SAFC CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ICONIC FILM SUNDAY TOO FAR AWAY

GEORGE COSTAS, COSTAS CONSTRUCTION AND VASEY RSL CARE – BUILDING HOMES FOR VETERANS

RSL AUSTRALIA

CATHERINE GREER

TARA BELTON

SCS INDIGENOUS

PETER REES – GUTS AND GLORY

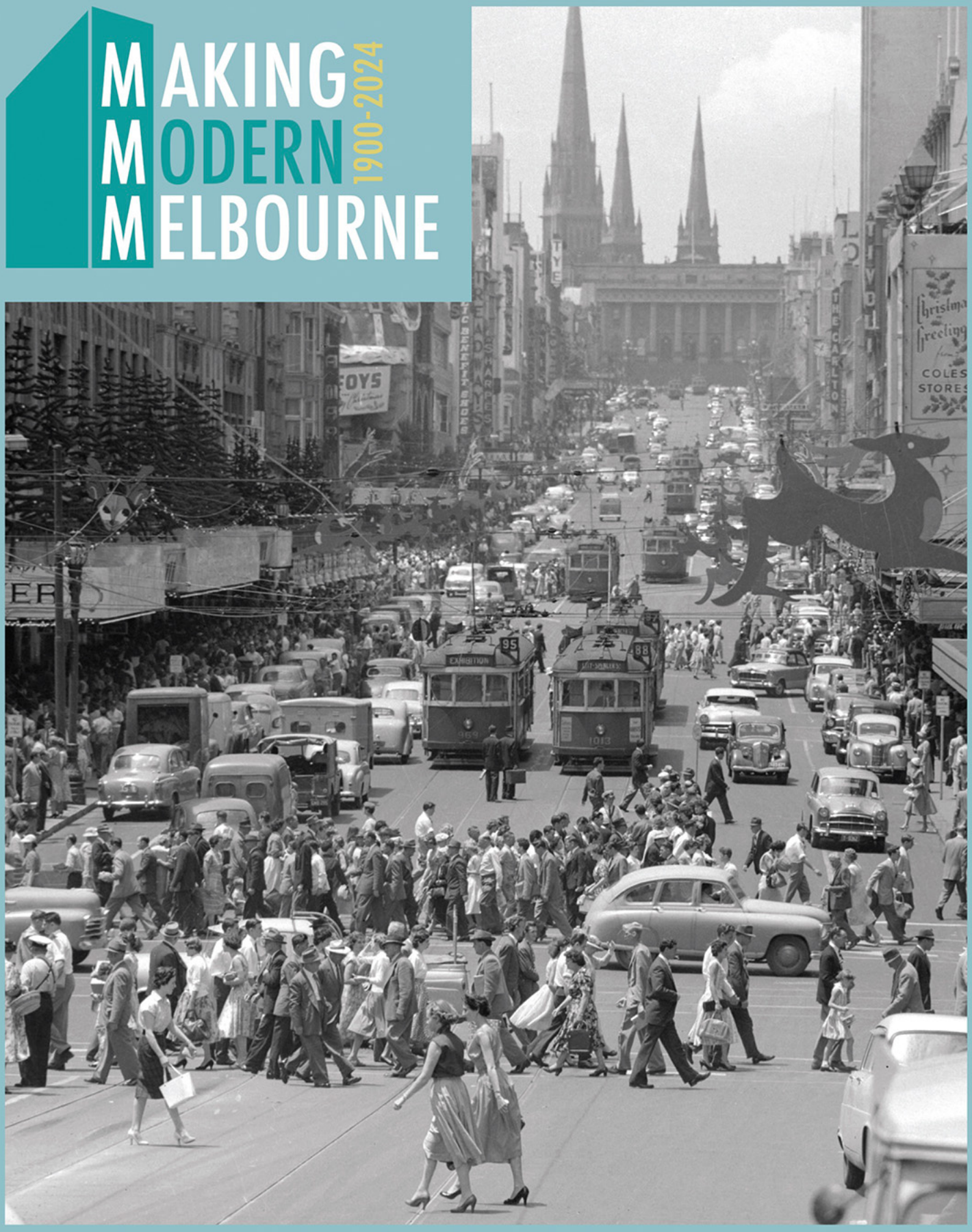
TRAVEL

ISSUE 36

THE LAST POST

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

MAKING MODERN MELBOURNE 1900-2024



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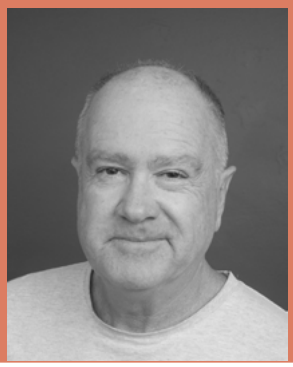

GREG T ROSS
Diary of an independent publisher

Sitting behind the desk, helping to put together this valued Remembrance Day edition, I became indulged in the writings of TLP's Travel scribes, Monique March and Moira Partridge. Their recalling of visits to Istanbul and London and Vietnam and Cambodia so poetically enthralling that I'd wanted to pack my backs and head off to their chosen destinations. I had no choice but to stay but you too can be part of their adventures in this edition. Wonderful stuff.

I spoke with so many people in the compiling of this edition. Ian Smith, Catherine Greer, Tara Belton, Jake Keir, George Costas and more. All from different backgrounds and with different, yet common messages. In my conversations with these people, I learn and I hope it has a similar outcome for you, the reader.

We also look at the amazing Tour de V Centre bike ride and the 12-hour run, Dusk Till Dawn, for Bravery Trek.

All this and more in what I hope will be a good read and remain so over the summer months.

Me? I'll take a couple of weeks off before starting on preparing for the big Anzac Day '26 edition. It's been the same rewarding experience since 2011. Meeting wonderful people - and sharing them with you.

Greg T Ross

#thelastpostmagazine
#diaryofanindependentpublisher

foreword

Peter Tinley AM

National President
Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL)

At 11.00 a.m. on 11 November 1918, the guns of the Western Front fell silent after more than four years of continuous war.

This day marked the end of the Great War, but the memory of those who served and sacrificed continues to shape our nation. Every year, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, people in Australia and many other countries pause for a minute of silent reflection in memory of all who have died while serving in wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations.

This Remembrance Day, Tuesday 11 November, I urge you to join us in honouring our veterans. Whether you attend a commemorative service at your local RSL Sub-branch, wear a red poppy, donate to the Poppy Appeal, or simply observe a minute's silence at 11 a.m., your participation ensures that the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty is never forgotten. As a nation, we will remember.

For more than a century, the Returned & Services League has led the nation in commemoration, ensuring that the legacy of service is preserved. Yet, our work is about far more than history; it is about the future of our veterans and defence personnel and the strength of our community.

The RSL is committed to serving Australia's current and former service personnel and their families. We continue to advocate fiercely for their rights and benefits, provide crucial welfare support and tailored services, and contribute to discussions about the defence and national security of Australia.

The challenges facing our service community today are complex, and the RSL's relevance is more vital than ever. We are the collective voice, the trusted network, and the unwavering support system for those who have served.

I invite all current and former serving Australian Defence Force members to belong to the RSL. Your membership strengthens our voice and ensures we can continue to serve those who have served.

Together We Remember.

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

Donate today.
poppyappeal.com.au

Poppy Appeal

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.

contents

'The Last Post' magazine is owned and published by GTR Publishing, a subsidiary of B4E Pty Ltd.

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www.isubscribe.com.au
www.magshop.com.au

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FRONT COVER:
Sunday Too Far Away - courtesy of NFSA and SAFC (1)/673825 - Jack Thompson (Foley) sitting in the rear seat of a car with the door ajar.

SAFC celebrates 50th anniversary of Sunday Too Far Away

Australian screen icon Jack Thompson AM and legendary producer Matt Carroll OBE were the guests of honour at the South Australian Film Corporation's (SAFC) 50th anniversary celebration of critically acclaimed and multi award-winning Sunday Too Far Away, the first feature film to be produced by the SAFC in 1975.

Held at Adelaide Studios in May this year, the special event was attended by SA screen sector members including some of the film's original cast and crew, and members of the South Australian Producers and Heads of Department Working Groups, along with members of the SAFC's Screen Circle and VIP guests, all enjoying a reception followed by a Q&A with Jack and Matt by ABC 891 Adelaide's Deb Tribe and a screening of the film.

Distinguished guests included The Hon Michael Brown MP, Senator The Hon Don Farrell, The Right Hon Lord Mayor Dr Jane Lomax Smith AM, Former Deputy Premier The Hon Vickie Chapman, Mayor of Burnside Anne Monceaux, Mayor of Flinders Ranges Ken Anderson, The Mercury General Manager Sarah Lancaster and Mercury Co-Chair Kirsty Stark, members of the SAFC Board, and past SAFC Board Chairs Hedley Bachmann AM, Julie Cooper and David Minear.

Members of the original South Australian crew who worked on the film were also in attendance: Director of Photography Geoff Burton ACS, Camera Assistant David Foreman ACS, 2nd Assistant Camera Geoffrey Simpson and Best Boy Trevor Toune.

Sunday Too Far Away was released in 1975, marking a key moment in the history of Australian cinema, and South Australia's pioneering place in it – launching more than half a century of filmmaking in the state through the SAFC. Directed by Ken Hannam, produced by Matt Carroll and the SAFC's inaugural director Gil Brealey, and starring legendary actor Jack Thompson in one of the most iconic roles of his career, Sunday Too Far Away is one of the great Australian films of all time.

On an outback station in 1956, hard-drinking shearers battle the clock, the sheep and each other for the position of "gun shearer", the one with the highest tally. Foley (Thompson) has not been beaten in 10 years, but he knows the day will come. As he considers his future, a disastrous strike looms.

Shot in Port Augusta and Quorn on Barngarla and Nukunu country, Sunday Too Far Away was produced by the then-fledgling SAFC – which had only launched three years earlier in 1972 – as the first feature film to emerge from this bold, nation-leading initiative. The film was a box office and critical success, winning the 1975 AFI Awards for Best Film and Best Actor for Jack Thompson, and it was the first Australian feature film selected for the Director's Fortnight at Cannes.

Sunday paved the way for a spate of extraordinary works out of South Australia, including Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975), Storm Boy (1976) and Breaker Morant (1980), spearheading the "Australian New Wave" of cinema, and establishing the SAFC as a pioneer in the new world of Australian screen culture.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Sunday Too Far Away - courtesy of NFSA and SAFC (1)/673901 - Railway carriages with four men onboard.

ABOVE: Sunday Too Far Away - courtesy of NFSA and SAFC (1)/673823 - John Ewart (Ugly) and Jack Thompson (Foley) standing together in a shearing shed.

LEFT: Sunday Too Far Away - courtesy of NFSA and SAFC (1)/674290 - group of shearers including John Ewart (ugly), Robert Bruning (Tom) and Jack Thompson (Foley) at the Gimal (Quorn) Railway Station.

ABOVE: Sunday Too Far Away - courtesy of NFSA and SAFC (1)/673825
- Jack Thompson (Foley) sitting in the rear seat of a car with the door ajar.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: Sunday Too Far Away - courtesy of NFSA and SAFC (1)/673897
- Group of shearers in the process of shearing sheep, Jack Thompson (Foley) is in the foreground.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM: Sunday Too Far Away - courtesy of NFSA and SAFC (1)/674289
- Close-up of shearers standing in front of the Gimal (Quorn) Railway Station.


GIMAL

— *INTERVIEW* —

Catherine Greer

thelastpostmagazine.com/the-last-post-radio-show-podcast

Greg T Ross: It's my great pleasure to introduce Catherine Greer, author and lifestyle consultant, doing a wonderful job. Hello, Catherine, welcome to The Last Post magazine and Radio Show.

Catherine Greer: Oh, thank you for having me, Greg. I'm super excited to talk to you today.

GTR: Well, it's a blessing to have you on. And the message that you give is definitely a good one, which we can use in these times for sure. Catherine, you started out as a teacher, I believe, in Vancouver. What was that like?

CG: Oh, my goodness, Greg, my hair was down to here. My skirts were up to there. I cannot believe they let me loose in a private school. But I was teaching English, which was my first love, and probably in a way what led to my writing. And I also really enjoyed teenagers. And I still do. I have the house with my husband where we have all of the young people, we've got the pool, we've got the barbecue pulled out at 10 at night, we've got people sleeping over, we do the whole thing. So I really love and understand teens. And I think when I started writing, my debut novel was actually a thriller for teens with Penguin Books called Love Lie Repeat. And it was about the pressure to be perfect. And the pressure that young women feel sometimes even from their own mothers, and from society at large about creating this and this perfect image, and then showing that to the world, which I think is really timely now, when people are struggling under the weight of social media.

GTR: Yes, a very true observation, of course, with social media, bringing a lot more people's lives into intimate, I guess, observation to your many books, you spoke about the Bittersweet Bakery Cafe, there's Jacaranda Snow, and I guess, books based on ways to improve your life, Small Steps, A Perfect 10 Minute Fix. Is it that easy to just read a book and improve your life?

CG: You know, that is such a fabulous question. So I believe that books are the best investment in our lives. Where else can you pick up something for $20 in an airport and actually get multiple good ideas about the way that you can move yourself forward? I think, you know, it's way less expensive than even having dinner with a friend, or certainly less expensive than therapy. And even when I write fiction, I really like to write fiction with heart, where at the centre of it, there's an empowering call to action. So it's interesting, Greg, with my new novel, The Bittersweet Bakery Cafe, which is a pro ageing novel, and it very firmly champions midlife women. And the reason I wrote The Bittersweet Bakery Cafe was because I was so tired of reading novels about 30 year olds. Like, I've already got the guy and had the kids and I just don't care. I just do not care about that anymore. And what I really did care about was all of the struggles I see in the midlife people around me, women and men. So for women, it is topics like invisibility in society, but that also impacts men. And you know, I work a full time corporate job. So I have quite a responsible position and I am very busy. And I also write, but in the corporate world in Australia, I routinely see any male over the age of 60 who is facing redundancy or a change, it is very difficult for those people to get another job. And so I was looking at this in general thinking, hang on, all of us men and women, we're in the most powerful part of our lives, we know so much, we're settled, we've been through a lot of trials, and we're facing this kind of golden age between, I would say, 50 and beyond, because we're living now into our nineties, routinely living into our nineties.

And I was looking at that middle and thinking, who is writing for these people? Who is speaking up for people like us who certainly, you know, still have so much to offer the world. I could look at you with your podcast and all the work you've done.

GTR: I've always been a late starter, Catherine, always been a late starter.

CG: Yeah, well, I think that's a really empowering message, right? I started writing my books and getting published at 49.

GTR: Congratulations.

CG: Thank you. Yeah, it took a few books in the drawer to kind of get myself to where I am now as an operating author in Australia and overseas. But also, I just think for anyone out there who's listening, this is the best time of life. This is not the empty nest.

This is the open door. You know, this is the time when we can really explore

what do we love? And can we do more of that? And whether it's something big and showy, like, you know, you have a podcast or you get a book published, or whether it's something quieter and beautiful and meaningful, like you take good care of yourself, you're in nature, you love your garden, you know, you are good to your family.

GTR: Catherine, that's a beautiful topic to lead into. And I think I often have, we went to a meeting in Queensland recently with some people of a like age, and they were asked to write a theme or their thoughts on ageing, etc. What I put down was, "Appreciate the small". So I see where you're coming from.

CG: 100%. And that's why when I wrote small steps are perfect. That book really was a series of reflections about ways that we can take stock of our lives and actually, realistically, and practically move us forward now, from where we stand, how can we take that one small step forward. And sometimes, honestly, it's just noticing, we see this all around us, right? So you run into a person, you're walking the dog, and it's, you know, spring and blossoms are everywhere on the ground, jacarandas, right everywhere. And you say to someone, "Oh, such a beautiful day. And look at all these blossoms". And they can respond in two ways. So one way is, "yeah, aren't they beautiful?" Imagine like, it's a carpet of purple, it's purple snow, which is what Jacaranda Snow is really about. Or they can say, "such a mess all over my car, people slip on these things", you know, and I think at every moment of our lives, we have the choice to be bitter, or to see what's sweet. And for the Bittersweet Bakery Cafe, that that was really my message, like, you've got a choice. You don't have a choice about what happens to you. But you definitely have a choice about how you respond to it.

GTR: Yeah, so well said Catherine Greer. and your philosophy and mantra in life is reflected in your response. And I suppose, Catherine, that's right, too. We all meet people. I mean, look, admittedly, I'm a glass half full person. And that's it, it can annoy some people. But, you know, I just wonder, what's the benefit in being the opposite?

CG: Absolutely. And sometimes it's taking the risk of asking yourself, what's the best that can happen here? Not what's the worst, but what's the best? Now, excuse me, I sound like an optimist. In some ways, I'm honestly not. And I think that's why I've had to work very hard in my life to capture my own brain, and to be the CEO of my brain and to say, "right today, these are the things we're going to think about". You know, these are the things we're going to focus on. Because it is so easy. We all have a negativity bias. We're all wired to look for fear and danger. That's just biological in all of us. But if we can take that step of awareness above it, and go, right, you got lucky in the lottery, Greg, and you are mostly an optimist. And maybe I didn't get as lucky. And I can see a lot of things that are wrong with the world. However, I just try to school myself to focus on what's sweet.

GTR: Actually, that's true, too. And of course, what happens, I guess, is there's constant reminders. And once again, we'll go back to social media and the input of negativity through the medium. But there are constant reminders of the harshness and brutality of mankind. And yet, if you dig a little deeper, you will find constant examples of beauty and kindness that aren't promoted as much.

CG: Yeah, 100%. And you can learn so much. That's what I love. I mean, a lot of people are frightened of social media, frightened of AI. And I think that both of those things, if they're tools for good, can really enhance our lives. Like, I don't know about you now, but I can bake macarons. I can do that because of Instagram. And also, I'd have to say, I did hear a sobering statistic yesterday, where somebody said, this is the first time in history, where people will die with more memories of others who don't even belong to them than ever before. And I thought about that. And I thought about the people we follow, and the people we listen to, and all of that. All that's in our brains. And we're kind of forgetting that we're self-directed, like, whose life is this anyway? Are you going to lie on your deathbed and think, gee, I really wonder what that influencer is doing? Or what, you know, Donald Trump is getting up to? Or, you know, like, I need some bad news. Get rid of that.

GTR: Get rid of that from your brain, Catherine. And we have, I suppose, a nightly reminder, the old news that comes on ABC at least, seven o'clock each night. There's videos and footage of bad things. And it may be as simple as saying, well, I don't want that in my life. Yes, I know it exists. But there's nothing really that I can do about it, except bring myself down by focussing on it. So you would recommend turning the TV off, perhaps?

CG: Do you know what I recommend? I think there's a fine line between awareness and seeking out bad news consistently. So if we think about how humans were wired to be in smaller communities, we were never, I think, built to know everything at all times. Right now, Greg, if we just turned on the laptop and took a look at all of the degradation and terrible things, like there are truly terrible things happening in the world that we could both access right now on our computers. Now, I'm not saying we need to ignore all of it. But I'm saying that we need to get into that river in a boat that you believe in. So your boat may be animal welfare. It may be bush care in Australia. It may be the huge issues in Gaza. But we can't all carry it all. That's how I feel. So I try to choose what I can carry. So I believe my role in this life is to honestly be an encourager. I think 100% I was put on this planet just to encourage others. I wanted people to read my latest novel and fall in love with themselves. I wanted women to read it and know they were going to be okay, no matter what they were facing, because they were following a story of a woman who had terrible things happen to her, betrayal and heartbreak, all these things, but still managed to figure out a way to make it through with grit. How beautiful. So I don't know what you feel your key role in this world is. But when I say that to you as a mature person, you probably have some idea.

GTR: You're sharing light as well. I think, Catherine, and thank you for bringing that up. I sometimes ask myself the same question. I think it honestly would be to reflect intelligence and beauty and reality at the same time. I guess beauty is out there in so many things, and it can be ignored as we were just talking about. But your efforts in bringing that into focus for people results in a more likelihood to find happiness on different levels. But by engaging in activities that promote joy, I guess, for me, I get a bit of a buzz, not a bit of a buzz, I get a buzz out of talking to people that are of a similar like-mind. Certainly, your attitude is more likely to bring about happiness than the opposite. That's the beauty of what you do. Can you choose happiness, do you think, Catherine?

CG: That's so interesting. Way back when I first started writing, I was a young mom, so sleep deprived. I actually collaborated on a book called Choosing Happiness with Stephanie Dourick, who's quite a famous older author in Australia now. We collaborated on that book together. That was my foray into writing. It had always been a dream of mine. I do believe we can choose it. I do believe that things can be very, very hard, and we are all icebergs. You sit here, and anybody who's watching or listening, you imagine Catherine Greer, professional job in the city, in Sydney, and a published author. She's got a family, and kids, and all these things. Win, win, win, win. All you're seeing is my one-eighth sitting above the water. Excuse me, all I'm hearing is your one-eighth as well, Greg. Everybody has that monolithic chunk that sits beneath of the challenges, the desperation, the hard times, and we've all got it. I guess it depends on if we have a mature and realistic view. We know that we need to handle each other gently. We know that we never know the full story of someone else.

GTR: That's true, too. Often, we intend to personalise it. A lot of the time, I have observed, because I used to be like this when I was younger, everything would be about me, so that if some person saw me on the street or something and happened to cross over, I might think, well, they don't want to talk to me. Of course, you don't know what's going on in their life. They might have just heard that their wife's leaving them, or that one of their kids is ill. They don't want to talk. I've moved on from that idea. The beauty of that is I don't do that anymore. It's about being aware of other people's lives.

CG: One of the things I wrote about, Greg, was exactly that. It is about letting people off the hook. Imagine by your back door of your house, you've got those coat hooks, just those hooks screwed into the wall. There's about six or seven of them. We've all got somebody hanging on that hook by the scruff of the back of their t-shirt, just the person we hate, the mother-in-law, the bad boss, the toxic person. We've got them on our hooks. We just keep them there. If we can imagine ourselves actually just walking up and picking them up and letting them off that hook, the relief is for us. They don't even know half the time that they're on our hook. The toxic boss has no idea that you're spending your waking hours thinking about them. I think that row of hooks by the back door, we can let people off.

GTR: It's a bit like people that hold grudges. I'm not one of those people. I think, well, why? Let's move on. I know that some people do hold grudges. It only harms them, Catherine Greer, because they're dedicating their life and thinking to this person when the other person is probably not even giving a damn.

CG: Unless we sound too perfect, Greg, let's be honest. When I was sitting down to write The Bittersweet Bakery Cafe, I was working through – it's not autobiographical, but I was working through some serious struggles of my own. Life had not been easy. The thing that I needed most in my life was grit. I needed to find my self-belief that I could pull myself up and make what happens in my world by myself. I had a friend say to me once, your best chance is always you. I thought, that's so right. Rather than wait around for somebody else to come and pick you up off the floor or give you the thing or grant your wish or answer your prayer, all those things, which is lovely, but doesn't always happen. If you start to think about yourself as your best chance, how do I move myself forward? And that's really where it was. So life is not perfect. But the lesson I learned over the last few years certainly was how to pick up and put the pieces back together, recognise the beauty and keep going. So that's, I think, a message that everybody needs.

GTR: Yeah. What a brilliant message too, Catherine Greer. I do remember speaking to a friend of mine some years ago, and the funny thing was I was about 10 years older than this friend. He was in his late 30s. He said to me, "Greg, you know the good thing about getting old?" I said, "What's that, James? He goes, "you don't give a stuff anymore".And of course, it's about letting go and not letting little things weigh you down. But I suppose also about a positive outlook. I know my mother had a positive outlook. On her deathbed, she was still trying to chat up the handsome doctor. So she was always a wonderful, just energetic person.

CG: And it's about that positive outlook. But as you say, having obviously being aware of reality. But what about love? Is it believing in love on some level? Oh, when you think about it, that's the only thing we've got, isn't it? And I believe that the definition of love is way too narrow. That's why I don't write romance. I don't read romance. Not that there's anything wrong with anybody who reads anything at all. I mean, do what you love, which is great. And I read a wide range of books. But the reason that I'm not interested in writing romance is that I think there are so many other more important kinds of love. The greatest love that you ever need to have, I believe, is first of all, the love for yourself. Fall in love with yourself. Try doing that. Knowing all your faults, knowing all the bad things you've done.

We're old. We've done a lot that we need to forgive ourselves for. And that's kind of the topic of my next novel that I'm working on now is how do we forgive ourselves when we know we've done something unforgivable? Not how do we forgive ourselves when we kind of do crappy things, but how do we forgive ourselves when we actually know we've done something unforgivable? And I'm really interested in that question. And I think female readers definitely will be interested in that question around forgiveness, forgiveness of others, forgiveness of themselves. So I do believe that love is the heartbeat, but I believe it's all kinds of love, love of self, love of friends, which is really underrepresented. I mean, the whole boy, girl thing or girl, girl thing, whatever, whatever your deal is, it's not everything. It's not all of life. Like think about the love we have for pets. That's enormous. The love that we have for children or even colleagues, you know, the fun and

the love that you have at work. Yeah, there's so many different levels of it. So many different levels of love.

GTR: You're so right. And a matter of fact, you can hear some noise in the background. It's a cat that I'm looking after at the moment. And I think I'm falling in love with a cat, but as long as the noise doesn't interrupt our discussion. But anyhow, the thing that's right, there's so many different levels of love. It can be love of music. It can be love of...

CG: Oh, that's a great one. Absolutely. Like people who love music. I have a son who's an adult son, but he's a cellist as well as a consultant, some management consultant, but he, you know, he loves music. He loves opera. He loves his music. And then I, you know, other people love different things, painting or art, or they just get immersed in beauty or gardening. Like there's so many things to love. We're sold this lie that it's people and it's romance and that's it.

GTR: Yeah, that's right. And that's a pretty narrow definition, isn't it?

CG: And does it help to have an eclectic, as far as music goes, I would say a wide variance of favourite music, opera, jazz, modern music. Love jazz.

GTR: Yeah, love it. Everything. And a matter of fact, I was driving along the freeway one night about 4am on the way to the airport and Miles Davis came on and I ended up writing a poem about that. I had to pull over and write a poem. It was so beautiful because it moves you so much. But does that make it easier to live with when you, I mean, you don't want to stand in front of the mirror for an hour and say, what's Dad doing? Oh, he goes, "well, I'm just falling in love with myself", you know, but is it easier to live with when you're this person that cares and loves yourself?

CG: I think so. And I think, look, it's the hardest thing to do, isn't it? Because we get so many messages poured into our subconscious, essentially when we're young, before the age of seven, don't they say that that's when all of it happens? We have all of these messages, intentional or unintentional, about who we are, the world tells us who we are. And it's hard to learn to tell ourselves who we are, because we know we're flawed. We all are flawed. You know, we all do all the things, make mistakes, we're horrible. I mean, I'm wonderful on this podcast with you. And sorry, you Greg, but there have been horrible moments too, where if you were in my home or married to me, you know, we have to be realistic. But I think...

GTR: Thanks for saying that. That's right. Exactly right.

CG: Yeah, exactly. Be gentler. Be gentler with yourself.

GTR: And that makes the beauty and the strength of honesty and love in return so special. Catherine, go on.

