a key winning theme of ADCO's bid was being able to do as Tino described, doing this 50 meter pool. Fast forward to today, as I said, no notion that I was going to be with ADCO, but it's a great company now being associated with having delivered this facility, which was extremely well received by Army and Defense in general. Great work by Tino and everyone involved from right at the start, from pulling the bid together throughout the full delivery phase. It's just been a great project that Tino was personally involved in with hands-on, so I'll let him talk more to how it went down.

**GTR:** Yeah, that's right. Thank you so much Matt. Tino, which leads me, you can expand on this if you'd like and I'm sure you will, but Matt and you both mentioned the swimming pool. How important is that to the health and wellbeing? I mean, I can't imagine a health and wellbeing center without a swimming pool, but ADCO's got it in there and got it in and there it is and... How do the staff and the service people at Pucka respond?

**TDG:** Look, it's a very, very well received and I think a facility that's been wanting for a long time out there. The Puckapunyal military base had an older facility. It was quite run down and the minute they walked into the new facility when it was completed, just the smiles and the acknowledgement from all the users, the PTI officers and all their staff were, it was sort of taken back actually. They were really relieved to get a brand new facility to use and to do their, not only personal training, but their army training that's required. So yeah, it was quite pleasing when we had the opening day and the minister walk through the place with the assistant minister with the lead PTI officers and everyone in there. I was getting goosebumps actually walking through the place. I've never experienced that, handing over a building before. So very well received.

**GTR:** Look, that's an incredible part of the story too Tino. I think that is a surefire confirmation, if you like, of the ability of something so well put together to not only move people but to assist in their mental wellbeing, and that's part of the journey, I suppose. Look, how does it... Well, you've just answered the question. It leaves you with a magnificent feeling to have achieved that, and congratulations to you and ADCO for doing that. I guess beyond that too, of course the Puckapunyal Health and Wellbeing Center is receiving plaudits everywhere at the moment, and rightfully so, but the support, ADCO's support for the veteran community actually goes beyond that. You've got some great, well, you support many things and some great relationships with Legacy, tell us a bit about that.

**MG:** Sure Greg, I can talk a bit to that. Well, ADCO's been committed to doing that sort of thing before I joined the

# WITH OVER 50 YEARS' EXPERIENCE, ADCO IS ONE OF THE OLDEST AND MOST ESTABLISHED CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES IN AUSTRALIA.



**A FAMILY BUSINESS, WE ARE 100% AUSTRALIAN-OWNED AND OPERATED AND ARE HUGE PROUD OF OUR HERITAGE.**

## **Army Engineer Work Experience**

ADCO has been working with the 19th Chief Engineer Works and the Australian Defence Force Academy since 2022 to support student engineers from the Australian Army to gain engineer work experience prior to entering the 4th year of their engineering degree.

In 2024, ADCO will support six students on our sites across Australia.



## **Veteran Support**

ADCO has made a commitment to the Prime Minister's Veterans Employment program currently employing 11 military veterans and searching for more through the Federal Government's 'jobactive' Portal.

ADCO and our trade partners recently donated approximately \$20k worth of labour and materials to support the Moss Vale Legacy Holiday House renovation project.

ADCO proudly supports the work Brisbane Legacy undertakes through participation in the Canungra Combat Challenge and sponsorship of both the annual Gala and Golf Day.

ADCO supported Veterans Housing Australia through participation in their annual golf day as well as Solider On and will continue to do so.



Puckapunyal Health and Wellbeing Centre, VIC

## **Indigenous Engagement**

ADCO is committed to a construction industry that builds more meaningful relationships, opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

At the recently completed Puckapunyal Health and Wellbeing Centre ADCO achieved a peak of 22% Indigenous employment and 3% Indigenous spend.

ADCO is privileged to appear in this Remembrance Day edition of The Last Post. We commemorate the loss of Australian lives from all wars and conflicts. We extend our gratitude to all veterans and currently serving members of the Australian Defence Force for all they have done, and continue to do, to keep Australia safe and prosperous.

company, it hasn't just been me with an army background coming in. We've had a Defense sector leader join the company about three years ago as part of their 10 years strategic plan. At the time Defense was identified as one of the growth sectors and I think that the company was smart enough to know then that if we're going to operate in the defense sector, it's the right thing to do to also be out there supporting the veteran community any way we can. And there's been a number of ways that the company's done that.

So small we get impact for once have been, I know our New South Wales branch as part of an ADCO Community Day that's done every year where we're all around the country, each of the business units, so the four state business units, they'll down tools for a day from their job sites and go out to various organizations to give a day of time and effort and resources to improve facilities of organizations.

And one that stands out to me was one where Legacy has this fantastic program called the Backyard Assist, where they'll go out and say for instance, look after the, it might be the grounds of say a war widow's property that might be in need of a bit of a touch up. Yeah, the New South Wales branch did one of those recently, which was fantastic to see. Beyond that as well, we've supported various legacy events. There's the Brisbane Legacy Golf Day, we entered a team there. I used the word team loosely because I was part of it and I'm no golfer, but we put a team in there. We were the silver sponsors for the event as well. And then we are also regular attendees at the Legacy Balls, which we are intending on sponsoring that one in Brisbane again for later this year.

For me personally, I'm really proud that we do this because Legacy's a fantastic organization where it's really focused on the families of veterans who have either been severely injured or killed as part of their service. So being able to give something back like that and being part of a company like ADCO that is more than happy to do it is great. We've also had affiliations with Soldier On as well and I think by supporting Soldier On and Legacy, I think that's just a neat fit as it covers, Soldier On obviously focused on the veteran themselves, whereas Legacy more focused on the veterans' families. So we certainly intend on keeping that level of support up. I think whether we're working on a Defense project or not, I think it's neither here nor there to do with our commitment to supporting veterans and the veteran community.

**GTR:** Look, you show that in many ways, and of course we've just been speaking about the Puckapunyal Health and Wellbeing Center and then moved on to discussions about other connections within the Defense and veteran community, the Legacy Ball in Queensland, what date is that on?

**MG:** Oh, you got me there. It'd be later in the year, it's usually around about November. So I think each branch will run them around the country. I'm based up in Queensland, so that's just the connection for doing it there. But it is a big veteran community around Southeast Queensland as well, so I know that. When I was still serving, the Legacy Ball in Brisbane was always seen as the go-to event so I used to go there when I was in uniform so it's pretty cool now going there in tuxedo instead of mess kit and representing ADCO rather than my old division. So, it's great.

**GTR:** That's wonderful. I received an invite to the Legacy Ball in New South Wales and with any luck, we'll get up there for that and then hopefully the Queensland one. Tino, are you going?

**TDG:** No, I haven't got an invite for that one.

**GTR:** Put on your dancing shoes.

**MG:** We'll set up for you.

**GTR:** That's right. That'll be wonderful. Look, you are a Defense sector leader. I guess in the news the ADCO Community Day is something that a lot of people will be interested in and shows the ADCO commitment to helping not only veterans but current serving Defense members. I was talking, I heard about your support for army engineers, I believe you were hosting the Royal Australian Engineer Lieutenants, is that right, for their six-week work experience recently for the degrees? What happened there?

**MG:** Yeah, correct. We did that last year and we've done it this year again too. And having been through it personally as a young lieutenant in the Engineer Corps back in, I would've done this around about 1994 from memory, so it's stretching the memory. But yeah, as part of their degrees they'll graduate from Duntroon as lieutenants. They'll then go back to ADFA to do the fourth year of their civil engineering. And usually in that gap between graduation and then starting their studies again in the fourth year, they have a six-week program of work experience they need to go and do.

So starting from last year, and we're going to do it again this year as I said, ADCO has offered positions there, I'll just check my notes to get the right numbers. We had a number of them, we had five of them actually last year and another few this year too. So they've gone out between various states on various job sites, and by all accounts, the ADCO people they've worked with have been very sad to see them go because they've usually got stuck right in to the work and made themselves a really integral part of the team. So I think, I don't know, Tino, you may have had association with one of them down in Victoria perhaps last year?

**TDG:** I think so. I don't have any details on it, but I believe so, yeah.

**MG:** I think it's just one small way I found that we do the support to veterans, but being able to support Defense individuals themselves by offering these positions for them to come out, and look, it is great for us, we get a really hard young worker that comes in and puts in, and hopefully it helps them because they get to see a bit of what life in the private sector's like before they go back in and launch into the fourth year of their studies, and maybe one day when they decide it's time to retire from the military or transition out, they're looking for a role somewhere in private sector, hopefully they have fond memories of ADCO and maybe it's a long-term recruitment process there for us as well.

**GTR:** That's right. Well, anyone with wise heads on their shoulder would look upon what you're doing as a great way of not only contributing but allowing serving Defense personnel to see what you do and the brilliant work you do. And that's something that's really a hands-on thing, I guess.