CG: Yeah, absolutely. So I think, you know, our primary jobs really throughout our lives are to love ourselves and love the world around us. So there's a really fabulous quote that says, if you love life, life will love you right back. And I think, what a great thing to aspire to, to just pour it out there and let it come back into you. And, you know, in all its forms, beauty, music, you know, art, romantic love, friendship, pets, all of it. Yep, totally, totally true. We're the luckiest people in history. We are the luckiest people in history. You know, our children don't die. 100 years ago, people's children routinely died. Like, think about that. That's scary.

GTR: And the thing is, of course, too, when you say at the lucky stage, that's so true. And I guess if you look at the deeper statistics, to be happy, healthy, comfortable, living in Australia, I mean, what percentage of the world does that really? I don't want to discuss it with a laugh, but I mean, really? It's so true. Really? You've won the lottery.

CG: I'm Canadian, Greg, so I've lived half my life in Canada, half my life in Australia, and I'm Australian. I think Australia is the best country in the world to live in. The medical care we can receive here and access, whether it's paid or free, is top notch.

The fact that we have freedom, the fact that we never, ever have to think about our children being killed at school, you know, those sorts of things. The fact that we're generally fairly healthy, you know, people are moving around outside, they're swimming, they're walking, they're doing their thing. The fact that we're truth tellers, I think Australians are truth tellers. So, it's not an accident that Australian debaters out-debate Cambridge, Oxford, and all the Ivy League schools every single year. And I think the reason they do is that while Australians are whip smart, street smart, and actually they're truth tellers. And, you know, you just see the world falling in love with Robert Irwin right now, and everybody fell in love with his dad. Well, he's kind of a silly guy, but he's a truth teller, right?

And that's what people connect with, the level of honesty of that. And so, I love this country. I think when I wrote Bittersweet Bakery Cafe, it's actually loosely set on a little community called Hyams Beach, down on the south coast of New South Wales. That was my first Australian beach. It was three kilometres of white sand, sand that's so white, it's like cornstarch, completely deserted. It's a beautiful area.

GTR: It's a beautiful area. Oh, gosh. I lived in Long Beach.

CG: Oh, yeah. So, I reimagined that little tiny community in my novel, because it's my dream place. If I ever got a Netflix deal or sold a million, billion books, that's where I would buy a home. It's such a beautiful spot. And I think that, you know, there's so much just to enjoy for free in this country. It's incredible what we have access to.

GTR: Yeah, that's right. And that's such a beautiful example too, Catherine Greer, to be able to walk or hop on the pushbike or hop on your scooter or get in the car and go five minutes to the beach. And of course, meditation comes at the beach, I feel.

Anyhow, it's a very good way to end the day, to lay on the sand, to swim in the salt water. And for me, at least, and I guess for you and a lot of others, you spoke about your love of that part of the world with the beach and the wide expanse. That would be heaven, I guess.

CG: Yeah, it is, isn't it? Heaven on earth. And I know it's so easy to get, we get glued into this little piece of technology in our hands, and we forget to look up. And I'm the same. It is so easy when you're tired or on the commute or whatever. And that's why we just need that reminder every now and then. We need to surround ourselves with the people who lift us up. And you know, if you don't know any of those people right now, all over Australia, there are really amazing initiatives happening, where people do meetups to try new things. And so that looks super fun to me as well. You know, just being around people who are doing a little something.

GTR: Yes, to enact and to engage with people that are actually doing something, it becomes something that you want to reflect and do yourself. I know you spoke about, I guess, writing, Catherine, and writing for you, and I guess for me also too, is a way of expressing and a way of meditation too. I guess, how important is that for you?

CG: I think I write, and writing is my way of thinking and figuring out what I believe about something. I'm creating stories. I never really thought I was a novelist. I'm a natural nonfiction writer. And in my professional life, I'm a corporate copywriter. So I write a lot of all kinds of communications from customer speeches, right down to customer communications.

But I think when I was a little girl, I would walk, I was raised in the country on a farm, and youngest of six kids, and I would walk a lot and tell myself stories in my head, because I was alone and just needed to create that world. That's what turned me into a writer. And I also believe that that's accessible to so many people.

So it doesn't have to be the book deal. Sometimes it's like you pulling over in the car and writing a poem, because why not? That's available to you.

This is an edited version of the Catherine Greer interview.
For the full interview go to: **thelastpostmagazine.com/the-last-post-radio-show-podcast**

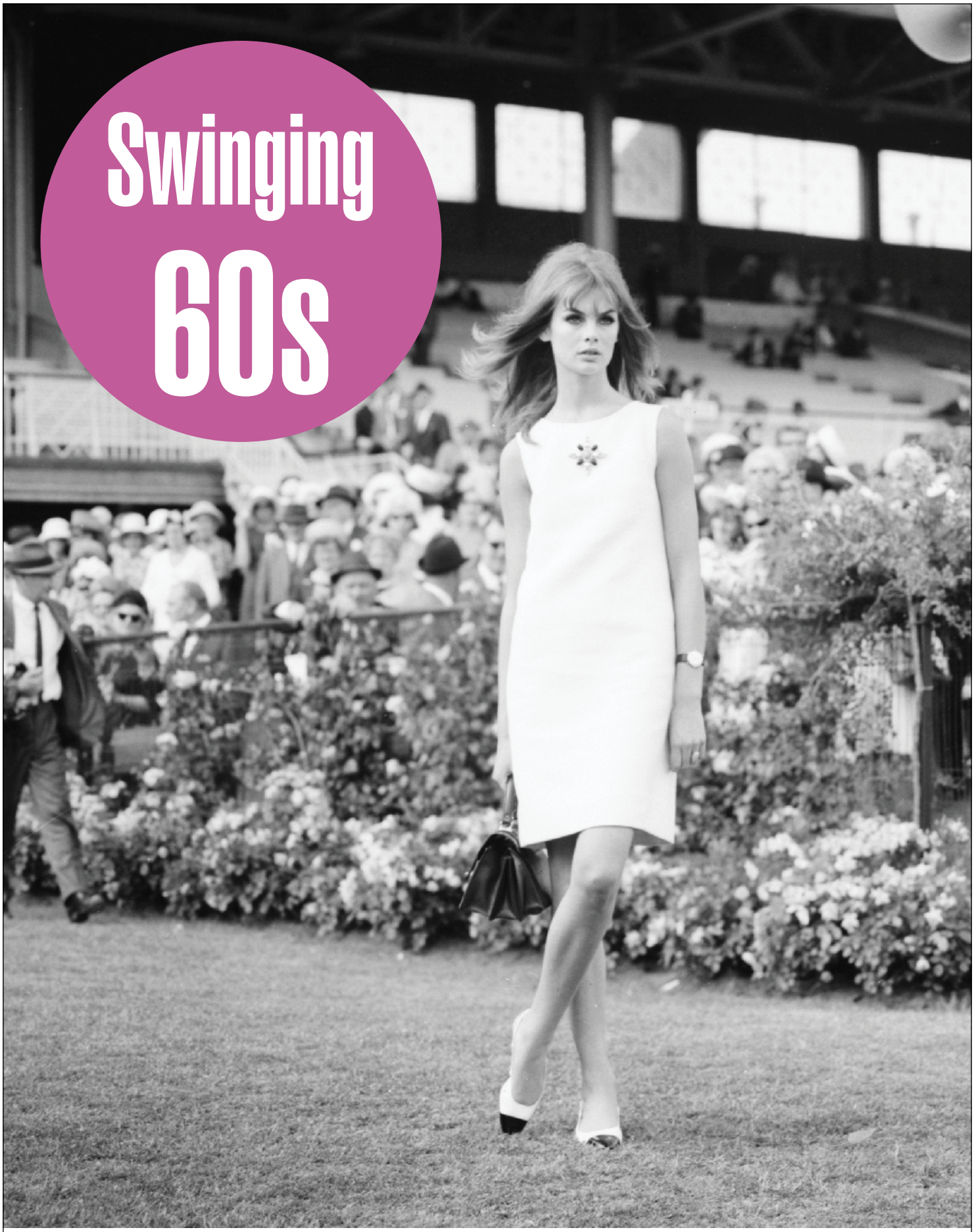

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Image: *Jean Shrimpton on Derby Day, 1965, Clive Mackinnon, The Age newspaper* | *Swinging Sixties* was researched and curated by the Old Treasury Building in partnership with Public Record Office Victoria

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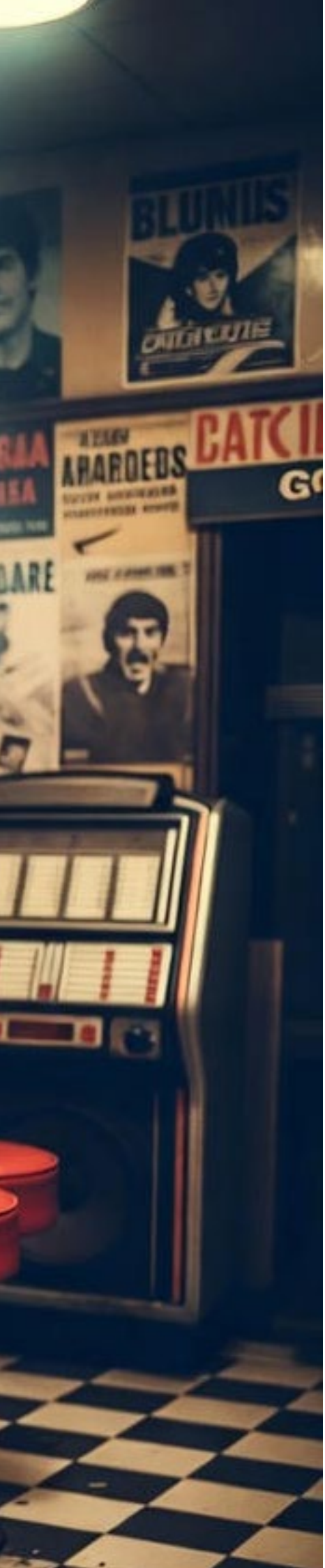


As Darkness Drizzles...
(Drugs and time and adrenaline)

Was the typewriter an enemy
as he bashed away in intensity?
Who knew, for he was a self-professed and confessed hater
of writing
but not of letting his mind run…
and the typewriter a necessary conduit right in the middle of this
and then thus he said he feared he may be lazy (no stress about being crazy)
or, worse still, incompetent
so he called its bluff and he called it Gonzo. Me and mine, it was.
Life is Sports, he said, with a confession that he was used to being lied to.
Amongst a determination not to be dulled out, he called it Gonzo.
He held a fear that life could become a series of headlines of terminal stages with only a feeling of presence to save him
and a belief that the wilder you get, the better.
He told me he was drinking at The Watergate, the night they broke in. With only drugs, time and adrenaline as company.
He emphasised that there was a secret to being selective in excess and with the elements of delightful terror that come with the discovery of a dirty self
and writing bad cheques
and having the balls to plough your own ground.
As darkness drizzles, he said that he had no intention of doing anything he didn't enjoy anymore like living.
I write at night with tension dreams and I call it Gonzo, he said.
In Woody Creek,
when the delightful terror became just terror he shot himself.
How goddamn Gonzo.

GREG T ROSS

Cleaning the Mess

I met death three times today.
A baby sparrow had fallen
from his nest on my footpath
He was covered with ants,
his little body smelled of death
and I had to clean the mess.

My neighbour, driving back home,
killed a tomcat who suddenly crossed the road.
I was grateful that he was not mine
and helped my neighbour to clean the mess
and bury the cat in his backyard.

I watched the news on TV this evening
and saw people being shot or killed by bombs.
The death by war was greedy
taking babies, young people,
pregnant women, adults, grandparents…
The ruined cites looked
like burned cemeteries and devasted graves.
Who is going to clean this heart-breaking mess?

I've been meeting different types of death every day.
The deaths of old age, of illness,
of accidents, of personal choice
are part of our lives and I can accept this.
But not the death of war.
So, I pray to God daily that no one meet
with the death of war face-to-face.

VALENTINA TECLICI


DOKCMS

If you could have any other life

Let's reach into the enchanted bag …

Would I go for money?
Fame?
Spiritual transformation?

Having done a fair bit of time
since those
naïve & dumb days,
I know that an ordinary life
Is not really ordinary at all.

I can pick up a paint brush
and paint my room –
my colours.

JEREMY ROBERTS

Rolf and his brother Menno.

We were Gods

Life had set me free,

my adventures were wild,
born sunshine with kids,
just an innocent child.

Fresh to have fun,
no boundary was set,
of our gate-less world,
in one absent of threat.

We sought out our curious,
each day from the last,
of hidden small treasures,
to emulate past.

Great challenges made,
by guess was our quest,
of a jump or a leap,
to win fancied contest.

No rules could we break,
our chalk lines were rough,
bravado erased,
we cowards were tough.

Run race or fast ride,
ball rounders to bat,
one street was our turf,
our domain of one hat.

All gardens and lawns,
all houses in rows,
we wore the same knowledge,
we shared the same clothes.

So mighty immortal,
we braved all the odds,
we only feared darkness,

as kids we were Gods.

ROLF DE JAGER

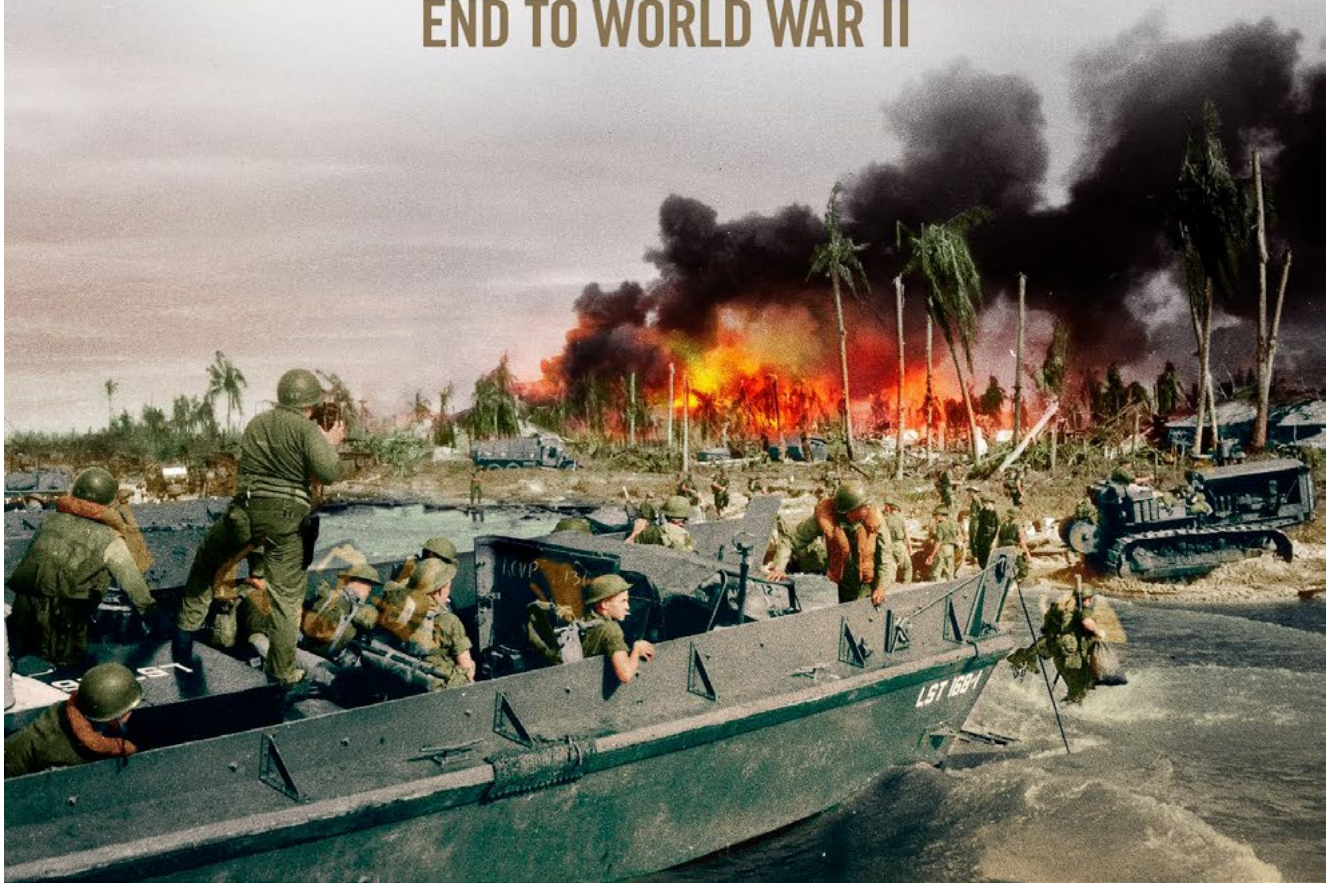
MICHAEL
VEITCH

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *AUSTRALIA'S SECRET ARMY*

BORNEO

THE LAST CAMPAIGN

AUSTRALIA'S BRILLIANT, CONTROVERSIAL
END TO WORLD WAR II



I really loved Bobby Bright. From the first time I heard him as a new arrival from Adelaide to the Melbourne Rock & Roll scene to when I first saw him live with Laurie at the Myer Music Bowl Go show to actually meeting him at Debs lunches many years later. I loved his singing and he was kind enough to appear at my Book Launch in 2015 singing his great hit ''I Belong With You''.

Always delightful company, sharp as a tack and still a great vocalist to the very end we will never see his like again. What a loss to all the people who loved him! One of the (sadly) few survivors from the magic Go years of the 1960s when everything seemed possible and everything was magical.

Thank you Bob for all the joy you have given me and so many others over your (fortunately) long life. This World is a so much lesser place for your leaving it.

Hasta La Vista Compadre with a hope to meet you again in the Great Beyond. We all belong with you!

DAVID N PEPPERELL

Bob Bright (1945-2025) -A friend's remembrance.

On 3 February this year, Bob Bright celebrated his 80th birthday at Pizza d'Sporto, a cosy Italian restaurant on Koroit Road Williamstown. Bob had booked a table for ten and, much to my surprise and delight, I was among Bob's chosen nine.

It was a wonderful dinner occasion for us all – the wine and conversation flowed easily while Bob entertained us with anecdotes often undercut with his dry humour. A birthday celebration made all the more poignant when Bob sadly and unexpectedly died on 19 July. However, in those eighty years Bob crammed in enough for two lifetimes. Without doubt, Bob will be forever defined as one half of Pop duo Bobby & Laurie but he's better remembered as the artistic all-rounder.

Bob and I had been aware of each within the world of social media for some years but our friendship really began in the autumn of 2023. Earlier that year, Sydney author and musician, Mark Cornwall, had published Proby And Me, a most readable and hilarious take on the life and times of the wildly talented but self-sabotaging P.J. Proby. After doing the rounds of various Sydney booksellers, Mark took his product into Melbourne when he'd secured an inner suburban book launch. However, before leaving Sydney he was desperately seeking a guest speaker who could bring a bit of extra cachet to the Melbourne launch. Bobby & Laurie were Proby's support during his notorious Australian tour of 1965, so why not Bob Bright?

"Bob was a very special guest speaker for the Melbourne launch of Proby And Me," Mark remembered. "Despite a recent major illness, Bob worked that room like nothing I'd ever seen."

Before and after the launch, Bob and I got to speak at length – two music buffs sharing a mutual appreciation of Joe South, Eddie Cochran, Mavis Staples, Leon Russell and Percy Sledge. We also exchanged phone numbers and soon after we were doing dinner together at Pizza d'Sporto where Bob was treated like royalty and deservedly so. That dinner date grew into a monthly ritual, a ritual that was never less than a mighty gab fest interspersed with some fine Italian cuisine and a few fetching wines. Bob was an engaging raconteur but also an excellent listener. After dinner I would drive Bob back to his Newport home and then spend hours in his small studio listening to demos, unreleased tracks and live material. Bob's solo recordings revealed an artist well versed in vintage R&B, burly Country Rock, Jump Blues and Reggae. In between tracks, my host's commentary was continually informative and often amusing.

On other nights we watched several episodes of Homicide, the popular Melbourne cop drama that usually featured Bob playing either a loudmouthed yobbo or a surly thug. "There's another great role I don't remember," Bob remarked with a wry smile as he took in footage of him beating up some unfortunate victim. "It was much the same back then for us minor actors – punch that bloke, run down that laneway, jump over that fence and climb through that window." Bob never had an acting lesson in his life but he possessed natural talent and that's something that can't be taught.

Although Bob's illness had impacted on his physical state, he never complained or adopted a "poor me" attitude – his sense of humour remained intact and his memory was still remarkably sharp. Bob leaves behind a solid and enviable legacy; singer, songwriter, guitarist, actor, radio announcer and voiceover man. Then add landscape artist to the list – a charming watercolour of the Footscray Wharf hung on Bob's kitchen wall. "Who painted that?" I asked one night. "Umm, I did," replied Bob. "Is it any good?"

I'm forever grateful that I was fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time to enjoy the friendship of one of the most entertaining and likeable people I would ever meet. Bob leaves this world with so many wonderful memories and achievements. To paraphrase one of his song titles – it was a great life.

Bob Bright, thank you for being a friend.

MICHAEL MACDONALD

— *INTERVIEW* —

Susan Neuhaus

thelastpostmagazine.com/the-last-post-radio-show-podcast

Greg T Ross: It's my great delight to introduce author, general surgeon, surgical oncologist, Susan Neuhaus AMCSC. Hello Susan, how are you?

Susan Neuhaus: Good morning Greg.

GTR: It's a great pleasure to have you here Susan. We've been going to catch up for a number of years and always something seems to get in the way. However, as the gods would deliver us, so comes the book, The Surgeon of Royaumont. It's a magnificent book and congratulations on writing this.

SN: Thank you very much Greg. It's an absolute pleasure to finally be able to get this book out into the world.

GTR: We're blessed, particularly me, I've had a couple of stories published, no books, but I'm always terribly thrilled to see a book of such consequence and detail that it actually, I would say, drags you into the story because you go willingly. What brought about this book and its construction Susan?

SN: Greg, I think like most books there are many things that have led it to here. Books, I guess, live in your mind in a way and they start and they spiral and threads come together and then the story comes together. But I was very fortunate to have been able to draw on the real experience of an incredible group of Australian women who served as doctors, as surgeons in the First World War and that was really what enabled me to pull this character together, this composite character, as a way of, I hope, doing justice to their real life experiences. Well of course, such is the detail.

GTR: I must tell people that this book goes into amazing detail, sparing us nothing. Of course the details of the operations and the injuries are so intricate...was this a deliberate plot to get people to know what it's like? It's horrific.

SN: I think for me that's the purpose of fiction really, is to be able to put yourself into someone else's shoes, to be able to feel what it was like. And they were in some ways the hardest passages to write because I'm a surgeon, I go to work, I can operate, but trying to put that on the page to describe what that was like.

GTR: It was strikingly visual to me and I thought how brilliant that you're able to construct the atmosphere through words, which is the joy of reading good writing, which you do.

SN: As I say, they were some of the toughest scenes to write, were the surgical scenes. But certainly it was an amazing experience to go through.

GTR: It's an amazing book. It's about, I suppose for those that haven't, for the few that don't know much about the book, it's a story of a young Australian woman, Susan, set on the battlefields of World War One. But tell us about Clara. She's an amazing woman in herself. Was there part of you in Clara?

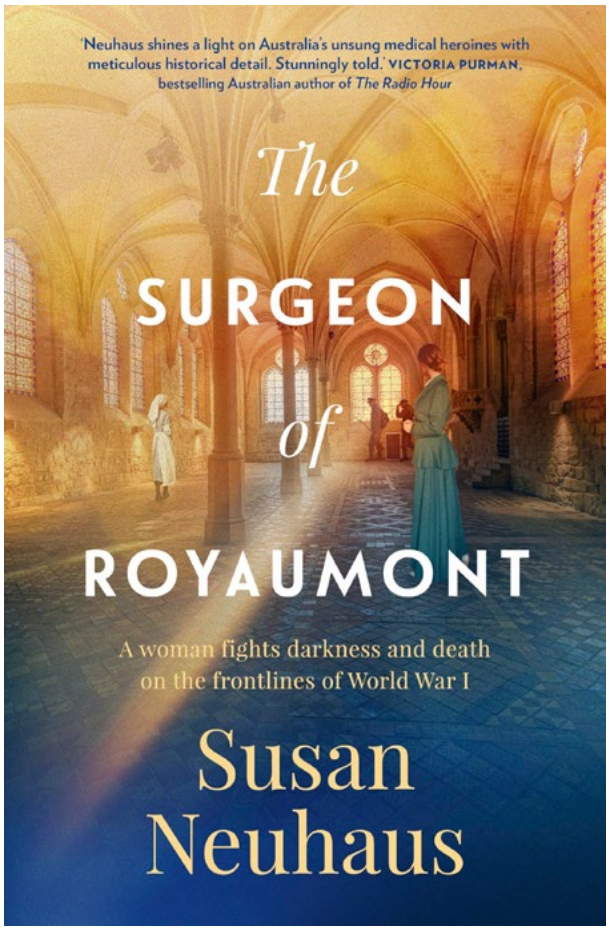
SN: I think people say, don't they, that every book is in part autobiographical. But Clara is not me. I was not on the Western Front. And my experiences have been quite different. But without a doubt, there is some of me woven into her story. Because her story is really one of a young, naive surgeon. At the time, actually, the novel starts, she's not even a surgeon really. She's working in a hospital ward in Sydney. But she wants to go to the war. She wants to go out and do what she sees the men are doing. She's desperate to serve. And of course, because at those times, it just wasn't considered a conventional or done thing for women to serve in the military, she is rejected.

GTR: This is what's striking to me, and I guess we'll talk more about this in a moment, the women's struggle through this. But as you say, she wanted to serve. And her fiancé, Edward, I think it is, he goes off to war. He does. And she feels this, I guess, this conflict. And she's looking at her own purpose and her own desires and everything. And this is part of what drives her, Susan?

SN: Absolutely. She wants to be there. And this group of women, I think, the real women, were very driven by an absolute need to do something useful. And to be fair, they'd had to fight a lot of barriers in order to get through medical school in the first place, in order to be allowed to work in the hospitals. And they saw this as an extension of that. If you go back, it's hard for us to understand what people were thinking around the time of the First World War. But there was a real sense that going away to serve would open up opportunities for them, that they could prove that they were just as good as men, that they would be able to come back and get jobs as surgeons in hospitals. And of course, none of that actually eventuated.

GTR: Yes, one gets that impression through reading the book. You're egging Clara on because you want this to come to a good outcome. But we might talk about the ending of the book, which is a bit of this amazing thing. So Clara wants to become a surgeon. She's rejected. And she leaves for France. Clara leaves for France. And tell us about that, her adventures there.

SN: So like many of this group of about 15 women who managed to go overseas and serve in Europe during the First World War as doctors, as women doctors, Clara joins up with what was called the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service, a group of women who were funded largely by philanthropy and set up hospitals in Britain, in Europe, that were run and staffed, believe it or not, entirely by women. And it's such an interesting time because, of course, whilst Clara, as an Australian, has got the right to vote, the women who were working,



the English women particularly, still didn't have franchise. So a part of their motivation to go and work was also this concept that they could prove that they were worthy of being able to be trusted with the right to vote. And they thought that by rolling up their sleeves and working in the war that they would be gifted that right at war's end. And again, of course, that is not what happened for them.

GTR: The story of Royaumont itself, the Abbey there, is managed entirely by women. And I was knocked out when I heard that. My mother was a nurse and I used to come in contact with people in the surgical arena often. But to think this was managed entirely by women on the Western Front was quite incredible. Now, Clara was lucky, wasn't she? Because she fell under the tutelage of Frances Ivins.