We speak about the Anzac spirit, we speak about a lot of things, but I think probably one of the things that ADCO does so successfully from my observation is to commit to a long-term program to assist. And again, I suppose Matt, this is about the health and wellbeing, the stories of the lieutenants, the Australian engineer lieutenants during their six-week work experience is a great example of that. Surely that makes you feel good about what you're doing.

**MG:** Yeah, look, it does, definitely. That's a way to support the individuals. But on a organizational level too, as I mentioned earlier, as part of the 10-year strategic plan for the company that started up several years ago now, defense being a growth sector in there, echoes a very successful company across many, many sectors, commercial, retail, health, education, sports and recreation.

So we do work for both the federal state and private clients. So there's a lot of work there that the company's involved in, but I think to have identified Defense as being yet another sector to move into.

To me personally, I think it's fantastic because there's a very large pipeline of Defense infrastructure work required. And I think to be able to be part of that really to me feels like I get to be in a company that... I mean, I've come out of the army where I was directly contributing to national security, but now coming into the private sector, I can still have that sense of service by being able to support Defense's infrastructure program through working with a construction company that's eagerly wanting to get into it further. So Puckapunyal job has recently been handed over as Tino said, so we really do look forward to getting into some more right around the country.

**GTR:** Yeah, that's right. And I think, Tino, with the Puckapunyal Health and Wellbeing Center being such an integral part of that and seeing the results must give you confidence in the future for ADCO as well as your role there with what you're doing. It's a magnificent thing.

**TDG:** Yeah, I think so, I'd like to think so. I mean, PMs don't like to put tickets on themselves, but I think the whole team, including our PMCA, has certainly seen what this ADCO team has done out of Puckapunyal. The support behind myself from head office, they could see that there's plenty of support upstream from an ADCO point of view to get this job done and hand it over, deliver it on time and to a satisfactory or an excellent handover position for the client.

Going back to some of that support too, you talking about some of the army personnel, whether there are students out there. During the project, we had a lot of Army that requested walkthroughs through the time of the project, just general walkthroughs, and we facilitated that, and that was through our PMCA. They asked us the question whether we could actually walk future users through the facility, and that was very well handled, and the Army were excited about seeing a facility come together. We had some senior people of Defense also come down from Canberra and different parts of the country to have a look at the progress, and they were ecstatic when they came through and walked through the facility.

And then, don't know where this part fits in, but the ability to facilitate some large variations along the line, the athletics track, we took that on board at sort of 60% of the delivery phase, stage two. The client through the PMCA asked if we could build the athletics track. We worked with them, collaborated with them, provided a price with a really Well-Fit organization that do athletics tracks, it's their bread and butter, and provided a program and a price and slotted that into complete on time as well for the main handover. So that working together, that collaboration has just created really good relationship and I think the client certainly sees that, including the PMCAs.

**GTR:** Yeah, excellent stuff, excellent stuff. And to see it grow and become part of a realization of an idea and thought and planning to seeing must be good for your health and wellbeing too Tino.

**TDG:** Bit of stress, bit of gray hair.

**GTR:** That's right, I bet, as with all things too. Now, Matt, I had heard a whisper, correct me if I'm wrong, you did partake in the Canungra Combat Challenge recently. What was the outcome of that?

**MG:** Well, the immediate outcome was a very sore body the next morning and a realization that my joy of obstacle courses whilst I was serving may not be a joy that continues with me as I get past 50 years old.

But Legacy's been running that competition, well, competition, that event, in partnership with Army I think for about six or seven years now. I'd heard of it when I was in the army, and then when I popped out, I saw an advertisement through it, I thought, right, need to get us into it. So basically it's a corporate event there where corporate

teams will enter in teams of four to spend a wonderful few hours at Canungra. So going over the infamous Canungra Obstacle Course, a bit of running, a bit of log carrying, bit of stalls movement.

So when I put it out to the Queensland branch to get volunteers, I thought, oh no, no one's going to want to come and do this. But lo and behold, I was actually inundated with people very enthusiastically wanting to come in and join. One of our company directors, Tom Hill and the son of the owner, Judy. He was, I think within about two minutes I had his email back saying, "I'm in," which was great. Ultimately, he didn't end up being able to get there through illness, but yeah, he was a rapid volunteer. So in the end, I thought we were just putting one team before, we ended up putting two teams of eight. I think the teams acquainted themselves well, they certainly enjoyed it.