SN: Yes.

GTR: There's a merging here of real life events and real characters with fictional characters that is unique because it brings out something amazing. Particularly Clara's friendship with Frances. Can you tell us about Frances?

SN: So Frances Ivins is a real character. She is an extraordinary woman. I would love to have met her. I suspect she was possibly a very stern character at times.

GTR: She was a gynaecologist and obstetrician, wasn't she?

SN: Yes. So in those days, to get a fellowship in surgery was really quite difficult. But she did manage to get a fellowship from Scotland and she served with the Scottish Women's Hospitals.

Not everyone who served in the Scottish Women's Hospitals was Scottish. That's a bit of a misnomer. In fact, one of the units of the Scottish Women's Hospitals in Serbia was run almost entirely by Australians. But that's another story. But she was just an extraordinary woman and I wanted to create that relationship of the senior mentor and this young, naive surgeon who is a little bit big for her boots, I'd have to say, at the beginning of the story and has a little too much confidence in her own ability to do things and really has to learn the hard way about the realities of surgery, about the realities of war surgery, about the realities of her own limits as both a surgeon and as a human. And this is so incredible too, of course.

GTR: We talk about the importance of mentoring and this comes out in the book too, the brilliance of, and as you say, Clara does really need to be towed in sometimes. She has great enthusiasm for life and everything that it may bring. And Francis, I guess, helps her so much in that. The brutal realities of war start to come through and is this in some ways too an anti-war book as being a book about surgeons because it's a shocking, shocking situation that they find themselves in.

SN: I think any doctor that's worked in war zones or conflict zones or countries emerging from war is inherently anti-war. I mean, it is a part of the human condition that unfortunately has been with us since time immemorial but it's not possible to serve in those environments and not come away having seen both the best and the worst of what people do to each other. And World War I, of course, was absolutely extreme. This was industrial carnage on a scale not seen before. And these women, and I hope it comes through in the book, that these women are dealing with injuries that really no one knew how to deal with at that time. There's a whole new passion of warfare. There's a massive number of amputations and fractures which are difficult, particularly amongst the contaminated fields of France. There's an enormous amount of gangrene and that's where Alessia Dalliel, who again is a real character as a bacteriologist, comes in because this was the day before antibiotics. All they could do was surgery and it's a very difficult time. There's a lot of lessons, a lot of innovation that needs to take place, which we benefit from today but came out of very, very dire circumstances.

GTR: Clara's an amazing character in the book. Her maturation as a character through, as you say, a bit too big for her boots in the beginning perhaps, but finding a mentor with Frances Ivins and waking up to the brutal realities of war. Her journey, what does this tell us about her, the depth of her character because she comes through, doesn't she?

SN: Yes, I think to be fair, Clara's a very flawed character. She has rather a lot of ambition, she has a lot of self-confidence, certainly at the beginning, but she has to learn to navigate so many things, not just surgery but also the relationships in the hospital. She's trying so hard to establish herself as a doctor and she's working amongst nursing staff, also women, with their own hierarchical structures and she has to be able to navigate that. And that's a tough thing for a 27, 28-year-old to do at the best of times. So she has to work through that. She clearly has some relationships with her father, with her fiancé that are playing into all of this. And as she's exposed to more and more of the brutal reality of war, she starts to realise the complexity of some of the decision-making, that it's not often easy or straightforward, that, as we would say in medicine sometimes, what is right for the wound is not right for the patient, that there are times where there is no right answer, where you just have to try and do the least worst that you can do for somebody.

GTR: It's her realisation of that too, I guess, Susan, that I was grappling with the whole thing, because I just wanted things to be okay and everything, and she got all the conflicts, I guess the great adversary was the internal conflicts with Clara too. I said maturation, but I guess there's a whole lot of things there about realisation of who she was as a person.

SN: Absolutely, and I think that's the reality, isn't it, of any difficult life experience, is that the obstacle is not always the obstacle that's in front of you, it's the way that you respond and the way that you deal with that obstacle.

GTR: And then the toll that that takes on the characters too, you write so well about that. I mean, you're a surgeon yourself, you've done some brilliant things yourself. What was it like projecting yourself through your writing into this? Did you live the life of Clara for a while? Did you become part of it?

SN: I think I did for a while. I'm sure that Clara was in my head for a very long time. In fact, this is a little bit of a bizarre story, but the first two months of this year, I was working in French-speaking Africa with Médecins Sans Frontières,

and working there as a surgeon. Most of the workload was, interestingly, either obstetrics or orthopaedics, and I found myself, most people write their characters from their life experience, but I found myself suffering the reverse, which was, here was I in Central Africa, struggling with my French, and thinking to myself, I wonder what Clara would do with this fracture? And then thinking, that's incredibly stupid. She's a fictional character, how could I possibly ask her what she would do? But it's just a sign, I think, of how immersed her character became into my head.

GTR: What would you do, Susan Neuhaus, if you met Clara?

SN: I would love to meet Clara. I'm not sure, though. It's an interesting thing. I certainly would love to meet Frances Ivins. Clara would be very interesting, I suppose, because of my age now, and Clara's age in the book. It would be a little bit like meeting an older version of one of my daughters, I suspect. But it's an interesting question. I haven't really thought about that. No, it would be brilliant.

GTR: I'd like to be there to see it happen, but I tell you what, another thing, perhaps a reflection of Susan Neuhaus herself, these are strong characters in the book, and I think a lot of your characters you've written in your books over your career have been strong characters. Did you find it necessary to create these characters with this strength? I mean, there's foibles and everything else, I guess, as with us all, but they came out to me at least as strong characters. And was that necessary, considering the misogyny of the time and the battle the women had to face recognition? These characters had to be strong.

SN: I think they absolutely had to be strong. I mean, I wonder if I would have had the courage to find my own way to Europe at the outbreak of World War I and serve in the way that these women did. I just, excuse me, I'm not sure that I would have had the wherewithal to do that. So I think they had selected themselves as a group of women. But I was also very lucky that I could draw on their own experiences. So oftentimes in the book, it is actually their voices, not mine, that come through, particularly when, for example, there was a young surgeon, a young woman who worked at Endell Street Military Hospital. And she's got 17 volumes of diary notes in the Melbourne Archive. They're just quite extraordinary. And they record her transition from this young, naive surgeon to someone who becomes much more experienced. And there's a particular passage in her diary notes which I could absolutely resonate with and I think comes out in Clara, which is where she's first working in Endell Street Hospital in London. And she says how horrible she finds war surgery. It's a strange melange of new military etiquette and rules. It's confusing. She doesn't like it. She says, but I suppose I'll get used to it. But I think war surgery is horrible. And that to me just captured what it was in the same way that there are words from Elsie Daliel around what it was like to be a doctor working at Remont during the relentless battle of the Somme with ambulance after ambulance and patient after patient, hundreds of patients for days and weeks on end. I mean, the relentlessness of it.

GTR: It's impossible for us to imagine. My grandfather fought at Gallipoli, my father fought in the Second World War and I had heard stories and that word use, brilliant, descriptive, relentless because it was relentless. There was very little time to appease the conscience or conscious or whatever. It was just a time of complete bombardment of emotions and death and injury. But it's made even more intimate by the fact of your experience as an army officer and surgeon in war zones. What have you found through your time as a surgeon in war zones?

SN: I think one of the reasons why Clara resonates with me as a character or why, the difference between our experiences because I feel so humbled that what these women did in World War I is something I didn't know about when I was serving. When I look back on my own experiences they're just pale in significance compared to what these women did. But I have, without doubt, used some things to inform the story. When I think about Clara staying up all night working her way through anatomy books, I understand that. Vera wrote that in her diaries about staying up and pouring through trying to work things out. She has some beautiful drawings in her diary of trying to put a shoulder blade back together again. And in her handwriting it's got third time fail. And it just hits me that the innovation, the passion, the persistence is quite remarkable. How does that reflect for me? Well I suppose when I was a young 28 year old in South East Asia pouring over text books of tropical medicine all night trying to decipher a rash. But really nothing, absolutely nothing in comparison to their experiences.

GTR: Was it harder for you as a female, do you think? Did you come across any misogyny or any embattled or hardened opinions that were detrimental to your future?

SN: Look, I've spent most of my career working in male dominated environments, be that the Australian Army or the College of Surgeons. But one of the things I find quite fascinating is that I went through pretty much three decades of my career without really realising that these women had opened the doors of opportunity without understanding what they'd done and the barriers they faced were just staggering. These were women who were denied the ability to have a job where even when they'd graduated, Susie O'Reilly who graduated amongst the top of her class was denied the right to actually work within the hospital and that led to a campaign in the newspapers to give her a position. When they tried to serve they were pretty much universally told to go home and knit. There were views that women would be too illogical or hysterical to be able to serve in the military. Nonetheless, they just pushed through those barriers and they demonstrated that there was nothing that women couldn't do.That they could command, that they could run hospitals, that they could be battle surgeons, that they could do all of these things and yet the war ended and in the collective forgetting and the wish to come home these women did not get the careers or the career opportunities that you would have thought would come from their experience and that to me was such a waste.

GTR: My mother for example had been a nurse. I think what I witnessed with my mother was a woman who, when she put her mind to it, could achieve anything also and this was the thing that you would see with your own eyes as a young boy and then I just can't... It's so foreign to me the idea of misogyny or attempted belittlement of women doesn't make any sense. What's the purpose of it I wonder? Is it fear?

SN: I don't know, to be honest but I think we sometimes forget how far women and women's rights have come in the last century and these women are just in many ways missing role models. They did the most exceptional, extraordinary things and it would be wonderful if people knew more of their stories.

GTR: Yeah, well keep it up because you're doing a magnificent job in educating those that need educating and entertaining too. But I guess for women it's all about having the courage and the sacrifice which can be magnified due to the struggles that they face. But it's an amazing book as I said. I was going to ask a question here and it's completely escaped me because I was so wrapped up in what you were saying but Clara is an amazing character. What about women in general I guess helping women too. Is Clara a mentor for some women, do you think?

SN: I hope in some ways it opens up a conversation about the fact that there are many, many narratives out there. The experiences of men of women within World War I it's not a singular experience and we're so much richer when we share all of those stories so we do have I guess very structured mythology around World War I when we look back but people forget that there were women in non-nursing roles that there were Chinese and Indians on the beaches of Gallipoli that we had indigenous soldiers who served and all of those stories by opening up all of those stories we become much richer as a nation.

GTR: Thank you It's been an utmost pleasure. Dr Susan Neuhaus, author, The Surgeon of Royaumont.

SN: Thank you Greg it's been a great pleasure.

KEEP YOUR TAIL UP:

Major Mary Thornton's (Mrs Kent-Hughes) remarkable journey

When Dr. Mary Thornton emblazoned her military tin helmet with a hand-drawn kangaroo and the personal motto "Keep your tail up," she couldn't have known how perfectly those four words would encapsulate not just her wartime experience, but her extraordinary life of service, resilience, and transition.

Denied a commission by her own country's military, Thornton—like many pioneering Australian women doctors before her—took matters into her own hands. She farewelled her husband, entrusted her teenage son to boarding school, and travelled halfway across the world to serve with the British Army. When finally appointed a Lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps, she was cautioned: "I don't know how you will get on, I'm sure. Women in the Corps—the men won't like it."

The men, it turned out, would adapt. Thornton certainly did.

Through the horrors of war—this determined Australian radiologist served with distinction. At Surrey, her first military casualties came from Dunkirk, arriving bootless, with ragged clothing and suffering the effects of prolonged immersion compounding their injuries. Later, navigating Blitz-darkened London streets with a respirator and tin hat became routine.

It was in the Middle East where Thornton – now promoted to Major – faced her greatest challenges. Posted to a tented facility near Basra in the desert, she confronted the unique difficulties of practicing military radiology in extreme conditions. Sand infiltrated everything, coating equipment in gritty khaki dust. The excruciating heat threatened to ruin X-ray films—the emulsion would simply slide off without proper cooling. With remarkable ingenuity, Thornton and a neighbouring Scottish engineer regiment developed a cooling system, similar to an Australian Coolgardie safe, to keep the precious equipment functioning. Possessing the only portable X-ray in the region, she travelled between Indian hospitals using improvised "earthing" methods—running wires to pipes driven into sand, with water poured down just before exposures.

Throughout her service, Thornton experienced the profound isolation of being both an Australian in a British unit and the sole woman officer. "I was a poor lone wolf," she wrote, noting how long English officers took to transition from "period of courteous acquaintance to 'dinkum cobber.'" These separations were most acute in July 1942 when casualties arrived from the western desert—including the legendary "Rats of Tobruk." Among them was Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Anderson DSO, Commanding Officer of the 2/32nd Battalion AIF, whose arm had been amputated. Thornton had been his family physician before the war and had delivered two of his children. Despite initial signs of recovery, she would later receive news of his death from wounds.

Yet through personal hardship—including her husband's death during a brief compassionate leave home—Thornton maintained her resilience and sense of duty. Even when radiation exposure burned three of her fingers and she suffered from "constant weariness," she chose to return to her unit after recovering. When finally repatriated home, standing astern the hospital transport she commented to a fellow Australian soldier that she "could almost smell the gum leaves."

Thornton's post-war transition exemplifies how military experience shaped many women's subsequent civilian contributions. Returning to Australia, she became a visiting specialist in radiology at the Repatriation General Hospital in Heidelberg, Victoria. She also served as President of the Women's Returned Service League in Victoria, advocating for proper recognition of women's wartime service.

After the war, Thornton channelled her experiences into literature, documenting both her personal journey and the broader historical context she had witnessed. In Matilda Waltzes with the Tommies and the fictional The Dust of Ninevah, her astute observations captured the stark contrast between her beloved Australian bush and the ancient landscapes of the Middle East.

Women like Major Mary Thornton didn't merely serve during conflict—their military service transformed Australian society through their determination to contribute despite institutional barriers. Their stories remind us that transitions—whether from peace to war, rejection to acceptance, or military to civilian life—reveal character and forge legacy.

Today, as women serve in all branches of the Australian Defence Force, we would do well to remember those who 'kept their tails up' when doors were closed to them, yet found ways to serve nonetheless. Their stories aren't merely historical footnotes—they are the foundation upon which contemporary opportunities were built.

AUSTRALIAN WOMAN RADIOLOGIST.

Service in British Army.

DR. MARY THORNTON.

MELBOURNE, Friday.

A Melbourne woman, Dr. Mary Thornton, a Collins Street radiologist, has already left to accept a position as radiologist in the British Army.

During the last war she did V.A.D. work in Melbourne before beginning her medical course, from which she graduated in 1928.

In private life Dr. Thornton is the wife of Dr. Kent Hughes, and she has a 13-year-old son, a pupil at Melbourne Grammar School.

Before offering her services to the British Army she was assistant radiologist at the Austin Hospital, and clinical assistant at St. Vincent's Hospital.

Gaining the fellowship diploma of the faculty of radiology in London in 1938, Dr. Thornton was the first woman outside England to receive the honour, which is the highest qualifications of its kind in the Empire. She was educated at Ormiston Girls' School, Melbourne.

Dr. Thornton will hold the rank of lieutenant in the R.A.M.C., women members of which are eligible for promotion to higher ranks on the same footing and pay as men.

DR. SUSAN J. NEUHAUS

Dr. Susan J. Neuhaus is the author of "Not For Glory: A century of service by medical women to the Australian Army and its allies" and "The Surgeon of Royaumont." A former Colonel in the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps, she continues to document the contributions of Australian women in military medicine.

Women Veterans Magazine, created by Anna Maria Lang

At Women Veterans Magazine, we believe that every woman veteran has the potential to thrive in their life, achieve her dreams, and embrace her fullest potential. Whether navigating their career, transition from military service, exploring new career opportunities, or striving for personal growth, we are here to support you on your journey. Through personal development programs, we empower women veterans to unlock their strengths, overcome challenges, and step into their future with confidence and purpose.

UNITY
is all about strength in numbers, coming together as one to create a collective force that uplifts, empowers, and supports one another. It's the state of forming a complete and harmonious whole. As women veterans, we understand that while our individual journeys may differ, our shared experiences forge a bond that unites us. By embracing unity, we build a community that stands together, rises together, and thrives together.

INTEGRITY
involves standing firm in the truth and following a strong moral compass. It serves as the foundation for trust, honesty, and respect—both for ourselves and for others. At Women Veterans United, we are dedicated to being transparent, authentic, and ethical in all our actions. We empower women veterans to live with integrity, make decisions based on strong values, and remain true to their personal and collective goals.

SERVICE
lies at the core of everything we do. As veterans, we've already served our country, and now we continue supporting one another. Whether through mentorship, providing resources, or lending a listening ear, service is our way of giving back. We believe in assisting those who have walked similar paths, offering support to heal, grow, and succeed.

PURPOSE
is the driving force behind every decision, action, and goal we establish. It involves having a clear sense of resolve and determination, understanding that each step forward contributes to something greater than ourselves. At Women Veterans Magazine, we empower every woman veteran to discover her purpose, whether through personal growth, career advancement, or contributing to the well-being of others.

Our Vision

Our vision is to create a world where every woman veteran has the support, knowledge, and opportunity to achieve her goals and live a fulfilling life. We believe that through personal development, women veterans can transform challenges into opportunities, find healing, build resilience, and emerge as leaders in their communities and beyond.

Our Mission

At Women Veterans Magazine, our mission is to empower women veterans to take charge of their personal growth and success. We provide a range of online tools, resources, and support to assist you in building a fulfilling life during and after service. Whether you're pursuing further education, starting a new career, or focusing on your mental and emotional well-being, we are dedicated to supporting you at every step. Our online programs aim to inspire confidence, encourage self-discovery, and promote lifelong growth.

womenveteransmagazine.au

Tara Belton

thelastpostmagazine.com/the-last-post-radio-show-podcast

Greg T Ross: Tara Belton, Chief Executive Officer of RSL-SANT. : Good afternoon, Tara. How are you?

Tara Belton: How are you? I'm good, Greg . Good to see you.

GTR: Thanks, Tara. It's a pleasure meeting you. We've heard so much about you and it's, I guess, a sign maybe, Tara, correct me if I'm wrong, of the RSL embracing a new generation?

TB: Well, possibly, given I'm middle-aged and female, perhaps that is the case. And I do need to just correct you, we also have Broken Hill on the end of the operations that we look after. And because that's my hometown, I can't miss it out.

GTR: Bless listeners in Broken Hill because, of course, they'll all be listening to Tara speak and that's a wonderful thing. From Broken Hill, what is your history, Tara, with returned service people? Did you serve?

TB: No, I didn't serve. To be completely honest, I didn't know what the RSL even did. I know growing up, we would often attend the service in Broken Hill and we went there as children, again, not knowing really too much about why, it's just what you did.

Every year, we all came together and we've kind of kept that tradition going with our own children as they've grown as well. We took them never really knowing what the RSL ever did. And it wasn't until, I think it was start of 22, maybe end of January of 22, that I saw a position advertised for a finance manager role.

What really sparked my interest was that it had Broken Hill in the title. And by then, I was already living here in Adelaide and I had to apply for it just because I felt it was my connection to home. And then that was the start of some great things for me and the RSL.

GTR: How wonderful to hear that, Tara. Of course, that connection to home always draws you. And the fact that there was recognition of Broken Hill must have been a marvellous thing for you at the time.

How important is it that the RSL, and of course, in this instance, RSL SA, NT and Broken Hill, moves with the times and embraces the newness of each, I guess, each year? Things are constantly changing.

TB: Very important in a high level summary. Extremely important, in so many different ways. We don't forget our foundations and our roots.

The research that I've done to be able to do the role I'm doing now, I needed to learn a lot about the RSL. And I was fortunate enough to find a set of

minutes in my office when I first started here from our very official first ever opening of 1915. And I found a set of minutes that talked to why we came to life to begin with.

And it really was around the repatriation of veterans and having a space for them and their families to go, when they came home. So it's been quite an important focus of mine stepping into this role in the last... I've been in this role now just over a year, but to make sure that there isn't anyone like me in the position where they're saying, what does the RSL do? I want everybody to know what the RSL does and that we are moving with the times. And we do know what the services are and we know what our current veterans need.

GTR: Very good to hear you articulate that so well, Tara, because I think, well, I don't think, I know very well, when the magazine, The Last Post first started back in 2011, it was really a follow on from what my father, who was a World War II veteran, had done with a newsletter called by the same name. But it was about educating those within the RSL. But of course, the times now mean that we're also educating people that are not necessarily in the RSL. So that becomes a very strong organisation.

TB: Absolutely. And I think that does need to happen as well so that our children, our children's children, we don't forget why we were here to begin with. Even outside of the RSL, the education piece around service can never go missing.

GTR: Yes, it must always be relevant. Very good to hear that, Tara, reflecting the magazine's view and my view personally too, is that it is an educational programme and of course, such an important part of our history that it should be front and centre.

TB: Yeah, exactly right.

GTR: Without wanting to carry on too much, you have, I've heard, some good things about the way you're doing things now, Tara. How important was it to, well, not only, I guess, acknowledge the past, but do start doing things the Tara Bolten way?

TB: I think that was one of my biggest challenges. When I came into the role here in the RSL, I really wanted to understand what, not only how we got to where we are, but what do we intend to do going forward? How can we make sure that we continue the purpose as to why we're here? What are we doing as a state RSL to make sure we keep achieving those objects? And the only way that I could really understand that was to jump in myself. I started doing advocacy training. I would do that after hours and then I would sit in with advocates. I would watch veterans come in. My ear was to the ground. I would listen to everything I could.

And with that, I think it gave me a sense of purpose here myself, because that was something that I really needed in order to make my role enjoyable. I needed purpose. And I found that by listening to the stories of others and thinking, now, in a league like this, we have a lot of assets at our disposal. And we should be using that in the right ways. And I think I was able to really learn that early on and then put that into practise with some of the programmes we've since released.

GTR: And there's a lot to unpack there too, of course, Tara. That's the magnitude of the job ahead of you and something you've been doing so well for the last year. But when you say, of course, listening to veterans and listening to those in the organisation, I suppose that's of utmost importance. Likewise here, I didn't serve, but I have learnt and met from a lot of wonderful people through the journey. And I guess it's a bit of a journey for you too.

TB: Absolutely. Absolutely. And really the knowledge, the knowledge is what drives me. So anyone that can share anything with me, my doors are open all the time so I can keep learning this. Because again, I've got this at my fingertips to help veterans. The only way I can do that is by really knowing what the veterans need.

GTR: I'll tell you what, that's right. And it's the same, I guess, magnified around the country at schools, etc. I suppose the educational process to understand, well, I guess it's our history, a very important part of our history. And you and I continue to learn. One of the brilliant things about this, I guess, is learning day to day. And with veterans, how much of a learning curve for you was it to actually put your ear to the ground and listen to these people talk?

TB: Well, it's still going, I don't think it'll ever end. Do you know, I'll hear a story, and people have heard me say this, I'll hear a story from a veteran and I think I'm in a very unique position where they feel they can open up to me because they need support. So they'll open up to me and I hear a story and think, that is the worst story I've heard. And then I'll hear another and I'll think, no, that's just beaten, the last one. And then I'll hear the best story I've ever heard. And then I'll hear another. So the veterans, they really, because they are so raw and so honest and genuine, you know, the stories are really what help us be able to help them. It's humbling to be in the role and I really love what I do. I feel very lucky.

GTR: It's such an important word, humbling, and something, I guess, that a lot of people would appreciate with your attitude, because I think one of the things that has struck those that have dealt with you, Tara, this is, you're all for, I mean, it's not about yourself. It's about helping those that can benefit from the RSL in that it's about helping those within the RSL in those domains, RSL SANT and Broken Hill. So a lot of people are pleased that you've come on board. And I guess in the past, there has been a passing parade of different people at the helm, but what makes you different?

TB: I'm not sure what makes me different. I can just tell you what I'm doing that may be different. And I think what I'm doing is what veterans are asking of me to do. You know, if I have veterans that will come in and need me to speak to DVA because, you know, something has happened, I'll go straight to DVA. I'm not afraid to make a noise if it means that people are going to get the supports and services they need. So, I think because I am in tune with really understanding, that's helped me shape the programmes we've got. Our most recent programme being our wellbeing service.

GTR: That's right. Tell us a bit about that.

TB: It's hard to describe it because it was in development for 12 months. We launched it officially in February of this year. What the programme or service does is it's sort of like a life wraparound, if you like. It's sort of like a big hug. Anything that the veteran needs, that's what the service is there to do. So typically when it comes to compensation, for example, a veteran would put in claims with DVA. There's a waiting period. DVA needs to do all the great things they do. That could take 12 months, could take two years. But in that time, who's looking after them and who's providing the supports whilst that's happening? Yeah, that's a drawn out process. So the reach out service will jump in and say, you know what, we're here. How about we pick you up? We're going to take you for a coffee. You know, are you financially struggling? We're going to look at that as well. Do you need some new sense of purpose? The reach out programme is going to give you that. You know, we've got a lot of great things that the reach out service provides because we can't have a veteran come in, submit a claim and then sit like a waiting duck, waiting for years to hear whether their claims have been determined or not.

GTR: Obviously the plan of this is to make sure that these veterans are okay on the journey too, because it can be, and we know that the DVA, it can be a drawn out process and there can be a lot of waiting and guessing, I guess, on behalf of the veterans. But the wellness programme is there to make sure that they're okay.

TB: That's exactly right. And what we've also found just in the last few months where we've really, really put it to the ground, we've helped 941 veterans in two months. And when I say helped, that can be in so many different ways, because I'm pretty lucky I haven't got any red tape around me. So I don't have any, you know, government restrictions. We haven't found out what a no looks like yet. So we haven't said no to any request for any supports, whether it's financial supports or similar. So we've been quite lucky that we haven't hit the no. I'm waiting to find out what that no is. So then we know what the boundaries are. But right now, we're not sure.

GTR: All right. So in other words, all of your requests have been approved?

TB: Absolutely have. And the other point to remember at the RSL here in our state, we have just short of 4,000 service members. There are 48,000 known service members in South Australia. 48,000? So there's a lot of veterans out there that the RSL doesn't know about, and the reach out service is there to support them as well, because the definition of a veteran is one day of service, right? So if you've had one day of service, and you need anything, the RSL doesn't need you to be a member, the RSL is still going to support you.

GTR: Oh, is that right?

TB: Yes. So for those veterans out there that may not be members, fear not, because RSL will still reach out. The objects of our league are to look after any veteran. So I know that there's often talk about membership numbers declining, but the reality is that the service level is increasing longer or faster than we can even keep up with.

GTR: This must give you a feeling of, I guess, satisfaction to the degree where you are reaching out. And look, even I wasn't aware that there was 48,000 in South Australia with a 4,000 membership. So there's a lot of people to reach out to.... there's a lot of people out there, Tara, that, well, not only potential members, obviously, but potential there for help for these people.

TB: Absolutely. And sometimes, it's just as simple as we may have a veteran that's never had to put their hand up for any support from DVA, didn't even know that that existed, but is alone and isolated. So in return, they'll come to the reach out service, we'll link them up with a volunteer that matches their service, that can talk their language, that can go and have a coffee with them. And then while they're having a coffee, you know, it's just a friendly, informal coffee, but our volunteers are trained to look around the house. Is the house cold? Does it look as though we need to look at heating? Do we need to help them because we put our coffee cup in the sink? And the weeds are really high outside. Do we need to bring a landscaper in just to sort that out? All of this outside of DVA entitlements because veterans are entitled to be supported.