I just need to give an acknowledgement and thanks to the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment, because through them we went out and did a bit of a training session run by a couple of their lads a few weeks before the event itself. And actually, I underestimated how much of a kick my ADCO colleagues would've gotten out of doing that to me, jumping around an obstacle course is just something I used to do but for them it was a bit unique. And so I think they really enjoyed what we did by way of the training in the lead up to it and then the event itself. And look, all the proceeds of course went into Legacy, which is fantastic. So I think it's an event that any company out there, I'll just urge you to have a look at it and jump on in. I know that from an ADCO point of view, we'll definitely get in there next year and maybe even put a few more teams in. So, great event, really good.

**GTR:** Yeah, that sounds fantastic. And it'd be a bit like after a leg day at the gym, wounded all over the body, I reckon. Geez.

**MG:** Yeah, a bit worse than a leg day yeah, you got it right there. It was an all over body day. I was a bit stiff and sore, but no, certainly well worth it though. It was a great event.

**GTR:** Oh geez. Well, yes, I'm thinking of entering The Last Post in this event, but I don't want any fatalities at the site. So we'll see what happens there. Now also-

**MG:** You'll get very well looked after. One of the staff from the Canungra Barracks there are manning all the way around the stands. So I know you'll be in good hands. I reckon you should jump in Greg, you'll be right.

**GTR:** Well, okay. Well, I'll see what happens. Now, also, finally, just on a personal note too, you're a bit of a gun with a banjo, I think, Matt, and you're thinking of forming your own group.

**MG:** A little bit of gun. Yes, I did accidentally have that in shock behind me there, so you're not going to get me to come out and strum anything because I won't embarrass myself.

**GTR:** Come on, play us the tune, play us the tune.

**MG:** No, no, no, I'll leave that for next time. But no, I do enjoy the banjo. It's not the most satiable of instruments to play, but I get a kick out of it though. So there we go.

**GTR:** Well, I play the spoons and Matt does the violin, so we'll be right, sorry, Tino does the violin, so we'll be right. Look, it's been absolutely wonderful speaking with you both for The Last Post and to learn more about ADCO's philosophy and how to enact that philosophy successfully amongst ADF and veterans around Australia. So thank you both very much Tino de Giusti and Matt Galton from ADCO Constructions. Thank you both very much.

**MG:** Thank you very much, Greg.

**TDG:** Likewise. Thank you, Greg.



### **Latisha Whalan, Fortem Australia Ambassador**

Latisha Whalan is a First Nations member of the Queensland Police Service (QPS). She is currently serving at the rank of Acting Sergeant within the Crime Prevention Programs Unit at Police headquarters. Latisha has been employed by the QPS since 2010, having joined the organisation at the tender age of 21 years old.

With her 13 years of experience with QPS, including 10 years within General Duties in areas like Logan district and the Gold Coast, Latisha has found her passion for community service, mentoring hundreds of at-risk teens to recognise and take the "right track" in life in a police-mentoring capacity.



## *Supporting* **THE BRAVE**

Essential to the wellbeing of our communities is looking after those we have entrusted to keep them safe.

Having recently lost two of my colleagues to mental ill-health, now is more important than ever to have open and sometimes uncomfortable discussions around first responding, mental health fatigue, and the ripple effect it has within our communities.

We as police are not only asked to enforce the law but we are also required to make endless judgement calls in volatile and high-pressure situations by assessing the risk around us and confronting trauma. Yet, we often forget that these jobs come at a price. The trauma will often unknowingly bleed into our family, social lives, and our communities.

The reality is that policing is extremely stressful and traumatic, however, in the words of Queensland Police Chaplain Baills "We will, tomorrow, turn up to our shift, and we will stand shoulder to shoulder again, and seek to do the best we can to keep Queensland safe and fulfil our duties as outstanding men and women". This echo's many of our personal core beliefs.

First responding will almost always take a toll on our mental health. So how do we navigate this? Three words; social connection awareness.

Social connection is one of the strongest predictors of mental health and wellbeing after stress and trauma. If we are taught how to recognise and manage our social connectedness, we might be in for a chance to shape how we manage our mental health.

When we feel supported, our resilience is enhanced, and we can cope more effectively with trauma.

I recognise how essential social connection is to positive mental health. I acknowledge when I am starting to feel lower than normal, and I know my support network can pick me up, often without knowing it.