GTR: I wasn't even aware of that. I mean, this is a learning programme for me too. I mean, it's an amazing, so you have volunteers that will go around to visit veterans.

TB: Yep, we call them wellbeing support officers.

GTR: And so that must be a heartwarming experience for a veteran actually to know that somebody cares.

TB: Absolutely. The programme matches the volunteer to the veteran as well, because in my experience over the last few years in helping to develop this programme, there are situations where you wouldn't want to put a certain type of volunteer with that veteran, especially if the veteran, you know, was part of one particular service and doesn't want to talk about another, then we wouldn't put those two together. So we make sure we match them so well that it's the benefit of the veteran.

GTR: Right. Now I've heard, correct me if I'm wrong, Tara Belton, but I have heard that you're an early starter.

TB: I do have a lot of long days. I don't see my family as much as they would like me to see, but that's fine. That's part of the job and I love what I do. And that must take a degree of enthusiasm.

GTR: It's important to be aware of every cent that's being spent and where that's going. How important is that role, the monetary role, does it limit the RSL in the state or not?

TB: Well, I'm quite, quite blessed in that I've originated from the finance role. So I know the finance and I can hand on heart say that anybody that gave us a donation, I could tell them exactly what we spent that money on. And that's something I'm really proud of, because when I first got here, I couldn't work that out myself. I found that very difficult to determine where things... ...what it was spent on. But I've been able to put systems in that I can read, obviously. So that when I go to our board, I say, hey, we've spent 40 grand in two months, and this is exactly what we've spent it on.

GTR: So you give a breakdown of where that money's gone?

TB: That's right. And where this service, this reach out service is actually helping our sub-branches, sub-branches implement it, and it becomes a community initiative, because their communities want to donate and say, here, here's $500 for you to spend on your veterans. Let me know when you've spent it or what you've spent it on. And it's becoming just a game-changing community.

GTR: How brilliant to hear that. And how good to hear the enthusiasm which is being embraced here in South Australia, NT and Broken Hill. The sub-branches, how important are they to the continuing role of the RSL in the state?

TB: Oh, very, very much. They're very much important. I mean, they're the reason we exist. So without our sub-branches, you don't need a state branch. Without state branches, you don't need national. So because we're federated, we all need each other. Now, without sub-branches, there's 4,000 members right now that would be left in limbo. They all visit their sub-branches. They love their sub-branches. But keeping in mind, like I said before, there's 48,000 veterans in South Australia. So 4,000 being looked after in our sub-branches, but we're looking after the rest as well.

GTR: And have you had the chance to go and visit any sub-branches?

TB: Yeah, it's part of my highlight. I love going to the sub-branches. I absolutely do. You'll find that my weekends, I'm spent at either a lunch or a dinner. Unfortunately, I can't say no because I love it so much. So yeah, I see them often and I've made some great friendships as well.

GTR: Apparently, according to a few people that I know from the sub-branches around here in South Australia, you're a most welcome face when you appear. And Keith was telling me, Keith Harrison, who's been with RSL SA NT Broken Hill for a long time.

We've had a long friendship. He was telling me about how impressed people are with the energy that you have. So it's an important thing, I guess, yeah, to know that the sub-branches appreciate your role. It gives you extra energy to go on each day.

TB: Yeah, it does. Like I said, there's a lot of hours that go into the role and perhaps a lot of people don't realise that component of it, but I do it for them. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here.

GTR: So how important is it, Tara Belton, to attract new members and, I guess, a new generation of veterans that have come from the Afghan Middle East conflicts?

TB: Yeah, so great a question. It is really important to us to attract the younger veterans to come on board because, you know, just like when we started back in 1915, 1916, we started because of a particular war and then each war after that, that's what we were known for. Then we seem to have had a gap and now we've got our younger veterans are coming back to us and they want to learn from the older veterans. They want to hear the stories and for us to be sustainable into the future, to keep offering the services and provisions we do to veterans, we need those veterans to continue to support the RSL. I think what I've noticed the most probably the last two or definitely the last year is that the RSL has become an open door all around the country. So I think all of our states are starting to encourage veterans to come in, tell us your situation, let us help you, let us learn from you and I think that's something that's really reinvigorating for us.

GTR: Well, how good to hear that because, of course, it reflects my experience too, Tara, with the RSL. I mean, when I started the magazine in 2011, it was a whole different ball game but through RSL Australia and the different states now, of course, there is more awareness of the need to communicate to the veteran community, particularly the younger ones that are coming up too. How much of a challenge is that for you? Is

it something that is going to be easy or?

TB: Do you know, I thought it was a challenge. I actually thought it would be quite difficult because I am aware of the, you know, it's the old boys club, you know, that's what I'd constantly had heard. So I always thought, how am I going to be able to sit in this role knowing that that's the, that's, you know, the reputation that we have. But the reality is that that's not what the majority think at all. The small minority that say that, they aren't part of the RSL and aren't proactively doing the right things. But we don't seem to have that reputation anymore. With the younger veterans, the most exciting things that have happened for me in this last year, I've been invited out onto Edinburgh, I've sponsored sporting events there, I was at the reformation squadron parade for the night a few weeks ago, RSL was invited there. So that tells me that we are doing the right things. DVA send them to us whenever they need some reach out support. So those little things are compliments to us that we are doing the right things for all ages.

GTR: Yeah, look, that's a pretty comprehensive viewpoint in regards to that because like you Tara, I had heard stories of the old boys club.

TB: But it's not what I've found in my time with the RSL. I haven't either, to be honest, I walk into the sub branches and that's the first thing I do is I look around at the membership base and they are so varied. It's quite incredible. So lots of families and I love the generational cohort. You've got grandma, mom and dad, children and then their little children. I think it was Henley and Grange RSL that I was at recently where I actually saw grandma, daughter and then baby bouncing on the lap. This is exactly what it's about.

GTR: Oh, well, the passion is obvious with you and the job that you've embraced here and you're getting a lot of support and a lot of enthusiasm for the areas that are important to you. What about, I guess, an educational thing? We touched on that before with the education is so important for the history of Australia and the RSL. We did have a lot to do with schools, I think, in the past. And my thoughts were that this should be a subject that, yeah, you ever thought of going and speaking to schools?

TB: I love that you're raising the schools part. It's actually something I get asked a lot, again, because there hasn't been a recent conflict. So I get asked a lot, you know, what's happening with the Anzac Day March? The way that I've looked at this of late, the Anzac Day March, the spectators on the side are increasing in numbers. The unfortunate part is the marches are decreasing as they get older. So our Vietnam, our World War One, obviously, World War Two, they're all ageing. What happened in my first week of being CEO, I had two different examples of real estate agents or removalists coming in with jars and they had deceased estate medals. And they said, here's some medals. We don't know what to do with them. We've just taken them out of the house we're cleaning and figured we'd bring them to the RSL. And I looked at them and I asked one of my colleagues here, what do we typically do with this? This is not the first time we've received medals, right? And they say, oh, it just goes downstairs into the archives.

And then, I thought about it. We run the biggest Anzac Day March in the country. RSL led and operated Anzac Day March. Why the heck are we not allowing a school student to wear the medals? Get the school students to do a research piece. Every year, every year, a new school student will wear the medals of the spirit of someone that's fallen. And that is how we keep the spirit alive. So I took that to the board. The board absolutely loved it. And the Anzac Committee will start to work on that as soon as I take to them. And hopefully we can get it in place in 2026.

GTR: Wow. Well, OK, you've heard it first here. This is amazing stuff.

TB: And it's something that I've been pushing for in my limited ways.

GTR: But of course, you're in a position to actually do something for it because it is important. And the schooling thing is so exciting. So they can embrace the identity and they will know the story of this veteran.

TB: Absolutely. And then after the march, when we have our Anzac on Torrens event here, the way I see these big plans in my head. So these kids will turn up here and then somebody will walk up to them and say, so who are you wearing the medals of? And they will know and they will know exactly who they're talking about, why they wore them, what they did in their time. And they'd be very proud to be able to say that story. And I think that that's a beautiful way to keep our children understanding what we're here for.

GTR: Geez, I tell you what, that is such a brilliant idea. And of course, it enriches those that are involved. The children will carry those memories for the rest of their lives.

TB: That's right. The parents get to be part of that as well. Watch them march. Imagine how proud as a parent you would feel watching your child march for somebody that's not able to do it anymore. I think that's fantastic. I think that's absolutely fantastic.

GTR: Tara, I do know that there's, for instance, I think in Albany in WA, the ANZAC Centre there allows you to take on the identity of a soldier, etc., which is great. So this though would be a statewide thing, I guess, which would make it a very big event. Certainly would be the biggest event of its type in the country in that regard, maybe.

TB: Well, from what I've heard, our ANZAC Day march, I mean, I'm sure you've been to one. I'm probably biased, but I think it's the best thing I've ever seen. This year alone, I got to be on the dais. So usually I don't get to experience the march. I'm here setting up for an event. But because I was able to actually be part of it, it is heartwarming. It makes you cry. It makes you laugh. It's just an incredible march. But to know that those people right now that are marching past me are still going to be in that march, I don't know, there's something pretty exhilarating about that, knowing that even though they're not there, they're there.

GTR: So the spirit lives on perpetually, eternally, through the actions, such actions that you've described, and your wish to make sure that schools become a part of the ANZAC legend and tradition by learning about individual soldiers and their stories. That's absolutely brilliant. So what's the future hold, Tara hope to achieve at the end of your tenure?

TB: So the reach out service, I've said this from the start, I think it should be a nationally available service. And because it's a community initiative. So it's not just the RSL being able to fluff its feathers and say, look at us. We don't really care about taking any of that credit. We just want veterans looked after. So I think rolling this service out nationally, I've already got a state that has been speaking with me in the last couple of days, they're going to roll out the reach out service.

And that's really, that's my first goal is to get that out, because then I know we're touching every veteran in the right way. Yeah. And it doesn't matter whether you're a lover of the RSL or not, you can silently come to the RSL and still get that support that you're entitled to by being a veteran.

GTR: Geez, that's absolutely fantastic. So it is purely a South Australian initiative, the reach out.

TB: It sure is. And we want to spread this throughout Australia. So that once again, knowing that all veterans can be looked after.

GTR: Under the stewardship and leadership of Tara Belton. I'm sure that RSL, SANT and Broken Hill is in excellent hands at the moment.

TB: And I've just got this feeling, if I can say so, of utmost enthusiasm, backed with a hard edged reality that things have to be done correctly.

GTR: But you have lots of plans, Tara.

TB: I do. Yes, I do. I've just got to bring them to life.

GTR: Thank you very much Tara, for being on the Last Post Radio Show. We appreciate your time very much and we wish you and RSL, SANT and Broken Hill all the best for a productive and wonderful future.

GTR: Thank you so much. And thanks for all you do.

Leading with Purpose: Robert Miller Joins Veteran Housing Australia

As Australia's housing crisis reaches breaking point, specialist housing providers are racing to find real solutions. Veteran Housing Australia (VHA) is stepping up — with a renewed focus under new CEO Robert Miller to deliver on its mission: ending veteran homelessness. As the lead agency addressing veteran homelessness, VHA is committed to a "housing first" model — providing housing to those in most need first, no questions asked.

Veteran Housing Australia is about more than bricks and mortar — it's about giving veterans and their families a foundation to rebuild their lives. What does this mission mean to you personally?

Once upon a time I wore stripes on my shoulder, and responsibility for and to my soldiers came with that. The last time my camo shirt came off in 2014 I felt lost for quite some time, for 16 years the warrior ethos was part of how I defined myself. Then it was gone. Some time later I came across this:

We are soldiers,
We guard Honor and Wage War
In between we stand still like a stone
Until our time comes again

I'm well past being able to call myself a warfighter, but now I can bring to bear my business skills at VHA and make a difference ….. my time has come again.

As you step into this role, what are your key priorities for your first 12 months as CEO?

There are an estimated 6,000 Homeless veterans in Australia. With out current resources we can barely assist 2%. I'll be pushing VHA to do whatever we need to continue to grow our capacity to address this imbalance. It's in the company's purpose "To end veteran homelessness".

Veteran Housing Australia
Stability. Connection. Hope.

What message would you like to share with veterans, their families, and our supporters as you begin this new chapter with Veteran Housing Australia?

We need to make every effort to end Veteran Homelessness. If anyone has anything to offer up in this fight, please reach out. It could be a fundraising effort, networking opportunity, rooms, volunteer hands etc.

To read the full Q&A visit:
veteranhousing.org.au/getting-to-know-robert-miller-veteran-housing-australias-new-ceo

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Ian Smith

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Aboriginal Veterans SA

Greg T Ross: Ian Smith, co-chair of the Aboriginal Veterans SA. Hello, Ian, and thanks for joining us.

Ian Smith: G'day, Greg. It's great to be on the show.

GTR: Always good to have you on, Ian. It's been a while since we caught up in person, but always good for a chat and to let people know about the important work you're doing. What's been happening there at Aboriginal Veterans SA?

IS: Well, actually, it was interesting that recently, I went down with Uncle Frank Lampard, who's my co-chair, and a couple of other guys that you know, like Bill Denny, down to Raukkan and to the Aboriginal community down on the top end of the Coorong, because we're doing a couple of projects down there. The first one is we're assisting the community with getting their... they have a beautiful memorial there, and we're updating it with the names of all the World War II veterans from the community and Ngatangere people who served in the Second World War. And also, at the moment, we're having discussions with family and with the community about whether they would like a couple of World War I veterans who are buried in an unmarked grave at West Terrace Cemetery and return them to country to the Rauk cemetery.

GTR: What a job you've got, and what an obliging thing to be doing too. And of course, Uncle Frank know him well, and Bill Denny too. So hats off to you for joining with the tremendous trio. What's the reaction been like from the local Aboriginal community?

IS: Look, it's been fantastic. We've got a fantastic relationship. In fact, Uncle Frank was born at the hospital at Rauk. When I say hospital, it's basically a building about the same size as a large room, but that was where he was born. And so, obviously, he's got very strong Ngatangere as well as Kaurna Links himself and a National Serviceman from the 1960s. And his brother was a platoon medic in VI RAR in Vietnam. .

GTR: There's a lot of history there, obviously. And unfortunately, we'll just say, no, we'll say fortunately, you're in the mode of fixing that up with Uncle Frank and Bill Denny as well. But how important is it to get this message out about our Indigenous veterans?

IS: Well, I think it's very important. One of the things that often people say to me is, oh, when I was serving, we treated everyone the same. And I have to say, to a large extent, that's true, of course. There's always some people that don't always treat everyone the same, regardless of the colour of their skin. But when you, basically, I said to someone the other day, when you're relying on someone to provide covering fire, you're not worried about what colour their skin is. And that's very true. But I think what is important to recognise is that before and after their service, Aboriginal veterans were not treated the same. And one of the

ways in which they were not treated the same as other veterans was that, in many cases, no one paid very much attention at all to their graves when they came back and died. And you might remember, nearly eight years ago, Aboriginal Veterans SA were involved in returning the remains of a veteran called Miller Mack, who was a World War One veteran from the West Terrace Cemetery back to Ralkin, which was quite an amazing event. And I actually visited Miller's grave today at the Ralkin Cemetery. And it's a nice reminder that these things are important. He was war dead, Miller. He was buried outside the AIF Cemetery at West Terrace and died of disease, basically, that he picked up when he was on the Western Front, along with a lot of other guys. And we arranged for him to go back to his country down at Ralkin.

GTR: I think, from memory, you and I may have had a coffee or something up at Blackwood talking about something similar to this. It may have been about that too, Ian. It remains a very important part of what you're doing and continuing to do. The racial impartiality that exists often during warfare in times of stress when your life depends on the help of your comrades. Why does that seemingly disappear upon return to civilian life?

IS: Well, I don't know that it necessarily disappears with the veterans themselves. I think it's more about the wider community. Often Aboriginal people were sent back to the places that they had enlisted from. Many times that was missions or similar places, reserves on the edges of towns. And they were still under the government in most cases. So they were not being treated the same as everyone else when they got back. In fact, the RSL was one of the primary movers to try to get the vote for Aboriginal veterans after the Second World War, and they were successful. I know that many veterans would have liked to have been able to have Aboriginal veterans who are their mates, who they'd served alongside, come with them, say, for example, to the pub. But of course, it's Australia at least, and I'm sure there were similar rules in other states. Aboriginal people were not allowed to be in possession of alcohol, let alone be on licenced premises or drink themselves for the whole period between the two wars. So World War I veterans were all affected by that and unable to go to reunions with their mates at a pub after the ANZAC march because they were not allowed in there because they were Aboriginal people.

GTR: Well, I suppose it's a good thing that I remain flabbergasted by that, of course, because I have known about that for some time. But every time I hear that repeated, there is something inside of me, and I guess you and a lot of other people that find that so hard to believe. It's an incredible thing. I didn't go to Vietnam myself, obviously, but did have some friends. I think Alan Aldenhoven was one of them who was an Aboriginal from South Australia. So I know that many friends were made. Alan made many friends during his time in service and came to be known as a reliable, good human being. And the RSL's role in getting that vote for Aboriginal veterans too is something to be applauded. What does the future look like, Ian? I guess with the Ralkin Memorial, is that just the start of things? What other things are happening?

IS: So at the moment, all of the World War I soldiers from Ralkin have a plaque on that memorial. So we'll add the World War II names. There are quite a few Korea, Vietnam confrontation and Malayan emergency names that need to go on there as well. So it'll be the next step in the process once we've done the World War II names. And as part of this, they're going to do a bit of a refurbishment of the whole memorial wall where the plaques are located, where the flagpoles are at Ralkin. And we're hoping that we'll be able to get together with the community and have a bit of an event to unveil the new plaques and to celebrate the refurbishment of the memorial. They pretty much have an Anzac Day service every year at Ralkin within the community and sometimes a service in the little chapel, which is on the $50 bill. So those of you who are familiar with the $50 bill will know that the little chapel there is actually the Ralkin Chapel that's shown on that note. And it's got memorial lead light windows, stained glass windows at the back of the chapel for the soldiers from Ralkin who died in the First World War.

GTR: So how have you found yourself, Ian? I mean, you've been involved in this sort of thing now for a while too. I mean, I follow that regularly and see the work you're doing, but how have you found that for yourself? Is it a satisfying role? Have you come across many instances where you're being blocked or what's happening?

IS: I have to say that we've been constantly surprised with the amount of support from not only widely across the veteran community, but within the wider community as well. And how, because of the way that we approach it in that I'm not a First Nations person, but Uncle Frank is, so we co-chair the organisation so that it's a bit of a reconciliation in action. And I mean, as people talk about reconciliation and for me, it's all about working together on matters of mutual interest. And this is the way we do it, by going and finding the unmarked graves of Aboriginal veterans. And when we involve the local community, we often find that we get a class from a local school comes and we go and talk to them about Aboriginal service. And we have a lot of members of the local community that come along to the services when we mark the graves. But you're right, it's been 10 years as co-chair with Uncle Frank. And I've been researching Aboriginal service as it regards South Australia, really, for probably more than a dozen years now. What led you down this track, Ian Smith, what led you to this particular interest in the service history of our Indigenous Aboriginal veterans? Well, it almost goes back to what I said at the beginning, and that is, I served with a whole bunch of Aboriginal and a couple of Torres Strait Islander soldiers when I was in the army. And I always just wondered, okay, why, given the history and that their families would have told them about the way they were treated by the government and by society in general, to be fair, for a long time, and they had reason to probably not be all that happy about the government and all the rest of it. Why did they enlist? And they often would say to me all the things you would expect, oh, it's a good job, he gets paid well, all the things that you would expect anyone to say. Often they would say, well, my granddad served, and he got over all those obstacles in order to serve. And I wanted to understand that better. And I wanted to understand the real history behind all of that, and exactly what obstacles that they faced. And that's what started me off on the researching quest, if you like. And now we've got nearly, I'm just about to finish off the second edition of the book that I published three years ago about Aboriginal veterans from SA, which you kindly featured in the last Post magazine. And I'm nearly at 500 names since the Boer War. So that's a lot of people. And it's taken a lot of research. But it's a great, I enjoy it a great deal. And I particularly love working with Uncle Frank. So it's been a very rewarding experience.

GTR: Yes, he's actually, Uncle Frank... I did have an Uncle Frank myself, he's passed. And Uncle Frank Lampard reminds me of my own Uncle Frank.

IS: Does he really?

GTR: Yeah, he's a beautiful man, Uncle Frank, isn't he? How important is that family history for the Aboriginal families that have been involved in service?

IS: It can be really important. The other day, Uncle Frank and I went to Ngutu College, which is in Woodville here in Adelaide. And there's about half of the class that we were talking to were Aboriginal students. And, you know, we were talking about their family members. And they were proud, you know, you could almost see them growing in each because we were talking about their family members who had served in several cases within the class. And that was, and that's really powerful. It allows them to

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look at something which is, if you like, quintessentially Australian, you know, the spirit of ANZAC, and consider themselves part of it. And to be proud of the service and the courage of their ancestors as servicemen and women. And, you know, that you can't discount how powerful that can be for young people.

GTR: Yes, it gives them a sense of pride. I imagine we all know our family history in service, my own father, of course, and your family too. But it must give the Aboriginal and Indigenous Torres Strait Islanders as well, some degree of great pride. And if we can be of service in that area, that's a fantastic thing. The working together that you spoke about, Ian, such an important factor in any results that are going to be positive. Do you think this can be reflected as we stretch out as a wider education? I suppose we'll talk about education in a moment, but working together, how important is that for the general community in all these ways?

IS: Look, I think it's really important. I think that the facts of the past, whilst they might not have been caused by anyone who's alive today, because, you know, we weren't the politicians that put those things in place around the treatment of Aboriginal people. But acknowledging that it happened is important. And knowing the facts of what happened is important, because it puts today in context. You know, the reason why we're down at Raukkan, making sure that the World War Two veterans are honoured is all of the World War Two veterans who are Aboriginal people from South Australia have all passed now. The last one was Raymond Boland, who died in Cooper Pedy three or four years ago. He was 98, which is an amazingly old person for an Aboriginal person, whose life expectancy is not so good. But they're all gone. It's really important that we write down and record their stories and remind people of what they did, because, you know, soon we won't have any Vietnam veterans left, and we'll be doing that same process with them.

GTR: Now, well said, and it brings to focus the very issue. We spoke about working together in education and everything. We'll get back to education just for a moment by saying that this is something that you spoke of schools being involved. So can we engage schools in this?

IS: Absolutely. And in fact, that's one of the things that Uncle Frank and I do. And in fact, we have an education subcommittee, and the leader of that subcommittee is a retired history teacher, Simon Kelly. He's a lovely fellow. And before him, it was Bill Hignett, who I think you would know, who passed a couple of years ago. Those connections with children at schools are incredibly powerful. A couple of years ago, we went to Cleve and saw the kids at Cleve, and we went to Port Augusta and visited the Clontarf Academy, which is all the Aboriginal kids there. We went to

Ian Smith with Frank Lampard at Walker plaque unveling, March 2023.

Barmara and did a grave at Barmara, and, you know, we had nearly the whole school there. It was really quite amazing. And the way that we work is essentially we'll go to the local school the day before, do a little session about Aboriginal service, and some of that stuff is a sort of museum in a box thing where they get to look at uniforms and look at medals and, you know, put on a pack and all that sort of thing. And then we talked to them about the practicalities of service for Aboriginal people in the different wars. And then the following day, they come out, often the whole school, sometimes the prefects and that sort of thing, they come out to the service where we mark the, where we, you know, unveil the marked grave of the veterans. So it has really a strong practical aspect as well as a ceremonial or a commemorative one.

GTR: True enough, Ian. And I think my memories of school and history, of course, was very much related to the white man's occupation or arrival in Australia and had bugger all to do with Indigenous affairs, let's put it that way, and certainly in service. I knew nothing about this until becoming an adult. So your work is greatly appreciated. The work of Uncle Frank Lampard and Bill Denny is also greatly appreciated. Now, Bill, while we're talking, you mentioned your book before, For Love of Country. Can you tell us a little bit about that and when's this next edition coming out?

IS: Right. So in 2022, we published For Love of Country, and it has the names of about 470 servicemen and women from South Australia or strong connections to South Australia. A few Broken Hillites get in there because we love Broken Hill in South Australia, and we've always included them in our stuff.

GTR: Tara Belton will be happy with that.

IS: Yes, absolutely. And in fact, the Northern Territory for World War I because, of course, the Northern Territory was administered by South Australia until 1911. It was an interesting factoid. And so all of those people are in the book. I've also profiled over a dozen individuals, including recipients of bravery awards, people who went on to be quite senior, one of which was Barney Clothier, who served in World War II and Korea and ended up a warrant officer here in South Australia, and then went on to be a Commonwealth policeman for a while as well.

And he had six sons, all of whom served in the Army, which is quite incredible. And there are Vietnam stories, there are World War I and World War II stories, and of course, the story of the only Boer War veteran that we're aware of from South Australia, who served in the Boer War, Charles Westbury, William Charles Westbury from Mount Gambier, or Port Macdonald really, but he's from way down southeast of South Australia. And those stories are being expanded on. I got a lot of feedback saying we want more photographs. So I've found dozens and dozens more photographs to include. And I've also found the names of another 25 or so veterans in the time since the book was published. So that will probably be launched next year in Reconciliation Week, which is the last week of May, usually. And we have a service at the War Memorial, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander War Memorial here in Adelaide at the Torrens Parade Ground on the last Friday of Reconciliation Week. So I suspect that it will be launched exactly four years after we launched the last one.

GTR: Well, fantastic stuff. I'll tell you what, so Ian Smith, For Love of Country, to be launched, we think, at the end of Reconciliation Week in May next year. So that's a fantastic thing.

Ian Smith, co-chair of the Aboriginal Veterans SA. And we thank also Uncle Frank Lampard and Bill Denny in absentia. But thank you so much for being part of the Last Post magazine and Radio Show.

IS: My pleasure, Greg. Great to be with you.

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— INTERVIEW —

George Costas

costas CONSTRUCTIONS

Greg T Ross: George Costas from Costas Constructions. George, hello, how are you? Welcome to The Last Post.

George Costas: Hi Greg, thanks for the invitation to join you today. Yeah, I'm excited to have a chat about our involvement in a recent project.

GTR: Well, we're glad your parents took the boat trip out from Cyprus in the late 50s. Now look, we don't want to go into too much detail but that was a bit of an experience too.

GC: My parents like a lot of immigrants back in the 40s and 50s and 60s were looking for a new life, coming from a world that had just sort of passed through World War II, I guess, and was left a bit ravaged. They saw Australia as a potential new home for them and were both sponsored to come out here. So they were lucky enough to get a ticket to come out to Australia and from the time they landed here in Australia, they pretty much fell in love with Australia and the people here.

GTR: I think Australia fell in love with the Costas family too because you went to, you didn't stick to the tall timber, the big cities, you went out to Orbost and your parents started a farm.

Is that right? What happened there?

GC: My father came out before my mother did and he probably had a little bit of adventure in his bones and he worked right around Australia. Started off in South Australia, worked on the railway line up to Darwin and then moved across to Queensland and then eventually from Queensland down to New South Wales and then ended up in Victoria. He was happy to take on any work that he could and ended up falling into the logging industry in Victoria and found himself up in East Gippsland at a place called Orbost where he decided to settle down and not long after that is when he met my mum and they ended up buying a small property up there.On that farm they grew potatoes, farmed cattle and because only a farm wasn't sustainable itself, Dad continued in the logging industry, falling trees and driving bulldozers. So then my three siblings and I came into the picture.

GTR: An amazing thing, of course, with a lot of Australia's migrants and bless our migrant intake too, taking on jobs sometimes that the locals mightn't be too favourable towards, but all sorts of work and that's the great stories and they all lead to stories of great significance to the more different type of jobs that your father had, which is incredible, ending up in Orbost with a farm and what an adventure that must have been for you as a child.

GC: Yes, it certainly was. I guess I really enjoyed growing up in the country. I had three sisters, so as you can imagine in a house full of women, I was always keen to get out of there.

GTR: You were adventurous, weren't you? You did a lot of stuff.

GC: Yes, growing up as a kid, I had quite a few mates that loved the outdoors as well and we would go swimming down at the Snowy River

after school or canoeing down the river, fishing, camping, all those outdoor activities and our parents really didn't worry too much about us as long as we came home at night.

GTR: Wasn't that the blessing? The blessing of those days too, is that you could go out and do your thing. I remember as children too, we had our own little gang and we'd go out in summer days, we'd go cycle off here, there, everywhere, the hills, the swimming pool and no one had mobile phones, George.

GC: Exactly, we were the same. We were on our push bikes going everywhere and anywhere we could, so yeah, it was a great time for me growing up.

GTR: What did you do there for work like as a young boy?

Yeah, well, on the family farm, we actually had a lot of work to do on that farm with planting potatoes and harvesting them and looking after the stock and hay baling and things like that, so that sort of kept us pretty busy. The whole family was involved in working on the farm. When I was in my teenage years, I had a few part-time jobs. One was milking cows for a short period of time.

I shared a newspaper run with one of my mates and then I think when I turned 14, I got a job at the local service station after school and on weekends pumping petrol and checking oil and washing windscreens.

GTR: The smiling face of George Costas asking if your tyres need pumping up.

GC: Hah, and that was good because, you know, I got to know a lot of people, a lot of locals and in a small community that was pretty important, so I really genuinely enjoyed working part-time there. It certainly helped with delivering service, you know, when providing something to someone. If you can do it with a smile on your face, you know, you get it back tenfold.

GTR: That leads us on to the philosophy, I guess, and we'll talk about that a bit later, about commitment and social commitment, but you talk about smiling on the face and then getting it back. I have also found that too, I think it's one of the great truisms of life that, and it's called karma. Some person once said to me they didn't believe in karma and I said, well, it doesn't matter if you believe in it or not, it happens.

GC: It does.

GTR: And you went to Melbourne and you were 16. How did you adapt to the big city?

GC: During school, I really enjoyed the technical side of and the practical subjects like carpentry and architecture. That led me to a job opportunity in Melbourne and I went for an interview and got the job and I was in this bit of a dilemma, like I'm going to have to leave my family and my mates to go down to the big smoke to start my working life. And that was a bit of a hard step. I was excited about it but nervous at the same time. Yeah, moved to Melbourne. The company that I started working for were a great company. They embraced me really well and it made that transition a bit easier. But in saying that, it still took a few years for me to get used to living in Melbourne.

GTR: It's a bit different from hopping on the pushbike and going swimming in the snowy and stuff, George.

GC: Yes, that's right, exactly.

GTR: Who did you live with?

GC: I had an auntie at the time who lived in Melbourne, so I lived with her for maybe six months, but I found that she wanted to mother me too much and I said, no disrespect, I'm happy to move out of home. And I ended up sharing a house with some friends that I'd made through work. And then later on, my parents, a couple of years later, moved down to Melbourne. So I ended up moving back in with them for a couple of years and then out on my own again after that.

GTR: So with your auntie, what did you say, she wanted to what?

GC: She wanted to mother me too much.

GTR: Hah. Whereabouts was your auntie? Where did she live?

GC: She lived in Oakleigh at the time and I had a job in Clayton, so it was pretty easy to get to.

I just jumped on the train from Oakleigh, jumped off at Clayton and pretty much walked to the office where I worked. So yeah, did that for a period of time. Then when I moved out and into a place with a friend from work, it was only five minutes away from the office. So that's when I bought another pushbike. Happy memories.

GTR: What, did you go up Centre Road or what did you do?

GC: It was off Centre Road, My job was as a junior draftsman for a building company. I really, really enjoyed drafting and designing homes, worked in a very small office. The company, not long after I started working for them, got bought out by a larger company from South Australia and that's when the volume builders were starting to come into the scene and they basically expanded the Melbourne office and through that I pretty much was only a draftsman for a couple of years and then because of the expansion of the operations, it gave me some other opportunities within the business. So I still finished my drafting degree and studied building part-time but also took up a role in admin, construction admin and estimating within the same business.

GTR: A great opportunity. You weren't one for standing still because of course, did you still have your pushbike when you decided to start up Costas Construction?

GC: No, no. I was 28 when I started my own business. That was when, in 1998? So I think on the day of my birthday, my 18th birthday, I got my licence straight away and I couldn't wait because getting around Melbourne on a pushbike and public transport was killing me.

GTR: So was it exciting starting up Costas Construction and did you have to put much thought into it? Did you have an idea of what you wanted to do?

GC: Yeah, interesting question. It was, I guess, a natural progression for me, I felt. After leaving the first company I worked for, I worked for a short period of time for Metricon Homes as an estimator and then a supervisor. Then a former colleague that I worked with started up his own business and

he offered me a job there running the construction side of his business, which I took on and helped him build that up to a point where I really wanted to do things better and potentially my way, not his way. And yeah, at the age of 28, I decided to start my own business.

GTR: Where did you start, George? Did you have a small office somewhere?

GC: Well, I started operating my business out of home to start with and a lady that I worked with, who was sort of keen to move on from where we both worked, she basically said to me, if you're leaving, I'm coming with you. So I started my own business and this wonderful lady, Robyn, who I work with, came and helped me set it up. She helped with a lot of the admin stuff and the account stuff and I focused on getting the jobs and building them on site. So yeah, it started off from a home-based office. We only lasted a year in the home-based office and then I ended up being offered some office space in my accountant's office. He is based in Blackburn, so we quickly moved into there and then it became a lot more professional from that point onwards.

GTR: Wonderful, George. So you took with you, I guess, with your background and family history and a whole lot of other things and just generally who George Costas is. You have a philosophy at Costas Construction. Is that so? And if so, would you be able to explain that? What is the philosophy of Costas Constructions?

GC: Yeah, there's a few parts to this, I guess. One of them was providing a great experience for our clients through providing a good service and quality. Also understanding what the client's needs are and meeting them. That was some of the philosophies involved. Also, we started off building extensions, renovations, building single dual occupancy units in backyards and then we ended up in the last maybe 15 years specialising in multi-unit developments. We sort of found our niche and that came about because of the demand required on housing and a number of our clients at the time were developer clients and it was about understanding what they needed to get out of a development to make it a successful development. So since then, we've been doing a number of our own developments plus helping many, many clients build their developments.

GTR: Yeah, that's incredible stuff and we'll get on to your work with Vasey RSL Care in just a moment. But of course, I guess there is a lot of social commitment attached to Costas Construction. You're doing around 100 houses a year. What are these houses? I think you told me that they enhance the local environment? What does that actually mean?

GC: Yeah, so I guess we are lucky enough to get involved in a lot of our own developments and client developments from the concept stage. So we help design developments that are suited to the area that they're built in. So we understand the needs of the end users, I guess, and the other parts to that are building a development that's fit for purpose really and fits into the surrounding environment. We don't want to go build something that is an eyesore or a block of apartments in a suburban street or anything like that. So we try and build what's appropriate for the end users and the area.

GTR: Well, we certainly could do with more Costas Construction type buildings, that's for sure too. I know that that is an essential part of being comfortable in an environment to do something like that, to make that part of the environment rather than combat or contrast with the environment. Your social commitment, George, this is one of the things about Costas Construction, is that you give back to the community in many ways, the building of beautiful homes, and I've seen some of these homes and they're outstanding. I'll tell you what, so that is reflected in your community work also. What does that involve for Costas Construction, giving back to the community, George?

GC: Yeah, I guess we've been in business for 27, coming up 28 years. Probably the first 10 to 15 of those years generally was a hard struggle. You've got lots of ups and downs in that journey.

After that, I guess everything in some ways become a lot easier in that we've managed to pull together a great team of people to create Costas Constructions and what it is today. Through those ups and downs and everything else that happens in life, I consider ourselves as very, very lucky. In more recent years, our focus has been on giving back to the community in many different ways. For example, my wife, she volunteers a lot of her time to support the homeless people out in the eastern suburbs. She does that through two different organisations. One of them is through the Uniting Church and they have a meals programme. Every Friday night, they provide meals for homeless people. Also, she's part of another organisation that runs a winter shelter programme between a whole heap of different venues. She's a coordinator for that to happen over the winter. They take in homeless people and help clothe them, feed them. They've got a bed to sleep in. So that's something that she's been doing, which I'm very proud of.

GTR: We are proud of your wife's work as well, George. We did discuss this, I know, in a conversation earlier this year. I tell you what, I did offer to have an inspirational Australian woman in the magazine too because she's doing some great work there with the that.

GC: I support her 110%. On my side of the fence, I guess you could say, our team at Costas Constructions has been supporting many different charities and organisations over the past decade through either donations or being actively involved in helping along the way. I guess that's sort of, in some ways, what's led us to getting involved with Vasey RSL more recently. So yeah, we put it out to all of our team members to try and identify an organisation or a charity that needs some support and then we'll consider these organisations on their merits.

GTR: You're doing some amazing work with Vasey RSL Care and we do want people to know that your work is obviously in assisting veterans in the housing situation. George, about your work with Vasey RSL Care. You've got a commitment too through social action and part of that is helping veterans. Can you explain that?

GC: I was introduced to Vasey RSL approximately three years ago. I probably didn't know the need for the support that we've been helping with at the time. It probably isn't in, how do I say, the mainstream media at all. The need for supporting our younger veterans who have suffered in recent years, I believe RSL Vasey is an organisation that's part of the RSL that's there to help these younger veterans that are struggling. They're there to help them. Housing was one big area where there's a shortfall with the support of these people.

GTR: I'd heard that some of them ended up having to be put into aged care facilities because they didn't have facilities to house some of these people that were struggling. Some of the younger veterans?

GC: The younger veterans, yeah. So, yeah, finding out some of the struggles that they have and the support they need, we were pretty keen to put up our hands and say, we're here to help. How can we help, I guess?

GTR: The thought that some of the veterans had to go into aged care, did you say to get a roof over their heads?

GC: Yeah. That's right.

GTR: So, you stepped in and through your work with Vasey RSL Care, we've had a construction, which I think is happening at Bundoora, with the V centre. Is that correct?

GC: It's an offshoot of the V centre. So, yeah, we were lucky enough to get involved in a development in Bundoora. We were asked for our input. They had some land that they wanted to put as many single-storey, one- and two-bedroom townhouses on to house some of the younger veterans. So, we were able to help from the very, very start, with the concept, by trying to fit as many on there as possible. We originally assessed the site and thought that it would fit somewhere between 15 and 20 single-storey townhouses on it and achieving 20, which was a really good outcome. From that point, our focus from coming up with the concept was getting all the documentation done, all the planning permits done, and trying

to add value to that development throughout all of the stages and then into construction. We, how do I say, we've put ourselves forward as building this development as a not-for-profit development in a way that we see that it helps provide low-cost housing for these veterans, and they'll benefit dramatically from it.

GTR: What are these houses like that you've built, George? Can you just describe them?

GC: They're all self-contained townhouses. Some of them have their own street frontage and some of them are serviced by a common driveway. The beauty of these homes is that the veterans can live there independently and get whatever service support they need from VCRSL. So some may need higher levels of support and some may be just finding their feet before they return out into a world that they can manage themselves. So, yeah, it's reaching completion. We'll be finishing the building of the townhouses and hopefully handing over by the end of November, and I believe they've pretty much got every townhouse that we've built there, allocated to somebody.

GTR: I suppose in the transition for veterans, we have spoken of the high ratio or the higher ratio than normal of veteran homelessness. What joy does this give you to see this enacting of a great gift to the community?

GC: Yeah, for us and our whole team, we've really taken on this challenge with enthusiasm and pride. We feel that there's probably a lack of awareness in this area compared to other areas that need support. So I'm hoping that whatever we can do outside of building these homes for the veterans, we're happy to push this cause. Yeah, I guess us all living in such a lucky country, Australia, and need to probably acknowledge the sacrifices our servicemen and women do and understand how some of them struggle after their service. And yeah, we, as a team,feel that we're hopefully making a difference and we're hoping that we can raise some more awareness around this so that, you know, it's such a lucky country, we should do what we can to help keep it being a lucky country.

GTR: And I guess to once again, leading to your parents coming out from Cyprus, there is an attachment to understanding this, I think, correct me if I'm wrong, but from migrant families who seem more aware of the fact that Australia is a lucky country. Australians with more of a background of having been born, their parents being born in Australia, etc, tend to take it for granted, I might suggest sometimes. So it's good to see this awareness being pushed by Costas Construction and Vasey RSL Care, particularly for the veterans, an important part, well, it's an essential part, obviously, housing for mental wellbeing. So you're helping in many ways, obviously, and it makes it easier for these veterans to go out and find work.

GC: Yeah, I think through Vasey RSL, the support that they're given is at many different levels, you know, might be physical injuries that they might have, it could be mental struggles that they're going through. The support and part of that support is putting a roof over their heads if needed. We can build a really nice environment for these people. Hopefully, it helps them get back on their feet quicker, you know, that we care about them, I guess. And we're there for them.

GTR: We are so thankful for your parents coming out from Cyprus. We're thankful for you getting on that pushbike and going up Centre Road every morning. We're so thankful in many ways, but of course, the veterans themselves are too. We must do this again. And we must speak with you to get an update. But of course, the constructions, the housing for the veterans opening in Bundoora at the end of November, it looks like at this stage, at least. And yeah, I'll try and get up there.

GC: It would be good to see you there, and show you through what we've done.

GTR: So, to the public, I guess, go to Costas Construction. There's certainly a lot of beautiful things being done. Even George's wife is helping with the community. So it's a really community minded family, a community minded business working with Vasey RSL Care for Australia's veterans. George Costas, once again, thank you so much for telling us a bit of your life story. There's more to hear. I guess we might have to have this done in instalments. And we can talk again at some stage.

GC: Thanks, Greg. I appreciate you having me here to chat.

Jules Hohnen is a former Infantry Lieutenant Colonel with operational service in Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, Syria, Israel and Lebanon. Though no longer serving, taking care of his soldiers is still something he values highly.

I feel like it's my responsibility to look after them forever: mentally, as well as financially

Remembrance Day is a time for me to reflect on those lost in the line of duty, as well as the ways I can continue to take care of those who served with me. It wasn't until I joined the military that I understood the camaraderie within; commanding soldiers is a massive privilege not afforded to everyone. And while there is a good part of a century separating my time in service from the end of World War 1, the values remain the same.

I still look after my soldiers from Afghanistan, as we went through a very tough time together. I use the adage, 'you break it, you bought it.' We all have each other's backs, and my former commanders have been an immense support to me. I remember being in hospital, and a former soldier drove a 2000km return trip to surprise me with a coffee and a chat. He will be a friend for life.

I lost two soldiers in Afghanistan on 20 August, 2010, and I think of them every day. War is terrible and tragic and nobody is immune. You do not bring soldiers back from war and feel like your duty is done. Grief is not linear, and you do not know what events in their life can trigger PTSD or other issues, so we still keep an eye out for each other.

A really practical way I can look out for my soldiers is through providing guidance around their financial wellbeing. Serving can be a bit of a financial bubble, and many soldiers need time to find their feet financially when they transition from the ADF. That's why I refer them to CSC's Vets Hub. It is so valuable in providing that front door for Veteran financial wellbeing, and it has been an enormous help to me. Pointing my soldiers towards it is just another way I can continue to look after them.

JULES HOHNEN

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Steadying the Ship:

Greg Melick's Leadership and Legacy as RSL's National President

When Greg Melick assumed the presidency of the Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL) in May 2019, he inherited an organisation facing considerable challenges. Governance concerns had diminished public trust, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission was calling for "new leadership to implement significant changes," and the RSL's position as the nation's premier veterans' advocate required a rebuild.

With the support of the National Board and dedicated National Office team, six and a half years later, as Greg Melick prepares to step down this month (16 October 2025), he leaves behind a fundamentally transformed organisation, one that has not only restored its reputation but emerged as a powerful, modernised voice for Australia's veteran community on both national and international stages.

The magnitude of the achievement becomes clear when considering the RSL's position and image in 2019. The organisation was challenged by governance issues and for any meaningful advocacy work to occur, public trust had to be rebuilt from the ground up.

Greg Melick had to 'steady the ship'. He did this in partnership with the National Board and the National Office team.

All subsequent policy victories and modernisation efforts were contingent upon this foundational work. Greg Melick's view was that an organisation lacking public confidence would not possess the moral authority or the political capital required to effectively influence government policy.

Greg Melick's legal background as a Senior Counsel (now King's Counsel) and military experience as a Major General in the Australian Army Reserve proved invaluable in navigating these complex challenges. His subsequent re-election in October 2022 confirmed a clear mandate from RSL State Branches to continue his reformist agenda and represented a powerful endorsement of his leadership approach.

The restructure of the National Office and the appointment of an experienced Chief Executive Officer in January 2021 further strengthened the organisation's professional foundation, bringing together respected military and civilian expertise at the highest levels.

Perhaps no single issue better illustrates this transformation of the RSL than the organisation's engagement with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The RSL evolved from a traditional commemorative body into a sophisticated policy advocate, directly shaping one of the most significant inquiries into veteran welfare in Australian history.

With initial concerns that the Royal Commission would unnecessarily delay much needed reforms to assist the veteran community, the RSL could have simply submitted a response and waited for the results. However, it didn't merely comment from the sidelines, it became a key collaborator. The organisation assisted in developing the Commission's Terms of Reference, lodged detailed submissions, appeared at hearings, and supported members in making presentations. Following the Commission's final report and its 122 recommendations, the RSL engaged directly with the Head of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Implementation Taskforce and held discussions with Veterans' Affairs Minister Matt Keogh. It welcomed the government's progress on implementing the 122 recommendations, but was also forthright in his assessment that "much remained to be done".

This high-level engagement yielded tangible results. The RSL expressed satisfaction when the government committed $44.5 million in operational funding for the new Defence and Veterans' Services Commission, noting the RSL had "advocated strongly for an independent commission." The organisation also advocated for a dedicated Women Veterans' Strategy, government-led research into military brain injury effects, and the establishment of a collaborative peak body for ex-service organisations.

RSL Australia is determined to continue to work closely with the Departments of Veterans' Affairs and Defence, and the Implementation Taskforce to ensure the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations leads to change that will strengthen the health and wellbeing of veterans, service personnel and their families.

Rather than simply reacting to events, the organisation is actively shaping the conversation, using its influence and direct relationships with key government departments to drive tangible policy outcomes.

The past six and a half years has been marked by the RSL's willingness to take principled stances on controversial issues, even when they challenged traditional positions. Most notably, despite gaming operations being a significant revenue stream for many RSL clubs, Greg Melick stated his preference for clubs to be free of such operations.

This position demonstrated what supporters saw as a commitment to putting veterans' ethical and social wellbeing ahead of traditional business models. It was a stance that wasn't universally popular but reflected his conviction-based leadership style.

Understanding that the RSL needed to evolve to remain relevant to younger veterans, Greg Melick, the National Bopard and management, spearheaded significant modernisation efforts and forged closer relationships

with State Branches and key stakeholders to ensure the organisation would evolve and "meet the needs of the broader veteran community and particularly younger veterans."

The RSL also initiated its own research programs, including the major Middle East Area of Operations Scoping Study designed to understand the impacts of Australian Defence Force service since 2002 on veterans and their families. This commitment to evidence-based advocacy strengthened the organisation's credibility when engaging with government and other stakeholders.

The RSL has significantly expanded its role in national defence discussions. The organisation's Defence and National Security Committee, comprised of senior defence and security specialists, focusses on key areas including Australia's defence preparedness, increased defence funding to match global risks, improving ADF recruitment and retention, and developing sustainable sovereign defence industrial capability.

This expanded mandate reflected a vision of the RSL as not just a veterans' service organisation, but as a key voice in Australia's broader national security conversation and an effective advocate for current ADF serving members.

Greg Melick's leadership elevated the RSL's profile internationally. He represented Australian veterans at Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in September 2022, and in June 2024 and prior to that the funeral of Prince Phillip the Duke of Edinburgh, travelled to Timor-Leste to meet with senior government officials and veteran group leaders, sharing insights from the Australian veteran experience. He played a role in the newly crowned King accepting patronage of the RSL in May 2024 and attended the Prime Minister's reception for King Charles III and Queen Camilla in Australia in Oct 2024.

in 2024, Greg Melick addressed the annual conference of the New Zealand Returned and Services Association, stressing the historic and ongoing close links between the veterans of the two nations. His participation in the Seoul International Veterans Forum in August 2025, at the invitation of the South Korean Minister of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, ensured the voices of Australian veterans were heard on the international stage. This international engagement enhanced the RSL's domestic standing while building valuable relationships with sister organisations globally.

Recognition came in the form of honours as well. On Anzac Day 2025, Greg Melick was installed as an Officer of the Ordre national du Mérite (National Order of Merit) by France, recognising his exceptional leadership in planning Anzac Centenary commemorations from 2011 to 2018.

Beyond the headline achievements, his presidency encompassed a broad range of advocacy victories. The RSL successfully pushed for Australian Defence Force Service to be included in the National Census, supported the appointment of a National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, and advocated for natural justice concerning alleged war crimes in Afghanistan.

The organisation also supported fast-track visa approvals for Afghan support staff, called for harmonised funeral benefits for veterans, and responded to the Defence Strategic Review with calls for additional ADF investment. The RSL continues to call for all recommendations of the Royal Commission to be implemented, improved veteran advocacy services, improved access to healthcare, sustained funding for DVA to adequately support veterans and assess claims, and increased ADF resourcing.

The National Board and management team have highlighted the RSL's federated structure and the "effective relationships with decision-makers" established across all states and territories, underscoring the work done to consolidate the League's internal structure and national influence, crucial for its advocacy efforts. The focus has been on building a strong, unified foundation able to leverage its unique position to lobby effectively for change.

The RSL Australia Board also proved to be a much more effective and functional team, and the stage is now set for a further review of the board structures going forward. The number of service and affiliate members has also increased in recent years, with membership numbers rising consistently over the past four years and total membership now standing at more than 153,000.

As Greg Melick prepares to conclude what will be the fifth-longest presidential tenure since the RSL's establishment in 1916, his legacy is clear. He took an organisation facing significant challenges and with a dedicated Board and management team transformed it into a credible, modern, and influential advocate for veterans' interests.

His successor will inherit a stabilised organisation with restored public trust, enhanced government relationships, modernised service delivery, and a clear strategic vision for the future. The RSL has set new standards for professional advocacy, evidence-based policy development, and principled leadership.

Greg Melick, the Board and management tear were successful in steadying the ship and setting a new standard for RSL leadership, one grounded in professional expertise, strategic advocacy, and a willingness to confront difficult issues.

For Australia's veteran community, the past six and a half years represent a pivotal period. It is one that ensured their peak representative body would remain relevant, credible, and influential for generations to come. In rebuilding trust and transforming advocacy, this is an enduring legacy that will extend far beyond Greg Melick's October departure date.

Jake Keir

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Greg T Ross: Jake Keir, CEO of Login Australia, welcome to The Last Post magazine.

Jake Keir: Thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here. .

GTR: We're here today to talk about cybersecurity. Unfortunately, a very topical subject. But I suppose for those of us wanting to know a bit more about cyber security, Jake, what what is cyber security And why is it so important?

JK: I think, you know, when we're talking about this topic, in any shape or form, it's actually quite a very broad spectrum. So cyber security can range from the human aspects, the infrastructure aspects, bank details, everything's involved when you talk about these things as well. So to give you the short and simple, it's really about how we protect humans and our software and everything we're developing in the modern day and age from being attacked. A bit like we always use a really good reference, a bit like, you know, you're at your home, you're in your house, and you've got locks on the door, you've got the Rottweiler in the front, front garden, you've got a security guard walking around, we try and apply that exact sort of methodology to how we secure your online systems as well.

GTR: Well, actually, that's a good analogy too, Jake. Most people would feel safe with the things you've just mentioned, that's for sure. Is it a bigger threat now than previously?

JK: It's huge. So if you think about how scary it actually is, a lot of us, and we even talk about, you know, a lot that's going on in the world right now, the locks on your door and the Rottweiler in the front yard might not cut it. So cyber security is huge, and then we've also introduced AI, and as exciting as that is, there's a lot of different developers out there who are building these tools, these platforms that everyone's using, whether that's on your phone, on your computer, you're talking to it, and it, you know, it's gone beyond the normal. It's really dangerous as well, because you don't know what security actually sits behind those developers, and you don't actually know all the time what you're clicking on, what phone access they have to you, and a really good sort of example about that as well, have you ever talked about something and then you start to see ads on Facebook that are relating to something you just talked about?

GTR: Yes.

JK: That's just the tip of the iceberg.

GTR: Actually, we thought for a while we were imagining that, Jake, but it's the big brother syndrome come true, because of course, sometimes even if I'm thinking of something, something appears in relation to what I had just been talking about, and that is super spooky.

JK: It's very scary. Even the other day, I was looking at trailers, which is a really sinful thing, and then all of a sudden, everywhere I went, there's trailers, there's trailers on sale, and unfortunately, I bought one as well.

GTR: Oh, gee. Well, there's an example. We're all vulnerable, and you've just proved it too, Jake, I guess. With AI, that's an interesting analogy there too, of course, because of course, there are, like everything, good examples of AI and threatening examples.

JK: Exactly. I think everybody right now will know what chat GPT is, I imagine. It doesn't matter how old you are, but we're all sort of getting to engage in that. There's a lot behind that where people don't always

know what they put in chat GPT is actually public. So, it depends on your licencing, and a lot of us won't have enterprise licencing, but you're contributing to the model and the language they're using and how it actually works as well.

So, if you put in there my full name, my mobile number, my email, chances are that someone else can now go, can you give me details on Jake, and they'll find it.

GTR: Well, I don't like giving out details like a lot of people, I suppose, too, Jake, but look, how can it impact networks, data, I mean, confidential info, that sort of stuff?

JK: Yeah, so look, it's pretty big, and the reason I'll sort of take this back a little bit is to explain it in a lot more detail, but kind of give an analogy that people will understand. So, cybersecurity is a bit like an onion. So, what we're trying to do is we're trying to layer everything around it, and the more layers we have, the better chance we have of being protected. Unfortunately, I'll never sit here and say, you know, Greg, you're safe from a cybersecurity incident, you've adopted all the right practises, you've got everything in there, I still won't tell you you're safe.

And the reason that is, is because, you know, these layers, all they're designed to do is in the event of an incident, it stops it being catastrophic as well. So, what we try and do, especially sort of in this IT space and this technology space, is we try and add those layers, and then we go back to the house or the onion. So, we're trying to put the double locks on the front door, the security guard who's walking around the house, we've got barred windows, and if you think about that house, that's all your personal information and your infrastructure and your software.

So, there's a lot of different ways to protect yourself these days, but it is becoming more and more difficult because there's just so much out there. And I guess what I would say is, I think it was, everyone's got a smartphone now, that took about 10 years for the greater good to adopt that. With AI, it took about two months. So, you can see how fast everything's changing as well.