Ultimately, the job of policing is difficult, both physically and mentally. It requires commitment, mental fortitude, and compassion, but the commitment from our support networks is what keeps us alive. If police have positive social connection, our communities will too, and the ripple effects are beneficial to everyone.



"SOCIAL CONNECTION  
IS LIKE AMMUNITION  
TO FIGHT STRESS."

# Social Connection and Resilience

Social connection is the key to a happy life.  
How do we know this?

The longest running study on life satisfaction tells us so. In 1938, researchers at Harvard University began a study that has continued to this day. What the researchers found was clear. Whether you grew up in poverty or came from a privileged background, the key to a happy, healthy and fulfilling life was connection to others.

## We are wired for social connection

These findings make perfect sense when you think about how we evolved as humans. Our brains, bodies and emotions were shaped over many thousands of years living in small tribal groups in hostile environments. For our ancestors, social isolation from the tribe meant almost certain death. Our survival depended on forming long-lasting social bonds.

So if having good social connections is tied to greater emotional and physical wellbeing, it's not surprising that social relationships are also important when it comes to resilience, because they help to reduce stress and suffering in a number of ways.

## How does social connection increase resilience?

Researchers generally agree that resilience involves our capacity to cope and bounce back from challenges. It is our ability to bend, not break under stress. However, most definitions of resilience focus on the individual and fail to acknowledge how individuals are embedded in social networks.

## Physiological responses to stress

The effects of social connection are reflected in how our bodies respond to stress. Whenever we perceive a threat – which can be anything from physical danger to social embarrassment to financial trouble – our nervous system springs into action, setting off a cascade of bodily reactions. These fight or flight reactions, although designed to help us respond to danger, are often uncomfortable and part of what we experience as stress.

Social connection helps to tamp down the stress response. When we feel that we have social support, we are physiologically much more at ease. The presence of supportive others during stressful events activates a physically felt sense of reassurance and is a direct antidote to stress in the body.

## DOMINIC HILBRINK

*Senior Clinician, Fortem Australia*

So, our social connections help us to recover from stress more quickly and effectively while also providing some protection against the wear and tear on our minds and bodies that comes from regular exposure to stressful events.

## Social connection and first responder resilience

Beyond Blue's national survey of the mental health and wellbeing of first responders in Australia found that social support had the strongest relationship to resilience. In other studies, researchers found that a sense of belonging was associated with lower distress and protective against developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after trauma.

## Promoting social connection for first responder family resilience

Social connection is at the core of what we do at Fortem.

Fortem's programs harness the natural building blocks of resilience. They are not just inclusive of families, but family focused. We aim to strengthen the connections both within and between first responder families, building networks of support that act as a container for the challenges that everyone in the first responder community experiences.

Fortem's model of care differs from traditional mental health services as it emphasises supporting participants to make early and accessible investments in their wellbeing. It focuses on building resilience and facilitating early intervention rather than solely responding to ill-health, both of which can contribute to sustainability in the first responder workforce.

## Conclusion

Social connection means having people around you that you feel are part of your life and you feel part of theirs. It involves a sense of belonging and being part of something bigger than you. It involves having people that you can share your joy with, and who you can turn to for support when you're in trouble.

We are not made to survive alone. As the first responder community continues to face unprecedented disaster events along with the inherent challenges of serving the community; now more than ever, it is not about survival of the fittest, but survival of the connected.



[www.vaseyrslcare.org.au/our-services/veteran-services/the-v-centre](http://www.vaseyrslcare.org.au/our-services/veteran-services/the-v-centre)

Governor General, His Excellency General the Honourable David John Hurley (Pictured Left) addressing guests at a recent visit to Vasey RSL Care's V Centre – Veteran Empowerment Program site. Pictured (Right) Vasey RSL Care Board Chair Mike O'Meara OAM and (Middle) Vasey RSL Care Chief Executive Officer Janna Voloshin.

# The Unspoken Duty of Aftercare

When young recruits sign up to serve in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), they are often enticed by the promise of a glitzy salary package, a chance to defend their nation, and a life-changing adventure.

What is not discussed enough, however, is what happens to them after their time with the ADF comes to an end. The aftercare of our veterans is as crucial as their service and while great improvements have been made, each year there are still some 300 veterans who become homeless.

Vasey RSL Care has supported the veteran community with affordable housing, home care and residential aged care for many years.

"Among our ex-service accommodation residents, we see a number who face ongoing issues that need more than just a roof over their head", says Janna Voloshin, Vasey RSL Care's CEO.