GTR: I'll tell you what, the onion is a good analogy, and I suppose obviously is with what Login, what are Login involved in, and what are they actually doing to protect us all?

JK: You know, we've been around for, I think it's 34 years that we're coming up to, and what we do is we focus on the human layer, the infrastructure layer, and your software layer. So, we're a Microsoft First partner, so basically we're trying to prevent attacks that are happening when you log into your systems, when you've got a laptop on your desk, when you're at home working from home. We'll layer our security platforms across that, and so we get live monitoring 24 seven as well. So, our biggest job is to identify an attack, prevent it from happening, and in the event that it does get through, and this is what I keep saying, if you've seen on the news, Medibank releasing data, all of those sort of as well, nobody ever really talks about how fast they were to respond to an incident. So, a lot of people will always say, oh, you know, they've been hacked, how could they do this? But the reality is, is that a lot of people have been hacked, some people don't even know, it's really about setting yourself up to respond to that, and that's what Login Systems does. So, we'll address your network, have a look at it, we'll put all the onion layers in that I talk about, but the idea is that when something happens, if it does, we can respond really quickly, isolate it, and have a really small financial impact for your business as well.

GTR: It's interesting to know too, Jake, because of course, most of us are too, or not too busy, but we're busy trying to make money for the company, we're busy answering emails, we're busy doing this and that, and we find a bit of a struggle to allocate time for security sometimes.

JK: Yeah, and I think you'll find that usually executives, business owners, they are a major target, because the chances of you opening an email while you're in a cab to the airport, you're rushing, you know, you've got to do these things really quickly, and we all suffer from it. So, we see a lot of what we call phishing, where they send, and a lot of people will understand this, but where you've had an email in your inbox, and it looks exactly like what the CEO would send you, or what a family member would send you, but the intricate details are just in the email address. It might be the display name says Jake here at Login Systems, but the email it's coming from is 27.561 at gmail.com. It's a really massive indicator that something's wrong. .

GTR: Actually, I have sort of, I do keep an eye on the addresses that come in, but you're right, I mean, you're going to the airport, you're going to a meeting, you're in the back of a car, cab, whatever, email comes through, you want to get it out of the way, because everything becomes instant.

JK: Yeah, and I think when everybody talks about cyber security, and a hacker, or a threat actor, they think of someone who's, you know, maybe doesn't have a full-time job, they're sitting in the back of a basement with a hoodie on. The reality is the world's moved on, and you've actually got these large-scale businesses in foreign countries, and it can even be in our country as well, but they've got a business model, so they've got a Director, they've got a management team, there's people dedicated to scamming you and making money, because it's a business venture now.

GTR: Yes, I had read that in a recent report too, Jake, about how they are actually reflecting the companies they're trying to scam.

JK: Yeah, it's, you can even, and I don't want to put this out there, but you can find things like on YouTube about how to hack things and stuff like that, which is all public, but the knowledge is very much in front of us, and if you think about the kids of today as well, the amount of technology sort of expertise they've got before they even leave primary school, there's a lot to be had.

GTR: What about awareness Jake? How do we go about that, training people and awareness? How important, and what do we do?

JK: So when there is, so if you're sort of part of a business or a corporate model, you've got a couple of employees, there's lots of software platforms out there. Yes, we provide those as well, and they do sort of, they'll email you every week a training video.

It might go for a minute 30, but the content's really rich and powerful, and they'll quiz your employees at the end of that. Then for someone like myself who's got employees in the company, I'll get a report and I'll see who hasn't watched it, who has watched it, and who's bailed it. Why that's so important to me is if someone hasn't watched it, I know that they're now a risk to the business because they're not keeping up with the education as well. For us, especially in Australia, there's a lot online from the Australian government too, so they do something that's called the Essential Eight, which is how you can protect your business using a set of principles and guidelines, which for anyone sort of a bit in the dark, you can look at that and be like, okay, I need to lock USBs and those sort of things. So we do a lot of security awareness training as well, especially in the not-for-profit space. We'd like to provide that service for free and come out and talk to people and just get that education across the board. So there's a lot you can do, but there's lots of platforms out there now that are quite

sophisticated in training your users and your employees. Unfortunately, not as much exists for the home user, but you can actually sign up to those and it probably costs you for retail a couple of dollars a month per person. So there's lots of different opportunities there.

GTR: Money well spent. And we're all good at something, but I stand in admiration at your education and your knowledge on such things that basically what you're doing is a community service. I know you're a company and everything, but it is a community service and it's keeping not only the individuals and companies safe, but the country, I guess, to Australia. What about cyber criminals? Do they have a common portfolio or genre or what do they look like?

JK: I think that's also a common mistake of the public and business owners where they think, okay, I'm three or four users, a cyber criminal's not going to target me. They're going to want to target someone who's got 500 employees because they've probably got a lot more income coming in the door and there's a big chance. The reality is it's a numbers game. So if you've ever had a scam call and you've picked it up really quickly and gone, oh, I found that, I deleted it, the chances are they're making thousands of them. So all they need to do in one day out of a thousand calls is lock two people in for maybe $5,000 each and they've probably made a wage for themselves for the week. So if you think about that on a large scale, like I said, it's a numbers game. They're gambling with you picking up the phone. They're gambling with you opening that email and letting you in the network. I'd actually say if you are in a smaller business, you are just as much at risk as any other business because the chances are you might not have the protection that a larger organisation has. So they'll be targeting you. They'll be targeting your parents. They'll be targeting your family. It's really just about getting someone to put those credit card details in or getting into your network so they can infiltrate your suppliers or customers as well. So I would just say, you know, don't think you're immune to that. It doesn't really matter who you are anymore. They just want a couple of dollars in their pocket every hour and they'll start to make some really good money.

GTR: Is it true, just on a personal level, a couple of times, it doesn't happen often, but I mean, I don't pick up the phone unless I know who's calling, but occasionally I might. And a couple of times what has happened is this, you speak into the phone and there's a pause and then they hang up. Are these people just recording your voice or what's the...?

JK: Yeah, that's an interesting one. I've had that as well. I think sometimes, one, they're trying to see if someone picks up the phone so they know that number's active. Two, I think just like any business, you've probably got some employees there who are cyber criminals who have a target to make X amount of calls per day. They may even be just trying to get on their KPI dashboard that they made 400 calls that day and they actually didn't. So you've got to look at it from both sides. But I've also found sometimes there's connection issues and you're right, as soon as they sort of pause and then there's that little beep and then they say, oh, hi, and they don't actually tell you where they're calling from. That's a really good indicator that it's spam. My first question is, sorry, where are you calling from? And they just keep saying, hi, Jake. And I'm like, that's great. But where are you calling from? And I end up hanging up and blocking them as well. I would give some free advice too.

If you're on Samsung especially, I'm not sure about iPhone if they've got this, but there's an app called Who's Call and it's got a register of spam callers. So it actually lights up red when someone's spam as best it can. And that's all because the community is actually reporting those numbers as spam as well. .

GTR: Well, I mean, I've got a smartphone and it does tend to show me alerts when there's suspicious calls coming in, which is great.

JK: Perfect. Yeah.

GTR: China Nexus activity across all sectors has grown 150%. That's very scary. It is scary.

JK: I think, you know, everything's scary at the moment, which is what I keep sort of reverting back to, I guess. It doesn't really matter what's growing or what's not at the moment. The one thing we know is growing across the board is technology. And I keep coming back to that. You just have to remember how fast that's changing as well. So they do, whether it's China, whether it's Australia, there's a thing called a Zero Day Threat. And a Zero Day Threat is something that no one's picked up before. So someone out there or they've created a line of code or a way to interact with your systems and nobody, no security companies picked that up before. So they're very much real. And they're actually the hardest to contain, because what most security companies need to do is take that threat and try and recreate it in their own environment that's fenced off and then figure out how to actually stop it from happening. So it's a big and scary thing. And I just think that's why I keep coming back to a zero day threat is probably the most vulnerable we all are, because we don't know what that looks like. I remember back when I was a tech 10 years ago, the first thing we came into was ransomware. So that was where they changed all of your files, they encrypted all of your backups. So you not only couldn't access your files, you also couldn't back up from the files. And then we started to get more sophisticated with it. And I would say ransomware still exists, but now we've actually got a lot of ways of protecting ourselves from that as well.

GTR: Okay, that's good news. I guess, would it be fair to highlight countries like North Korea, China, Russia, Colombia, Vietnam, or is it all over?

JK: You're spot on. It's all over. But what we see is the majority of attacks come from those foreign entities as well. What you can do, whether you're an employee in Russia, an employee in Australia, is you can actually do something that's called geo-blocking. So what geo-blocking does is you can actually say, okay, I'm an Australian business. I only operate and trade in Australia. Therefore, I'm going to block anybody from accessing our network from outside of that. So what that means is if you're in Russia, you can no longer even try to get into my network. That's sort of our approach. And we call that ring fencing. So like I said, if you're in Australia, we're just going to let you work in Australia. And then what we have is policies and procedures where it's like, all right, Jake wants to take his family on a holiday. And I have to tell our team that I'm going to Europe or Bali or Thailand or something like that. So they can whitelist me in that location for that week. And I come back. And a lot of you, as I start to talk about that, will start to remember that the bank does that with you as well. So you need to tell the bank that you're going to use your card overseas. It's the same practise when we talk about your corporate infrastructure and your networks as well.

GTR: Well, that is interesting, too, because, of course, I mean, as an example, the magazine deals with New Zealand and Australia. So you could keep New Zealand and Australia and block the rest?

JK: That's it. That's exactly how it works. And then if you, Greg, said, you know, it's time for me to take a holiday, it's been too long. We just need to figure out where you're going. And then we go and enable that for that set period of time. And when you come back, we block it again. And that's only for you, not the whole business. But anyhow, we'll just see how we go.

GTR: What's the importance of understanding adversaries, too?

JK: Oh, look, you know, like I said, when we go back to zero day threats, what's out there? You can educate yourself on as many attacks as you possibly can. But what I would keep suggesting is that you just need to apply a framework to your business. And I do talk about business a lot. You can do it at home as well. But usually there's not a lot of assets you're trying to protect unless you're running a home-style business or just maybe identity. But all of it's important. I think it comes back to just educating yourself on what you need to do or getting some education like professionals like us on how you protect that business, as opposed to trying to sort of understand who the attackers are, where they're coming from, and what they're doing. It's more about applying a framework, following the framework, and having some really good strong

controls in place to make sure that if an employee who's got some great access starts to change some of that framework, you've got a way of catching that a month or two later and you start to make sure you're always doing the right things.

GTR: The 2025, I think it was the CrowdStrike Global Threat Report, did you see that?

JK: Look, I have. I've seen that report. The Australian government does a really good report as well each year. Look, it does show you a good amount of percentages of businesses that have been attacked and sort of what vertical they're in or what market segment, but I still think you need to sort of just apply a framework that suits you and one that's known and trusted and start with that. I think a lot of businesses usually really start to crumble when they think, you know, cyber security is so expensive. I don't know if we've got the budget for this. We're a four-person milk bar down the road. The reality is that you can start small and there's lots of little things that come in with the licencing you might have just for your email. There's just little bits you can do just to start and if you follow that framework, it can be really helpful for you just to be ahead of the game and not behind.

GTR: And I suppose we've sort of gone over this, but if you could just reiterate what industries are targeted? I mean, according to what I've heard, correct me if I'm wrong, but technology I guess is a big one, but there's just about everything else too.

JK: Yeah, I personally think financial services is always up the chain and, you know, companies that store personal information is usually a big target. The reason is that that personal data can be used to buy things as well and they sell your credentials on what's called the dark web. So the dark web was created a very long time ago and they've not been able to take it down. It is basically, you need a special way to access it, which I'm not going to share with you on this. You'll find these attackers sell credit cards, guns, drugs, all that sort of stuff on these websites and you can't just get to it by searching "sellmegunsandcreditcards.com". You've actually got to go through a certain route to get there. What you'll also find on the dark web is that they may not even sell you the correct details, so they may just give you a fake credit card and you'll go and put your money in and buy, say you spend $1,000 on this fake credit card and you're supposed to get a $10,000 balance. You'll try to use it, doesn't work because it's not even real. So it's a lot of sort of undertake trading and we actually, login systems as a business, will scroll the dark web and their databases to look for when you've been compromised as well. So Greg, if you put your email in there, if you accidentally signed into LinkedIn and someone took your password, it would tell us that you've been compromised and we would contact you and say, hey Greg, you need to change your password. It was on this application and you need to get it fixed.

GTR: Ok, right, scary stuff. Yeah. I'm just sitting here in awe because one of the things that I've learnt through the magazine and now the podcast series, Jake, is that life's a learning process. I'm a green thumb in so much of this. I don't even know what the dark web is.

JK: You don't want to.

GTR: Thanks Jake, you've been a bundle of help and advice. Jake Keir from CEO, actually, of Login and Jake's become a friend through our discussions and certainly I do see a series of these talks because things are changing so quickly. I'm just wondering, I think you touched on it before, correct me if I'm wrong, but what is phishing? If you could just let, because I didn't even know what it was.

JK: So phishing or business email compromise are things you might have seen already. You just might not know the terminology. So it's not phishing with an F. We're not going down to the local river to unfortunately catch some carp, which is what normally happens, but it's phishing with a, it's P-H-I-S-H-I-N-G.

So if you want to search what that is, but basically what they're doing is they're finding a way to grab your username and login is usually what it is, or phish you into supplying invoice information or something of critical nature. So what these threat actors usually do is they'll find a way to get an email to you. They might've created it so it looks like a supplier. It's really easy these days too. Like if you Google your company and you look at, okay, they've got a supplier who's, you know, Ford Australia or Toyota supplies, their fleet cars, they'll send you an email from Toyota. So it's not from Toyota, but it looks like it. And it says, oh, Jake, you know, you missed a payment. Can you just log in here and update it? All they want to do is get your username and password. And then they'll take that and they'll try to do your LinkedIn, your Facebook, your business apps. They'll be guessing things like Microsoft. So they're phishing to get information. And there's another layer on top of that where they'll actually call and they're trying to actually pretend to be someone that, you know, and phish for credentials. And you see definitely sort of in the older community, they always fall for these usually. So it's like, oh, Jake, I'm from the Australian tax office. You didn't pay your tax return. You've got a $10,000 fine. So for someone who's quite vulnerable, they might sit there and panic and go, what do I need to do to rectify this? And they go, you just put your credit card here and boom, the money's gone. You'll never see it again.

GTR: Actually, I suppose like a lot of people, I don't know if it's a lot of people or not, but occasionally I get texts supposedly from a certain bank saying that I've missed a payment and to avoid further charges, please log in here. But of course, I'm not even a member of that bank.

JK: Exactly. And yeah, you've got to think, you know, the banks these days are doing a lot to tell you that they will never contact you to do certain things. And you just, I guess for someone who's in sort of the cybersecurity space, I'm very aware, but I can't imagine what it's like for others who are not constantly in front of these things because they are really sophisticated attacks. So they're changing every day. They're looking more and more. We've got our LinkedIn page login systems, which we're kind of posting a few stories here and there as well that are real life things we've encountered with businesses we've helped. But one of them was they actually hacked into a customer. It wasn't a customer of ours. They became a customer after this. And what they did was get the supplier list. And then they found out, okay, these are all our customers of this business we've hacked into. They sent an email saying, if you pay your invoice and they replicated the invoices today, we'll discount 10% off your bill that's due in five months. So if you think about people go, oh, great, there's a 5% discount. I'm going to jump on that. That money never went to that business. So it was gone.

GTR: Well, actually, I did. Yeah, I did. Just another personal example. And this happened, I think, about four or five years ago. And thank be Jesus, it hasn't happened since. But a client or partner said they'd paid the invoice that I'd sent out for advertising. But that had not appeared in the magazine's bank account, Jake. Then I said to them, look, you're going to have to pay because, you know, it just hasn't appeared, mate, you know. And then, you know what happened? I went back and I checked again, the date they said they'd paid. And instead of not having any deposit, suddenly there was their deposit. And yet, I know because I keep a very keen eye on payments. I know that that money had not come through.

JK: Yeah, wow. These are the kind of risky behaviour and scenarios you will face a lot. And especially, you'll see in the bank too, there was that story that went on for years about there was a threat actor who actually took one cent from a million person's or people's bank account, and they didn't find that for years. So if you think about who's going to notice one cent missing from each bank account, but on a scale of a million to two million, I'd say he's enjoying his holiday in the Bahamas somewhere. You're that bugger that took a cent from my bank account. Yeah, which no one notices. So it was actually, it was a brilliant idea. It's incredible.

GTR: I can see a series of these chats because things are changing so quickly, unfortunately. But we do thank you for being here and taking the time to chat.

JK: Thanks, Greg.

Calling It What It Is:

Language, Justice, and Power in the Push for Military Reform

In September 2025, Flinders University's Open-Door Initiative partnered with Women Veterans Australia to host the "Calling It What It Is" symposium - a significant event addressing the crisis of military sexual violence within the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

Held in Brisbane and streamed online to a broad audience across Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the UK, and the US, the symposium drew 117 participants from various sectors, including Defence, non-profits, academia, and human rights.

Central to the event's theme was the transformative power of language. Experts and survivors called for an end to euphemisms like "sexual misconduct," advocating for precise terminology: military sexual violence. Such clarity, they argued, not only acknowledges the scale of the crisis but also promotes transparency and accountability - key steps in empowering victims.

Panel discussions, led by thought leaders including Dr Megan MacKenzie (author of "Good Soldiers Don't Rape"), Professor Ben Wadham, and Natalie Merryman, dissected the institutional barriers perpetuating harm. From opaque data systems and justice structures that keep reporting within the chain of command, to a culture rooted in martial masculinity, speakers emphasised the need for survivor-centred, trauma-informed reform.

One compelling comparison came from Llani Jayne Kennealy, Chair of Women Veterans Australia, who drew parallels between Defence's quick overhaul of aviation safety in response to aircraft losses and its slow response to human harm. Her message: "Invest in people capability as deliberately as we build military capability, and ensure reform is survivor-centred, measurable, and enduring."

Statistical insights showed that 80% of military sexual violence victims are women, with 90% of perpetrators being men within units. The panels called for separating support for survivors from the chain of command and linking leadership accountability to tangible outcomes such as pay and promotion.

The symposium's core message was clear: "This is not a women's problem - it's a crisis rooted in harmful norms." Moving forward, genuine reform will require the courage to challenge entrenched systems, prioritising survivor experiences, and championing transparent and accountable leadership. By recognising the problem and choosing truth over euphemism, the Defence community can transform itself from part of the problem to a model for meaningful institutional change.

PROFESSOR BEN WADHAM
Open Door

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SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

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SANE

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Standing Shoulder to Shoulder helps tackle life's challenges

For some veterans, transitioning from the miliary to civilian life isn't easy. They can feel cut off and isolated, particularly if they are struggling with their mental health, which can lead to a withdrawal from family and friends.

CLOCKWISE , FROM FAR LEFT:
Joe Yost during his Service with the ADF.
Dr Jon Lane, Chief Psychiatrist at the Department of Veteran's Affairs.
Joe Yost supporting veterans and their families through Open Arms.
Joe Yost at a recent Anzac Day commemoration.

Launceston-based veteran Joe Yost faced a complicated mix of emotions when saying goodbye to a life of service in 2018, after realising his long-held dreams of serving in the Army. His departure was more than simply resigning from a job – it fundamentally shifted his sense of identity, leaving him with chronic anxiety.

"I mourned my old life and wondered who I was without that green uniform," Joe said.

"Over time I became snappy, developed insomnia, was not loving life and my mental health was going south."

Compounding the pressure was Joe's caring responsibilities for his oldest son, who lives with disabilities and required extensive medical support.

Fortunately for Joe, his family and close friends noticed the signs that he was in a bad way. They convinced him to reach out for help, and after contacting Open Arms in 2023, Joe saw a psychologist for 10 months.

"I haven't looked back. Not every day is perfect, but my anxiety has got so much better."

Joe's experience is not uncommon, according to Dr Jon Lane, Chief Psychiatrist at the Department of Veteran's Affairs, which includes Open Arms. Around 46.4 per cent of transitioned Australian Defence Force members are estimated to have experienced a mental disorder in the past 12 months.

"Many veterans experience a loss of identity, purpose and meaning, along with support, on transition," said Dr Lane, who brings both military expertise and lived experience to his clinical practice.

Dr Lane, who enlisted in 1989 and served in Afghanistan, is now a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserve. After experiencing his own mental health struggles upon his return from Afghanistan, he wholeheartedly supports providing military-aware mental health support to veterans, current serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and their immediate families.

"Whilst in Service in the ADF, we get many things that we take for granted – relatively good pay, secure employment, access to further education, free healthcare, subsidised housing, automatic social connections and a clear sense of community, individual and collective purpose.

"When you leave however, these things now become your own personal responsibility and may very well be difficult to find. It may be the first time you apply for a Medicare card, fill out a rental application or write a résumé that explains how what you did in the ADF relates to the job you're applying for.

"You may also be dealing with physical and or mental health challenges from your time in Service, so the combination of added responsibility can make transition seem particularly overwhelming."

Connecting with fellow veterans

Not every veteran has a close support network around them, particularly those who live in regional and remote communities.

And for veterans who are feeling isolated and want to connect with other veterans online, they can encounter widespread hostility, with some reporting concerns around misogyny, homophobia and general safety due to a lack of moderation.

But since Anzac Day 2025, a new platform is helping to turn the tide.

This date marked the launch of Shoulder to Shoulder – a new, free online community for veterans and veteran families to support the mental health of fellow veterans, as well as their partners, families and loved ones.

Shoulder to Shoulder is delivered by SANE – Australia's leading mental health organisation for people experiencing complex mental health issues and an industry leader in digital mental health services – with funding from Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling. As well as direct input from the veteran community, Shoulder to Shoulder was designed with support from posttraumatic mental health experts at Phoenix Australia.

What makes Shoulder to Shoulder different is its professional moderation. No matter the time of day or a person's location, veterans and their support crew can anonymously access essential mental health support and resources in a safe and productive space.

"Shoulder to Shoulder is designed to challenge the stigma and culture of self-reliance that can prevent veterans and their loved ones from seeking support," said Karen Hall, SANE's General Manager of Recovery Programs and Clinical Governance.

"It provides a pathway to address the psychosocial challenges and common issues that impact veterans' mental health and wellbeing.

"What we ultimately want to achieve with Shoulder to Shoulder is to create an inclusive and compassionate space where this community feels truly seen, supported, and empowered – and that they know where to go for more tailored help if they need it."

Finding a place to belong

So far, the forum has reached close to 313,000 people, with more than 12,500 visitors to the space and almost 740 ongoing members. Of these members, more than 67 per cent reported they have been impacted by trauma, and 63 per cent are from non-metropolitan areas across Australia.

Regular Shoulder to Shoulder webinars for the veteran community tackle common themes and questions which have been shared across the forums. To date, webinar topics included finding purpose after service and turning fear into courage. The next webinar, scheduled for Wednesday19 November, will explore how trauma, stress and anxiety impact sleep.

"What we see across the Shoulder to Shoulder forums is a desire not just for information, but for understanding and belonging," said Karen.

"We want to continue to grow this positive and connected defence and veteran community and invite current and former servicepeople to join us and share their feedback as we continue to refine this space into the future."

New beginnings for Joe

Joe has turned his life around and is now a Lived Experience Professional with Open Arms' Community and Peer Program who supports other veterans to stay connected and take charge of their mental health.

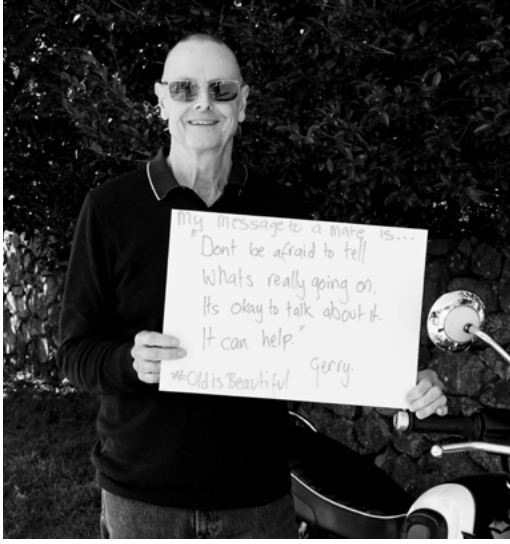
"I know what it is like to go down a dark road, make the difficult decision to seek help and discover there is light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

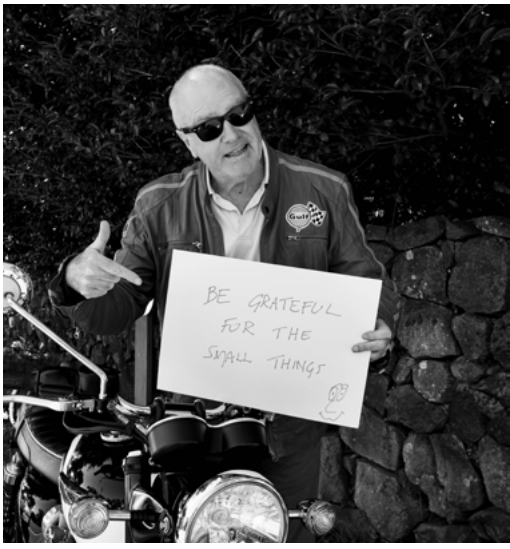
"There is nothing shameful about seeking help or doing what you need to do to make the best possible recovery.

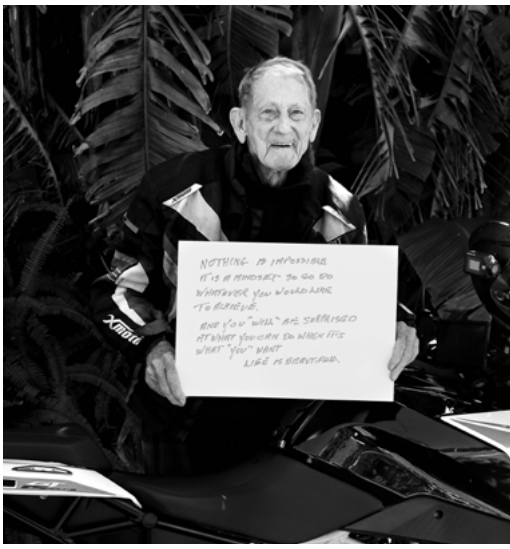
"I've seen the effects my mental health has had on my family. Getting help means I am now a better husband, father and am generally travelling better."

Visit **sane.org/shoulder-to-shoulder** for more information.

Photos by by Jade Ellis.
CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT:
Geoff Rowe.
Gerry Gilchrist.
Greg T. Ross.
Roy Wieske.
Phillip J. Hiley.







What do old motor bike riders do on an idle Wednesday in Brisbane? Getting together and talking about what makes them beautiful probably doesn't come to mind. But that's what the Old is Beautiful project does. The Old is Beautiful project is a unique way to address internalised ageism and value our own ageing by re-framing how we view ageing and using the power of portrait photography to capture the beauty, perfection and imperfection of ageing.

Some may be challenged by the assertion that old is beautiful but surprised to learn that ageism is a key causal factor for elder abuse. The National Elder Abuse Prevalence Strudy estimated that 15.9% of older Australians experience elder abuse.

That's a huge problem. The ageist view that beauty is limited to youth is harmful to older people and society more broadly. It devalues and socially isolates older people, erodes their health and wellbeing and robs those who are not yet old of being optimistic about ageing.

Why older riders?

It all started when I bought a classic racing car - a Lotus 11. I had recently lost my wife Helen and doing early morning runs up to Mt Glorious in 'Lola' helped me to cope. For those who don't know, Mt Glorious is about an hour northwest of Brisbane and the winding picturesque roads through the D'Aguilar National Park to Mt Glorious have made it a motor enthusiasts mecca.

It has created a unique circle of fellowship, and the aptly named Mt Glorious Café has become a rare place where, riders, from all walks of life, come together to talk about life, love and loss…..and of course, bikes, or in my case, classic cars. It's become a place to make new friends and find a sense of belonging.

That's where the idea to host an Old is Beautiful workshop for older, mostly men, who ride up the mountain was born.

The evidence about the wellbeing of older men is concerning. Research shows men 85+ have the highest suicide rates in Australia, three times the national average. This figure has been attributed to the losses facing this group, as well as isolation, loneliness and feelings of worthlessness.

The project aimed to explore older men's perspectives on ageism, and to identify ways to support older men 'doing it tough'.

I think to the surprise of some, it was good fun, the resulting photo portraits are fantastic, and the messages and stories critically important to understanding the ageism that drives elder abuse.

And we were delighted that the Editor in Chief of this publication, Mr Greg T Ross, could join us. But sadly, he couldn't bring his Vesper! Greg will be talking more about this project in the new year on The Last Post Radio Show Podcast.

Old is Beautiful is the brainchild of Dr Catherine Barrett from Celebrate Ageing Ltd, and ADA Australia has partnered with this organisation to bring the project to Queensland.

Combatting ageism is slow work, but through this type of systemic advocacy work ADA Australia hopes to create more self-awareness and change attitudes about ageing. Old is good.

For more visit **www.adaaustralia.com.au/old-is-beautiful**
Find the care you need, fix the care you have.
Aged Care Advocacy Line **1800 700 600**.

GEOFF ROWE

Geoff Rowe is CEO of ADA Australia, the Queensland member of the Older Persons Advocacy Network. Geoff's career in the human services sector spans 40 years, including senior and executive positions in the Queensland Government, and in the not-for-profit sector. Geoff has a strong interest in social justice, human rights and inclusion.

Veterans' mental health care with understanding and respect

Avive Health is an Australian, clinician-led private mental health services and hospital group that provides evidence-based, trauma-informed care, proudly supporting those who have served and continue to serve.

Private, single bedrooms support recovery at Avive

Military-related recovery stays and programs

Specialised inpatient care for veterans and first responders – trauma-informed, evidence-based and delivered in supportive, purpose-built environments. Developed by a multidisciplinary team of experts, including clinicians with defence backgrounds, the program is guided by lived experience and grounded in research.

Inpatient care and day programs

- Private single bedrooms with en-suites
- On-site gym with exercise physiologists
- Circadian lighting to restore natural sleep-wake balance
- Chef-prepared meals and peaceful surrounds
- Ongoing recovery supported through flexible day programs following inpatient care or as stand-alone treatment

Veterans and DVA support

- DVA Gold and White Card holders accepted
- Airport and local transport assistance available
- Coordinated care with your GP and treating team

Rural and remote access

Through Cloud Clinic by Avive, DVA-funded telehealth psychiatry connects veterans across rural and remote Australia.

avive

Avive locations

Avive Clinic Brisbane Windsor, QLD
Avive Clinic Mornington Peninsula Mount Eliza, VIC
Avive Clinic Adelaide Adelaide CBD, SA *opening 2027*
Avive Clinic Gold Coast Southport, QLD *opening 2027*

Contact us

P 1800 284 830 **E** help@avivehealth.com.au

Access support for veterans at Avive

James Armstrong, cancer survivor and WEHI consumer advocate.

James' Story

Every family has a story. For James Armstrong, that story is marked by cancer.

"I lost my wife to cancer. I lost my father to cancer. I lost my brother to cancer. And I, too, live with the shadow of this disease."

James' story is, sadly, not unique. Unfortunately, it is the story of thousands of Australian families and millions more around the world.

"Cancer touches every family. Mine is no exception."

James' wife endured brutal chemotherapy in the 1980s. His father survived decades longer thanks to pioneering surgery. His brother was given precious extra years to meet his first granddaughter because of a medical research breakthrough – immunotherapy. James himself is alive today thanks to early detection and vigilant treatment.

The power of medical research

Bowel cancer, or colorectal cancer, is now the second deadliest cancer in Australia. While 99% of bowel cancers can be treated successfully if they're discovered early, less than half are picked up in the early stages.

When James was diagnosed in 2011, only three genes were linked to bowel cancer. Just eight years later, scientists had identified 28.

Discovering the genes behind disease helps us understand why illnesses happen in the first place. This breakthrough knowledge opens the door to earlier diagnosis, more effective treatments, and even the possibility of preventing disease before it starts.

Researchers at WEHI have led a world-first study into the use of organoids – 3D cancer models grown in the lab from a patient's own tumour – to predict how patients with bowel cancer will respond to different treatments. This enables them to test which drugs will be most effective for each patient, and just as importantly, which will have no effect at all.

"Each time you give a patient an ineffective treatment, you lose 2-3 months on something that won't work" said Professor Peter Gibbs, an oncologist and one of the lead researchers on the study.

"Many patients with advanced bowel cancer only get one or two chances at treatment. Knowing what is most likely to work before they start treatment would make a significant difference to their survival outcomes and quality of life."

A clinical trial is now being developed to validate this highly personalised approach which could revolutionise cancer treatment.

But breakthroughs like these take time. It typically takes 10 to 15 years to turn a promising discovery in the lab into a life-saving treatment. Which means the research that will save lives in 2040 must start in 2025 – now.

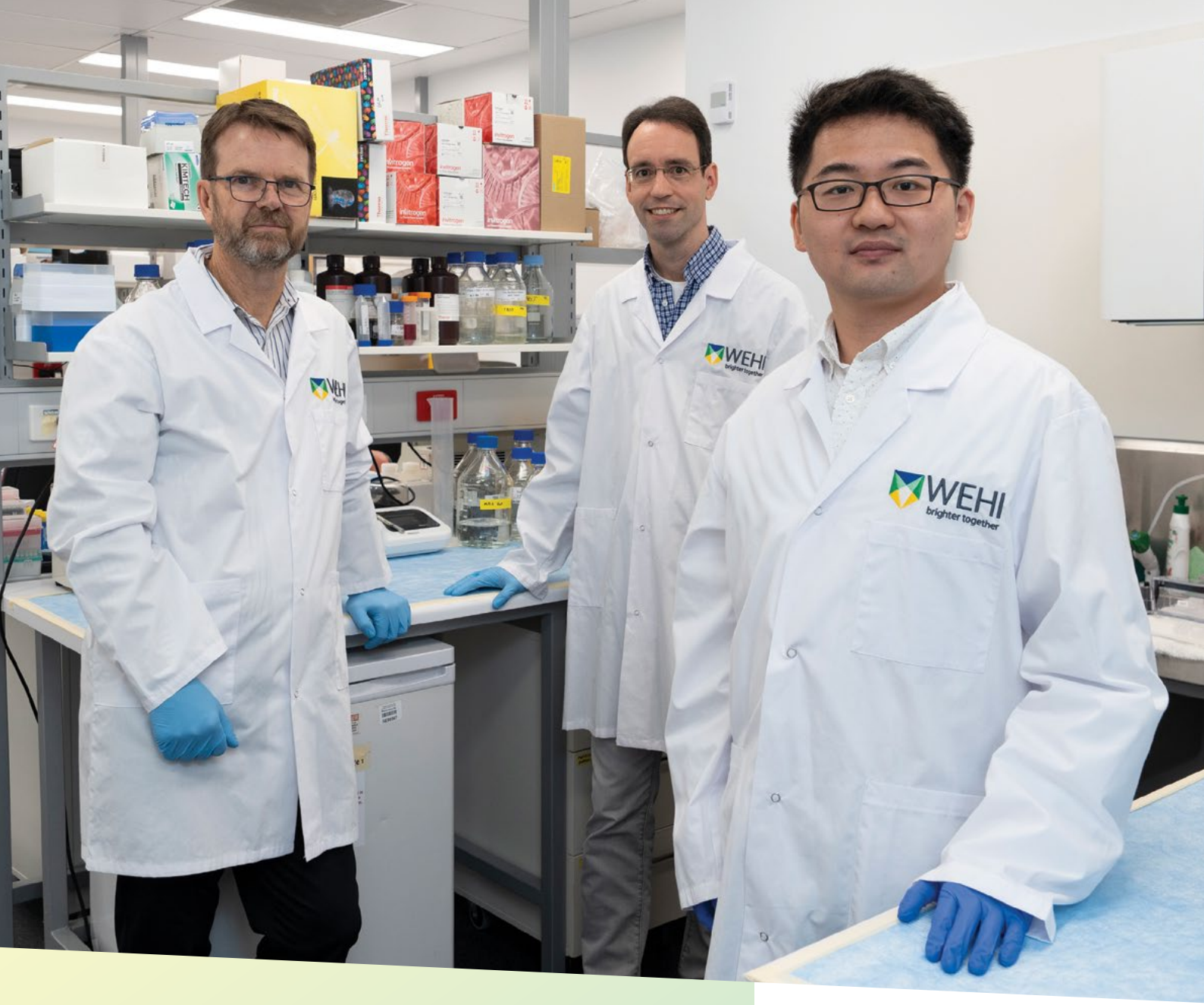
You can help change the future

Bowel cancer is striking younger people more often. We don't yet know why. But we do know this: only medical research will find the answers.

As both a scientist and a father, James knows this. That's why he is committed to supporting medical researchers at WEHI.

"Research isn't just for us – it's for our children. The treatments of tomorrow start with your generous donation today. It doesn't have to be much. But if we all give, together, we can make medical breakthroughs possible. Together, we give scientists the chance to change the future."

Your donation today will fuel discoveries that give families more time, more hope, more tomorrows. Together, we can change the future of cancer:
www.wehi.edu.au/support-us/donate/colorectalcancereappeal



Mastery of disease through discovery

Image L–R: Professor Peter Gibbs and Associate Professor Oliver Sieber with Dr Tao Tan. These scientists are leading cutting edge research into new ways to treat bowel cancer.

At WEHI, we believe that together, we can cure the most devasting diseases. By working collaboratively and with your support, we can solve health challenges faster than ever before.

WEHI is Australia's leading medical research institute, with more than 100 years of world-changing medical discoveries. Millions of people live healthy lives today because of our discoveries. Our research teams are globally recognised and continue to take on the world's major health challenges, finding solutions never thought possible.

To learn more about our current research, or to make a donation, visit:

www.wehi.edu.au

WEHI
brighter together

Your legacy. Their future.

Will you be the difference?

What does it take to make a difference to people in need?

It takes you.

By remembering Australian Red Cross in your Will, you can leave a legacy of generosity and transform the lives of people facing disaster, conflict, family separation and loneliness.

Creating a Will can ensure that your assets go to the people and causes you care about. Once you've provided for your loved ones, we'd be honoured if you'd consider leaving a gift for Australian Red Cross.

Will you be the difference?

Find out more about leaving a gift in your Will.

Scan the QR code to receive a free Will Planning Checklist.

Australian Red Cross

Pedalling for Purpose:

The Tour de V Centre Shines a Light on Veteran Homelessness

It is a shocking fact that Australia's veterans are almost three times more likely to experience homelessness than the general population. Behind these statistics are personal stories of service, sacrifice and, too often, a silent struggle.

Determined to change this, leading ex-service organisation Vasey RSL Care launched the V Centre Veteran Empowerment Program in February 2024. Based in Ivanhoe, in Melbourne's north-east, the V Centre is an industry-first initiative providing safe accommodation and tailored wraparound support for veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In its 20 months of operation, the V Centre has given veterans from across the country the time, space and support to overcome the challenges they face. Vasey RSL Care's Executive General Manager for Veteran Services, Chris Gray, said, "This is unique. It's veteran-specific. It's effective. And it's vital that regional communities are aware of the supports available to veterans, particularly housing solutions and specialist programs."

That message of support inspired the creation of the 'Tour de V Centre', a 500-kilometre bike ride designed to raise awareness of veteran homelessness and the services available to help.

From 12–16 October, nine cyclists and seven support crew journeyed from Warrnambool to Melbourne, travelling through Ararat, Ballarat and Geelong, engaging with local communities along the way. At each stop, event dinners brought people together to have honest conversations about the reality of homelessness and how we can all play a role in supporting those who've served.

Veteran and participating rider Adam Kent said "The ride was so much more than people getting on bikes. It was about highlighting the fact that connected communities save lives."

"The warmth and generosity from the communities we passed through was incredible. It showed how much people care and how powerful it can be when we come together to support our veterans" Mr Kent continued.

The Tour de V Centre was a physical challenge – but so much more; it was a movement of compassion and connection. It proved that combating homelessness is a collective effort, one that starts with awareness, empathy, and community support.

As the riders rolled into the Box Hill RSL Sub-branch on the final day, tired but inspired, they carried a clear message – help is available and when communities unite to support their most vulnerable, we can change and save lives.

Thank you to everyone who supported the inaugral Tour de V Centre 2025. Find out more: **vaseyrslcare.org.au/tdvc**

Coromandel Cricket Club team in 1881/82.

History of the Coromandel Cricket Club

The Coromandel Cricket Club (CCC) was founded in 1862 by the late Adam Whitehall.

This was 37 years before the foundation of the Adelaide & Suburban Cricket Association (ASCA) for which it competes in to this day, providing five teams in section 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8.

The CCC began its cricket on the Chambers Flat ground which was situated at the southern end of Coromandel Valley, with stints at Murry's Flat, Fiveash and Hawthorndene, the club finally purchased it's current home ground of Hewett Oval in 1892 from a Mr Batt, a clerk from the Mitcham Council.. The original pitches at this ground were asphalt!

In the 1880's the Hewett family began its long association with the club. It is a name that has graced the playing field and club administration for over 140 years, and to quote its most identifiable player, former President, life member, patron and club legend, Jack Hewett;

"Of course, playing conditions have improved. One wonders how the present club would react to chasing a heard of cows from the Southern Parklands before a start could be made. Or to make a hundred on a field of barley grass and wild oats, knee high, with stumps pulled at 6pm – the same time as the local hostelry closed. And what about the local batsman at Coromandel one day who swore that the snake that wriggled across the pitch came out of a hole in his pad."

By 1905 Coromandel was regularly playing games at Adelaide Oval against a number of sides, including Stirling and Ashbourne. At this stage of Adelaide Oval's brief history, it had already hosted six Australia v England test matches.

The 1921-22 season saw the best individual performance in the club's history, when Eric Wickens compiled 1622 runs, including 8 centuries at an average of 183.5 and took 70 wickets at 10.07 each. A feat that looks almost certain to remain the clubs best ever performance by a player. At the end of this season, the wicket was changed to a cement pitch and the first evidence of trophies being awarded was recorded.

CCC took a recess of four years for the second world war during which, the ground was used by the military. The club re-entered the Adelaide and Suburban Cricket Association in 1944-45 which it had previously entered for the first time in 1938-39 with J. Hewett as captain, took out Division 2 premiership. The club was promoted to Division 1 in 1945-46 and was successful in winning the premiership, again under J. Hewett.

The club was promoted to Division 1 in 1945-46 and was successful in winning the premiership, again under J. Hewett. Besides a small hiatus of less than 10 years, the club has competed in Division 1 of the ASCA.

The CCC continued to compete successfully in the 50's with two teams competing and in 1956-57 the club entered its first junior team in the Edwardstown Association.

In 1962 the CCC celebrated its centenary year. The official centenary celebrations occurred on 29th January and involved a morning match amongst local juniors followed by a match in the afternoon between a Coromandel side and a composite team of Blackwood R.S.L. and Coromandel Rambers. The day was concluded with a dinner and social evening.

In 1961-62 saw the establishment of a third side for the first time in the clubs history and this same year saw the club get its first practice nets, with a slips practice machine erected in 1967 which is still in use today.

The 70's saw the highest individual score from a CCC player with Gary Bonner scoring 262 in 170 minutes, the highest individual score in the club's history. Life Membership of a number of players was first granted in 1974-75 and it was determined that life membership would be awarded on the

Coromandel Cricket Club caters for junior boys and girls and senior men. If you would like to find out more about playing at CCC,please contact President, Cameron Van Den Bos on **0456 226 523**.
coromandelcricketclub.asn.au

CCC Premierships

Section 1 – 5

Overall – 19

CCC Current Player achievements

Peter Zacpal – 1130 wickets.
All-time leading wicket taker.

Darren Cheek – 11086 runs. 2nd all time runs & 482 wickets. 6th all time wicket taker.

Bruce Carpenter – 11682 runs.
All-time leading run scorer.

Andrew Magarey – 8232 runs. First game in 1962.

Mike Maclean – 7091 runs.

Rahsaan Oakey – 6700 runs.

Jai Koirala – 6068 runs.

Jarrad Macauley – 426 runs.

basis of 150 games and membership for services rendered would be awarded at the recommendations of the committee.

CCC noted a growing number of juniors in the district wanting to play cricket and decided to field 5 teams for the first time in1981-82. Financial assistance was obtained from the department of Recreation and Sport to assist in the purchase of equipment. A role that is now filled by community sponsors. This same year the association introduced a system of player registration which was particularly useful for the eligibility of players for finals which were introduced in 1984-85.

Prior to 1984-85 season the team that finished the season on top of the ladder was named the premiers of their division. The decision to introduce finals into the ASCA can largely be attributed to member of the CCC who presented submissions and support to the motion for finals. The C grade won the first final series in 1984-85 season, which was captained by Russell Hewett, the club's current patron and broke a drought of premierships, with the previous premiership being 1964-65.

In 2012 CCC turned 150 years old and acknowledged this milestone with a black tie gala event on the 25th February in the Bradman Room at Adelaide Oval. Past and present players, life members and dignitaries celebrated the night with gusto and were given an extra bonus with the Redbacks playing the one day final and winning it while the event was taking place.

The last 5 years have seen some well needed upgrades to the club. With the old bessa-brick clubrooms that were shared with the Blackwood footy, netball and tennis clubs torn down and a new fit for purpose clubrooms and changerooms being built on the southern side of the oval. The club also upgraded its playing nets a couple of years ago and now arguably boasts the best facilities in ASCA.

The club continues to attract a large member base in both seniors and junior associations, fielding 5 senior and 6 junior sides in the 2025-26 season. Also last year winning two senior premierships. The club won its first division/section 1 premiership in 70 years. A victory made all the sweeter by beating their local rival.

Coromandel Cricket Club is the second oldest cricket club in South Australia. The club has a rich history and has proven to be able to evolve to all modern day challenges in its 144 year history. A club where family names are repeated down through generations and a sense of community has always been a part of the club. CCC is always looking to welcome new players and welcome back past players hoping to get back out and play one of the greatest sports in the world.

Suburban club cricket is more than just a weekend game for me. It's where lasting friendships are formed, values are lived, and life lessons are learned, one ball at a time. My years at the Coromandel Cricket Club have shaped me in ways that extend far beyond the boundary rope.

After a seven-year hiatus from the game, I decided to take up cricket again at 24. I never could have imagined the impact it would have on my life now at 31. As a kid, cricket was just something to fill the summer while I waited for footy to start again. Now, it consumes much of my free time, from game days to the countless hours spent helping run the club I love.

Coming back to the game as an adult, I realised club cricket is about far more than what happens on the field. It's about the people you meet, the laughs shared in the changeroom, and the pride felt when a teammate succeeds. Over the years, Coromandel has become a second home, a place filled with mates who've turned into something closer to family. The bonds formed through shared wins, tough losses, drought-breaking premierships, and long afternoons in the field have become some of the most meaningful connections in my life.

Playing at Coro has taught me the value of commitment and resilience. Whether it's grinding through a long spell in the heat or digging deep for those last 15 overs of the day, cricket mirrors life in its highs, lows, and unpredictable turns. You learn patience, teamwork, humility, and how to handle both success and disappointment, lessons that stay with you long after the stumps are pulled.

Off the field, the camaraderie and banter build a sense of belonging that's hard to replicate elsewhere. Those friendships, forged through competition and mutual respect, are the heart of our club.

For me, cricket isn't just a game, it's a test of character, a teacher of life's lessons, and a community that endures. The Coromandel Cricket Club isn't just where I play, it's my home.

CAMERON VAN DEN BOS

President, Coromandel Cricket Club

2024-25 ASCA Section1 Premiership side.

Cameron Van Den Bos holding the 2024-25 ASCA Section1 Premiership Cup.

Coromandel Cricket Club Fathers & Sons

The Coromandel Cricket Club has a long history of fathers and sons playing through the generations. Continuing this proud tradition, here are some of the 2055 CCC father and sons.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP:

Left to right – Ben Haslam, Michael Haslam, Will Lemmey, Mark Lemmey, Cam Van Den Bos, Rob Van Den Bos, Matthew Hunter, Richard Hunter, Maksim Maclean, Mike Maclean.

Left to right – Ben Eames & Jack Eames.

Left to right – Peter Zacpal & Simon Zacpal.

Left to right – Sam Cheek & Darren Cheek.

Left to right – Andrew Magarey, Mark Lemmey, Will Lemmey, Dave Magarey.

Have you thought about Senior's Cricket?

It's a game where everyone gets a hit, batters must retire at 40 and bouncers are a no-no. But concessions to age are few in the Veterans Cricket Victoria competition.

Sure, the seniors who pad up every Sunday aren't the young men they once were. But they more than make up for it with enthusiasm and love of the sport.

The competition started with four teams playing in Victoria but now there's over 60 active clubs with probably more than 1200 players over 60 - and growing.

The competition fields teams graded 'over 40', 'over 50', 'over 60' and '70-plus'. There isn't an over-80s competition at the moment. but given good health, we expect to see one in about five years' time. Cricket is great for seniors because it keeps us off the couch, away from the TV and staying active.

The competition is a mix of players who ceased regular cricket in their thirties and those that have continued the summer ritual throughout their later years, albeit as they slipped down through the grades! Turning to Veterans Cricket gives a new lease on your cricketing life as you once again are playing against other fellows in the same age profile.

The regular 40-over-a-side competition starts in October and runs until March. Matches are played on Sundays, usually from 11am-5pm. It is general practice that there are barbecues and a chat after the game.

A lot of wives/partners come along and watch and participate afterwards. It's a great social outlet for those who still enjoy their cricket.

Players have varying levels of ability, from one long-retired Test player through to fellows who had never played cricket before, but the alternative for them was to play for the local bowls club! Everyone gets a bat and a bowl - we ensure that each team must use seven bowlers, so everyone gets to compete. The camaraderie and the socialising are an important bonus for all involved.

Boundary cones are set a little closer to the wicket than they used to be in our prime, but here are no other restrictions except our own physical limitations, which means it is rarely seen that batsmen run three!

Run outs are contingent on fielders not fumbling the ball, so tend to be a bit rare

and you can't really rely on fieldsmen to take catches. If they do the celebrations are lengthy!

While the players might lack the athletic ability of their salad days, and club matches are mostly light-hearted, there still remains the underlying competitive spirit.

Veterans Cricket Victoria also participates in several National Carnivals each season. These competitions allow players who in earlier times would never have dreamed of representing the 'Big V', the chance to live their childhood cricketing fantasy.

There are a number of different carnivals each year and recently there has been a move to representative carnivals in age groups split by five years rather than ten. That is, there are carnivals for over 50s, over 55s, over 60s, over 65s, etc. This gives a larger number of players the opportunity to represent their state.

The best players can go on to compete for Australia. A team recently returned from England after competing for the "Grey Ashes".

But for many, the highlight is a week-long end-of-season carnival in Echuca, bringing together teams from all over the state and beyond. Each March we have hundreds of players and supporters converge on Echuca and surrounding areas for a week of cricket, camaraderie, social interaction and fun.

There exists a great future for veteran's cricket. The VCV is keen to continue to grow the sport and get more people involved. Those who might have felt that as their working career is over, there isn't much to do, now have a second chance at playing cricket. And those of us already involved, thank our lucky stars each week that we do!

If you're interested in wielding the willow again - or even for the first time – contact the VCV Secretary Craig Martyn at **secretary@vcv.org.au** and you will be put in touch with a local club.

Dusk 'Till Dawn

From 7:00pm on Friday 17 October to 7:00am on Saturday 18 October 2025, the treasured grounds of the Australian War Memorial (AWM) were transformed into a powerful symbol of resilience and camaraderie during the annual Dusk 'Till Dawn 12-hour challenge.

This overnight endurance event brought together over 220 participants in a collective effort to raise funds and awareness for Bravery Trust, a national charity dedicated to supporting Australian veterans facing financial hardship.

As part of the broader Bravery Trek campaign, the challenge proved to be a resounding success, generating more than $180,000 in donations. The funds will directly assist veterans and their families, helping them navigate difficult times with dignity and support.

Participants included spirited teams from the Royal Military College - Duntroon, the Australian War College, and the Joint Explosive Ordnance Services, whose members completed the trek in full EOD-10E bomb disposal suits, showcasing extraordinary grit and determination. They were joined by a wide spectrum of Defence personnel, industry and community supporters, all united by a shared commitment to honouring service and sacrifice.

Over 10,000km were completed under the stars, with the iconic AWM providing a poignant backdrop. Stories of service, remembrance, and personal triumph echoed through the night, reminding everyone of the deeper purpose behind each step taken.

Beyond the physical challenge, Dusk 'Till Dawn fostered a spirit of solidarity and reflection, reinforcing the importance of community support for those who have served. With growing momentum each year, the event continues to inspire Australians to walk alongside their veterans—literally and figuratively.

In Brisbane there's a 42 for 42 Memorial on the outer perimeter of Suncorp Stadium; it commemorates 41 soldiers lost their lives during Defence's 20-year involvement in the war in Afghanistan and the 42nd represents the soldier who lost their life in training or took their life due to mental illness. Approaching the Dusk to Dawn run I was keen to honour these brave souls – I'd set myself an objective of doing 42 laps of the Australian War Memorial precinct throughout the night.

With Bravery Trek Ambassadors, Meg and Singh, we laid a wreath by the reflection pond during the solemn occasion of the Last Post Ceremony. We then got an early start lapping the War Memorial. I pinned on the the details of the first soldier on my belt and headed out to meet the challenge. Each lap we'd change the soldier we were running for. We paused at 1830 to hear Fred Smith sing about the Dust of Uruzgan and the story of Private Paul Warren who lost his leg to an IED. He lost a mate that day – Private Benjamin Ranaudo, another of the 41 who I'd remember on my 11th lap soon after dark. At the extremity of each lap lay a hidden reminder; a dusty incline through a corpse of gums where the course reached it's apex and descended back towards the Memorial's parade ground. As night wore on and runners pounded through these trees the dust became more prevalent. Stark contrast to the groomed and well hydrated lawns surrounding the memorial; it became a mystical proxy to the story of Afghanistan, of Privates Warren and Ranaudo and the dust that never seemed to abate. Whilst our legs felt drained the tangible sense of context in Fred's song and the reminder of the 42 who made the ultimate sacrifice pushed us on. Night soon became morning which then became daybreak.

In the morning light my partner Judy joined me and we walked the 42nd lap together. A solemn walk thinking of my mate Ben who took his own life after returning from Afghanistan.

In the Trek we raised important funds to ensure we support those who were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice.