"After a great deal of research, industry consultation and input from the veteran community, we have developed a unique strategic initiative, The V Centre – Veteran Empowerment Program. This is a program combining an industry-first purpose-designed facility offering transitional housing with individualised support services for veterans at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness.

We anticipate participants will stay for between 3 and 9 months – but there

is no set length – it's about what each individual needs."

The pilot program has garnered a lot of attention in the political world, and when Governor General His Excellency General the Honourable David John Hurley and his wife Her Excellency Linda Hurley were in town recently, they took the opportunity to visit The V Centre and meet with Vasey RSL Care staff and residents to hear about how this program will change the path of veterans' lives.

"The stark reality is that veterans are almost three times more likely to experience homelessness than the general public," says Chris Gray, Executive General Manager Veteran Services, "Which is particularly concerning given Australia's current housing crisis."

"The aftercare of veterans is not just a duty; it's our moral mission. It's time for our society to understand the sacrifices these men and women have made and take care of them when they need it," says Janna.

Chris Gray will lead the initiative for Vasey RSL Care and has been busy lobbying for government funding towards the project.



Vasey RSL Care General Manager of Veteran Services Chris Gray leads the Governor General on a site tour of the V Centre – Veteran Empowerment Program in Ivanhoe, Victoria.

"Over the past decade, we have seen a substantial and sustained increase in the demand for affordable housing from the ex-service community, especially among the younger veterans. What's even more concerning is that a lot of these veterans arrive at our doors in homeless situations, sometimes with nothing more than a backpack", says Chris.

Janna adds: "The V Centre is a first for Australia. It's modelled on successful overseas programs and provides a veteran-specific solution. A similar program in the UK reported 90% of participants going on to lead independent lives. We can't wait to get this up and running – we truly believe it will not only change lives – it will save lives.

**HEIDI FLOWER**  
Vasey RSL Care



# Royal Automobile Club of Australia

Incorporating Imperial Service Club

## Defence Introductory Membership

## **JOINING FEE WAIVED**

The RACA is offering a special membership deal for current and retired members of the Australian Defense Forces and cadets. Eligible residents of NSW and the ACT can join for the first year at a heavily discounted subscription fee of \$200.

To find out membership benefits and join the club, please email [marketingco@raca.com.au](mailto:marketingco@raca.com.au)





# WARPATH BREWING

## CHOOSE YOUR PATH

In January 2023, I launched Warpath Brewing: Australia's only 100% veteran owned and operated brewing business where we use beer as a tool (wine and spirits coming soon) to employ transitioning veterans and teach them the principles of project management through a hands-on approach of running a brewing business.

It is both an employment and learning opportunity as well as a stepping stone to success for these young veterans. When they have gained experience and built on their confidence, we move them into operational roles in the civilian sector where they can take these project management skills with them as they aspire to take on new challenges and choose their next warpath.

Each brew raises awareness for a specific veteran program/project and a portion of proceeds will be donated to the respective veteran cause and all of our artwork is done by veterans using art therapy to combat PTSD for which they earn a royalty. By this, we can add value to their lives and reward them for going that extra step to overcome their challenges.

By sharing our mission at Warpath Brewing with your circles, you allow us to accomplish the following:

- Employ and teach Veterans principles of project management.
- Add value to the lives of Veterans using art therapy.
- Raise awareness and contributions toward Veteran projects.

Cheers and thank you.

Choose your path,

Alex

Alex Presutti, Founder  
Warpath Projects  
[warpathbrewing.com](http://warpathbrewing.com)

### TACTICAL ADVANTAGE LAGER



VETERAN OWNED AND OPERATED  
ALL PROFITS SUPPORT VETERAN CAUSES  
[WARPATHBREWING.COM](http://WARPATHBREWING.COM)

### GOLDEN JOURNEY ALE



VETERAN OWNED AND OPERATED  
ALL PROFITS SUPPORT VETERAN CAUSES  
[WARPATHBREWING.COM](http://WARPATHBREWING.COM)

### DANGEROUS FREEDOM PORTER



VETERAN OWNED AND OPERATED  
ALL PROFITS SUPPORT VETERAN CAUSES  
[WARPATHBREWING.COM](http://WARPATHBREWING.COM)



Samela Harris

c e l e b r a t i n g

50  
Years

1973 - 2023

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Adelaide Festival Centre is delighted to launch the book Celebrating 50 Years,  
as festivities for Adelaide Festival Centre's 50th Anniversary year continue.

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