I managed another lap before the challenge ended to focus on those soldiers from Afghanistan who struggle to this day and perhaps need a hand from Bravery Trust to make ends meet.

MURRAY BRUCE | LEIDOS

Vice President Science Engineering & Technology, Leidos Australia

Peter Rees

"Early on, kicking a football around informally called to mind the comforting familiarity of home. And as the weeks went by, Australian rules became the most popular football code the Australians played at Changi. It gave them an outlet for their outrage and powerlessness at their status as POWs and at their military leaders, whom they blamed for the surrender.

The play has often been described as rougher than the game back home, a clearly different game from the rugby union and soccer favoured by the British. Aussie rules gave the Australians an opportunity to own and express a national identity. Private Jim Maycomb of the 2 9th Field Ambulance caught the mood of the time and he wrote, as if by magic, someone produced a football.

At first, the lads were able only to indulge in kick for kick between buildings on the hard bitumen surfaces. Then someone suggested getting a competition going. However, there was concern that the diet on which the men were living was far from sufficient to engage in such a strenuous exercise.

A mere two ounces of meat was the weekly allowance. Despite the inadequate diet, there was strong demand for a competition. And this led to the formation of the Changi Football League, with some 600 men registering interest in playing Australian rules.

The POWs created the footy oval in the no man's land between Salerarang and Roberts Barracks. 30 foot long poles were fashioned out of rubber trees as goals and behind posts. The six clubs in the newly minted Changi premiership were appropriately named Melbourne, Richmond, Essendon, Carlton, Geelong and St Kilda."

Greg T Ross: Hello, Peter Rees, author and thank you for opening the show with that reading from your latest book, Guts and Glory. How are you, Peter?

Peter Rees: Well, thanks, Greg. It's great to be with you and to be able to talk about the book.

GTR: Yeah, well, fantastic stuff. So the Changi Football League, Peter?

PR: Yes, it was one of the most important things that kept the spirit of the POWs, the Australian POWs going and able to cope with the adverse situation that they were in. I mean, here they were, suddenly having gone from fighting to being forced to surrender by their commanders. And there was great hurt and outrage at the situation that they'd been placed into. They did not believe that they should have surrendered. So they had to find ways to cope in their new situation. And sport was one of the means that they employed to exercise their time.

GTR: I noticed in that read there too, Peter, that, of course, so brilliantly written about the prisoners using this as an opportunity to own and express their national identity.

PR: And this was something, Greg, that was there right from the start of Australia's involvement in the wars over the 20th century. It happened in Egypt in World War I, 16 days after the first contingent of troops arrived in Egypt in 1914, December 1914. 16 days later, they were playing Australian Rules on a dusty paddock at the Gazira Sporting Club. This was their chance to show Australian exceptionalism, their own game. And it left those in the British spectator ranks around the ground bemused. They'd never seen anything like it. And yet it was the opportunity, the Australians in that contingent, that first contingent of 20,000 men who went away as the first AIF, it was their choice of how to show their exceptionalism.

GTR: A couple of things, actually. We'll get into the deeper side of all this shortly. But where did they get the footy from, Peter, at Changi?

PR: Well, in many cases over the years, Greg, they actually had to make their footballs from scraps of leather. Old boots, old gear, they would fashion them into footballs. And they became quite prized. There was a football taken to Gallipoli that was used to kick around that Tom Richards, the great Australian rugby player, rugby union player, took part in. He wrote about it in his diary, a football that Victorians had taken to Gallipoli. And he joined in with them, kicking the ball around. And the same thing happened in World War Two, not just at Changi, but in other POW camps in Germany, where Australian airmen were incarcerated. So it was something that was quite unique.

GTR: But just back finally, I can't let this go about the Changi footy league, but no Collingwood.

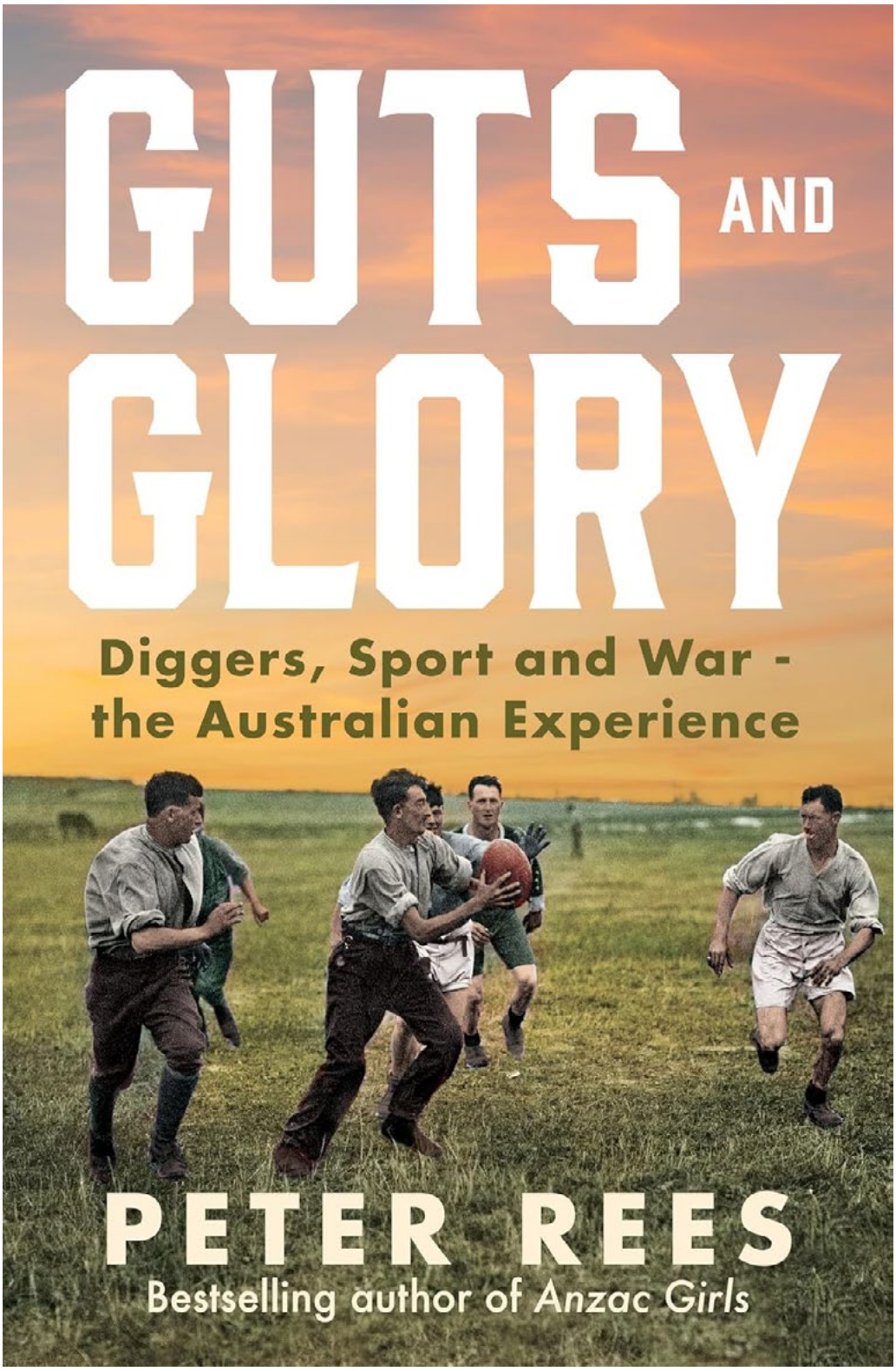
PR: Well, I guess this is a source of contention among the Magpie supporters today. They were shunned. They were the teams that were settled on, Melbourne, Richmond, Essendon, Carlton, Geelong and St Kilda. And indeed, one could argue that the Magpie should have been there. Yes, that's true.

GTR: Well, we'll forgive of course, but a brilliant read this book is too. Dare to dream, dare to commit. What's that mean?

PR: Well, what I wanted to bring out, Greg, is that to go to war is a commitment. To put yourself on the front line is a commitment. And it's important that you have a spirit that will carry you through. And part of that spirit, I think, is to dream. And my aim with this book was to show how sport and war have been interwoven throughout Australia's military history. You know how sporting fields offered not only escape from the hardship of war, but became crucibles for camaraderie, resilience, mateship and the forging of leadership. And to get there, you have to commit and you have to dream.

GTR: Jeez. Well, I find great companionship in those words too, that you've introduced readers to the book with. And it starts a magnificent journey. There's so many examples of sport being used, as you say, as a way of owning and expressing the national identity throughout warfare. There's so many examples. Private Ralph Robinson up in Papua New Guinea, he was actually on the cover of the current edition, Peter. So what's Ralph's story?

PR: Well, Ralph was in that first contingent that went to the islands,



New Guinea and the surrounding islands, tasked with the goal of taking over and capturing the German wireless station there, which the Australians promptly did. But they were stationed there, they had to fill in a lot of time. And so a football was produced and they spent time kicking it around. So it was the first time that Australian troops were able to kick a football around. And they started the tradition of doing so wearing army boots, which was not recommended as an easy way to do this.

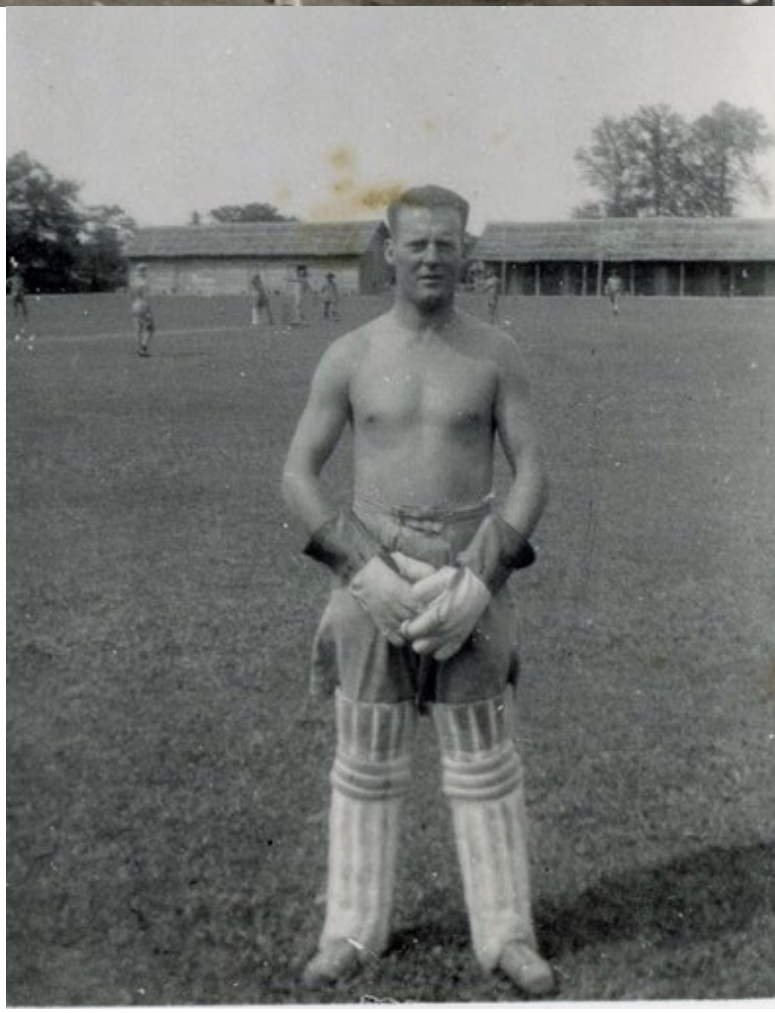
GTR: Throughout the book, Guts and Glory, there's examples of not only football, of course, and we'll get on to a couple more examples soon, Peter, but it was all sorts of things, wrestling on horseback even, for heaven's sake.

PR: That's right. That was one of the exercises, the games that Bull Ryrie of the Light Horse introduced during a sports carnival for his men as they waited impatiently to go to Gallipoli. So you can just imagine the mayhem that was evident in that sort of sporting endeavour. Running, rowing, Aussie Rules, of course, and rugby.

GTR: I suppose the thing that struck me in this read was, of course, not only the connection with sport, with our military history, but what do you reckon our history as a country would have been like if we hadn't joined the European war, which became the First World War?

PR: Well, that's a wonderful question, Greg. If we hadn't joined the war, well, we probably would have seen that early enthusiasm that came with Federation in 1901 continue, because World War I left a huge impact on Australia. It meant that hardly a family in Australia was unaffected by the war in some fashion. In far too many cases, the grief of losing their men, of men returning home so badly damaged that the after effects lingered for years and years, causing countless misery. So

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P04366.004



ABOVE: Australian troops hold a surf carnival, Gaza, 1942.

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
ADF troops Vietnam, tug-o'war. Family pic.
WO Scott Heywood, Malaya. Family photo.
WW! recruiting image. AWM.

'... THEY WERE PLAYING AUSTRALIAN RULES ON A DUSTY PADDOCK AT THE GAZIRA SPORTING CLUB. THIS WAS THEIR CHANCE TO SHOW AUSTRALIAN EXCEPTIONALISM, THEIR OWN GAME. AND IT LEFT THOSE IN THE BRITISH SPECTATOR RANKS AROUND THE GROUND BEMUSED. THEY'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.'

if we hadn't joined World War I, well, I mean, Australia would have been a far different place. But of course, we felt that commitment to join World War I and be part of the British Empire forces such as they were at the time. We felt a commitment, a connection to the mother country.

GTR: Yes, actually, that's very interesting you say that too, Peter, because of course, through sport, and then through warfare, the connection comes again, because I guess there was an eagerness to express our national identity.

PR: And sport certainly enabled that to happen, because not only through Australian Rules, as we've discussed, was that opportunity available by showing the rest of the world just what we were able to do with our football, but we also engaged in the opportunity to take on the old enemy, the British, the English, in cricket and rugby at every opportunity in both wars. And indeed, we've taken on the British in recent times, in the desert ashes that were held in Iraq 20 years ago. So this is a long standing tradition that has been maintained, and I see no evidence that it will ever pass into oblivion. It will be there, as long as we're engaged in military operations, and the British are there at the same time.

GTR: Back to individuals. Big Jack Massey, he was good at everything, wasn't he? He was a bowler. And tell us a bit about Big Jack.

PR: Well, Big Jack, he was about six foot four, 95 kilos. He was just an outstanding left arm fast bowler. He was also a boxer. He could do anything, a crack shooter. And he was on the verge of being selected to play test cricket for Australia to open the bowling, much in the fashion of, say, an Alan Davidson in later years. He was a bowler of that stature. He was viewed as the best left arm bowler in the world in 1914. But he felt this urge to enlist, as so many other sportsmen were doing. And so he enlisted with the first AIF within a few days of enlistment's opening, and went to war, went off to Gallipoli, and then on to the Western Front. Such an interesting character.

GTR: And you bring these characters to life. I don't know if it brings us closer to understanding what it's like to be an Australian, but I think it does, actually, Peter. There's examples through, I guess, the English attitude. Tell us, was it the Jazira Sporting Club where the English got a bit...with the Australians? Did you remember that?

PR: Yes, we played them in cricket there, during this period when we were in Cairo in World War I. And they were pretty sniffy, the English colonials who were in charge of the bureaucracy in Egypt at the time. And they would play on the field, but they were too sniffy to talk to the Australians when they were back in the sheds. And that really did get up the nose of the Australians, who were quite offended by this superior attitude, which of course only added to their determination to beat them on the field.

GTR: That's right. Well, we saw that recently, didn't we? A couple of years back now at Lords, where the players were harangued and harassed for playing within the rules.

PR: Well, there's certain behaviour among the upper-class British that doesn't change, I guess. So, yes, that has its consequences. It's an intriguing book, Guts and Glory, that brings you into the history of sporting and Australia's military history as well. And there's so many stories there. Actually, Peter, there was one there. World War II, the Wallabies arrived at Plymouth, September 1939, was it? And they were going to have a tour there, and a day later, Chamberlain interrupted that whole thing. And war was declared, which meant that they were left there in Britain for what was going to be the sporting tour of their lives.

PR: They were going to play England, they were going to go to the continent, and believe it or not, they were actually going to be playing Germany, which at that stage was shouldering with the French to be the preeminent rugby union side on the continent. But all these plans, including going on to America to play there on the way home, suddenly were upended when war was declared. And they ended up helping building fortifications before coming home. It was just a tour that was never marked by a test match. I think they had quite a good team at the time too.

GTR: But they were, the Torquay Hotel languishing about there, and of course, war starts and the whole thing goes belly up. So it must have been very, very frustrating. You speak of all sorts of sports too, cricket, the cricket in Malaya, was it? They played cricket there too.

PR: That's right. Before the hostilities began with the Japanese invasion of the peninsula there, the Australians were waiting for this to happen. And in that time, they played cricket, they played rugby union, they played Australian Rules, and that was quite a strong competition. But then all of this changed, of course, in early December 1941, when the Japanese attacked.

GTR: Yes, in a big way. Now, Peter Rees, we spoke about Big Jack Massey before, boxer, shooter, and of course, a fast left arm bowler. Brilliant, six foot four, brilliant man. What about Albert Jacka? Now, of course, Albert has a bit of a historical link with Australia's history. But if you can tell listeners a bit more about Albert, apparently he was a shy kid, but he got into a lot of stuff, didn't he?

PR: Well, he certainly did. And he was awarded a VC for his extraordinary bravery. But as a youth, he was very shy, but he was intensely competitive. He was gifted in sports such as boxing, cycling and football. And when war broke out, he again, like Jack Massey, was one of the early enlistees enlisting in September 1914. He was just 22 years old when he landed at Gallipoli, a day after the actual landing. And, you know, just less than a month later, he single handedly captured a Turkish trench during a Turkish counter attack. And that's where he was awarded his Victoria Cross for bravery. So he went on to the Western Front, where, again, his bravery was recognised when he rallied his men and charged the Germans to recapture a section of a trench. So, you know, he was a really notable figure in Australia's military history, and not just winning a VC, but also the Military Cross.

GTR: I was totally knocked out. I mean, learning the history of Albert Jacka, Peter, was when he took those Turkish single handedly. I mean, that's the stuff of a Boy's Own Annual, but it was true. And he became a heroic figure in Australia.

PR: He was a soldier who was seen to represent everything that the Australian Army needed at a time when the dreadful casualties on the Western Front saw recruitment slump. And so he was used by the authorities as a beacon, as somebody of stature that other men should try and live up to. So he was used in a recruitment campaign. And the idea was that he would encourage men to join what was known as Jacka's Mob. And his image appeared on recruiting posters, magazines, and newspapers in quest of achieving this outcome.

GTR: That's right. I remember reading and seeing that too, the posters. And was it true that they were trying to get a particular group of sports people together to fight under Jacka's Mob, but that never really eventuated?

PR: Well, no, no, no. The move for a Sportsman's Thousand, so to speak, was initially mooted when war broke out, but it took another couple of years for it to be revived. It didn't have quite the same urgency and popularity as it did in Britain, where they'd also had sportsman's units at the start of war. And they were filled much more quickly than the idea of it in Australia. But then it did come up again. And people like Les Seaborne in Sydney mounted the campaign to try and get a sportsman's unit together. Finally, they did. There was one unit formed and it included Cess Healy, an Australian Olympic gold medallist, a swimmer. And they fought in the Western Front in the final months of World War I.

GTR: I think from memory, correct me if I'm wrong, Peter Rees, Albert returned to Australia in a not very well condition. He spent time at Caulfield Repatriation, I think, and then eventually became a councillor, St Kilda Council or something, but he died at a young age.

PR: Yeah, well, so many of them were carrying injuries, psychological and physical, from the after effects

Australian troops, volley ball, Nui Dat, Vietnam. Family pic.

of war on the Western Front, Greg. I mean, the use of gas just had such long lasting consequences. So many men died young. So many men just were damaged in ways that were not understood at the time. And one of the things that I write about in the book is how they used sport in the years after the war to keep a connection with their fellow diggers going. They could at least understand there was this connection, this understanding among their own of what they'd been through, the terrible consequences of war in the trenches. And they got that familiarity reinforced on the sporting fields around Australia every weekend, whether it be cricket, tennis, or football. But there was this unspoken connection and sport was integral to that and to their well-being.

GTR: You get pretty deep here. I'm thinking about the barracking for football teams in this example, Aussie Rules. It's really, really a base emotion, isn't it? It's a strong, strong emotion that comes from somewhere else.

PR: Well, that's right. And it was an emotion that was alive and well in the POW camps in World War I and World War II. And indeed, we even had the barracking in a different sense, Greg, in World War II with the boxing, with boxing in the islands towards the end of the war with the RAAF units stationed in the islands.

There was a fighter by the name of Len Waters, a Kamilaroi man from around southern Queensland, the town of Nindiguli in St. George, who had great boxing skill. And he entered the competition, which featured American boxers and Australian boxers every Friday night. And his skills meant that his fellow airmen backed him all the way and won Dutch guilders each night that he went into the ring each Friday night. And they cheered him on, with good reason, of course, because he was earning them good money. They backed him for 15 fights. He won all of them. And finally, they reached the end of the competition, where he was to fight for the South Pacific Middleweight Championship against an American of some skill. And they backed him again, put all their money on him, cheered him to the hilt, and he went into the ring. It was a tough fight. But Len emerged victorious. So they cheered him with all their might. And it was something that was successful.

GTR: He must have been some boxer. And no wonder they put their money on him, Len Waters. Boy, oh boy. What about the 25th anniversary of Anzac Day, 1940, Palestine, the dawn service at the Gaza War Cemetery. And I guess they had that. And then three days later, the AIF were playing against the French. Was it in rugby at Beirut? That sounds interesting.

PR: Well, that was an amazing match. The French were the champion team of the Levant at the time. And there was a competition going there. And they sought this match against the Australians, then chose to bolster their team by flying in five French internationals from Paris. The Australians, though, were not to be outdone. They'd been training, basically unknown to the French. They had this competition going at their camps and managed to pull together a very strong team, which featured people like Weary Dunlop, the legendary surgeon from the POW camps. Later in the war, Weary was a Victorian, but a Wallaby. In those days, there was a strong rugby competition in Victoria. And he emerged as a Wallaby and indeed was on that '39 tour, which didn't go ahead after they landed in Plymouth, just as war was about to be declared. But he went on to the Middle East and was part of that team, which took on the French. And they appointed a fellow by the name of Jika Travers as their captain. And Jika played pretty smartly. He led the French to believe that they weren't fit enough, Australians weren't fit enough to play full halves....

This is an edited version of the Peter Rees interview.
For the full interview go to: **thelastpostmagazine.com/the-last-post-radio-show-podcast**.

North Shore War Hero – Keith Anthoness

The mounted charge of the Australian Light Horse 4th Brigade at Beersheba on 31 October 1917 was an epic victory for the British Commonwealth forces in World War I.

MAIN IMAGE: Painting of the Australian Light Horse 4th Brigade charge at Beersheba 1917.

INSET IMAGE: Keith Anthoness.

Commencing at dusk, members of the brigade stormed through the Turkish defences and seized the strategic town of Beersheba paving the way for the capture of Palestine from the Ottoman Empire.

One of the brigade scouts for the 4th Light Horse Brigade during this charge was Keith Antoness, who had played for the North Sydney club (later North Shore) prior to his enlistment.

He was described by the Saturday Referee and Arrow newspaper, as a ruckman, who was "a proper type of footballer" (20 June 1914).

The main purpose of brigade scouts in the Light Horse brigades was to find water, scout the ground ahead, to observe enemy troop movements and to draw fire away from the main body of troops. In attacks of this sort the scouts were likely to be at the front of the charge.

Keith Anthoness, a livestock salesman, was born in Hawthorn, Melbourne in 1893. The family moved to Sydney and he lived with his parents in Mosman.

He represented NSW in an interstate victory over Queensland at the Brisbane Exhibition Ground on 7 June 1913 when he led the ruck. The Sky Blues won 9.15.69 to 7.10.52.

Other players to serve our country in WWI from that victorious team were Les Clark (Sydney), Graham Duigan (North Sydney), Bertie Filgate (North Sydney – killed at Gallipolli), Don McConville (YMCA – killed in action), Freddy McGargill (Sydney), Bill Muggivan (Sydney), James Munro (Newtown), Aub Provan (Newtown, later President NSW ANFL1929-33), and Bert Swindells (Newtown).

Anthoness was also mentioned in dispatches in North Sydney's loss to Sydney at North Sydney Oval on 19 June 1914 when the Sydney Sportsman (24 June 1914) reported that "Norths not nearly nippy enough" – going down 1.7.13 to Sydney's 9.13.67.

This was the last match of the season for North Sydney; Anthoness enlisted on 2 February 1915.

He returned from active duty in April 1919, and moved to West Wyalong in 1921 where he established a stock and station agency in partnership with Harry Johnson.

A report of Anthoness playing for West Wyalong against Blow Clear Girral Rovers in 1922 in the West Wyalong Mining, Agriculure and Pastoral Times (23 May 1922) states that he was "a surprise packet" in the 4.3.27 to 2.4.16 win.

Tullibigeal beat West Wyalong in the first semi final but were beaten by Blow Clear Girral in the grand final played at Ungarie. West Wyalong with drew from the competition in 1923.

During the Second World War Anthoness held a commission in the Citizens' Military Forces.

He was active in returned servicemen's affairs in the area up until his death in 1975.

BY DR RODNEY GILLETT

Source: A Game to be Played: The Great War and Australian Football in Sydney by Paul Macpherson and Ian Granland, NSW Australian Football History Society, 2015.

Veterans Champion Wellbeing at the Australian Masters Games

The 20th edition of the Australian Masters Games was held in Canberra from 18 to 25 October 2025, celebrating competition, camaraderie, and community spirit.

While the Games are about testing skill and endurance, they're equally focused on having fun, getting active, and connecting with others, values that align perfectly with the RSL Active program, which promotes wellbeing, social connection, and camaraderie through sport and recreation.

In the lead-up to this milestone event, RSL Australia put out a call for members to join Team RSL, a national team representing veterans from across the country. Fourteen members answered that call, competing across a diverse range of sports including Athletics, Archery, Clay Target and Skeet Shooting, Dragon Boating, Fencing, Lawn Bowls, Sailing, and Swimming.

While the team delivered some impressive results, the shared philosophy remained clear — it was "more about mateship than medals." Participation and enjoyment were at the heart of every event.

For many, the Games served as a reminder of the benefits of staying active and connected. Damian Hastie, a former member of the Royal Australian Regiment and a current member of the Geelong RSL Sub-Branch, hadn't competed in 16 years before joining Team RSL.

"I was a little tentative entering four events, but this has given me the confidence to continue competing and change my life to a more active one," he said.

Damian went on to win gold, silver, and bronze medals across shot put, javelin, discus, and weight throw.

"The ongoing support from RSL and competitors has been fantastic for my return to competition. I have found these games competitive but very friendly, and the camaraderie in the competition tent fabulous."

The spirit of participation was perfectly captured by Richard, a former Navy Commander and member of Redcliffe RSL Sub-branch. "When RSL Team Coordinator, Geoff asked if I could swim, my honest reply was, 'Yes, but not very well.' His encouraging response was 'It's about participation,' and so I decided to do it!"

The opportunity motivated Richard to start a training routine. "My fitness and swimming ability improved significantly, and I swam well on competition day, despite some less-than-perfect flip turns," he recalled. "But such is the friendliness and all-are-welcome attitude of the Games, it really is about enjoyable participation."

Team RSL members gave it their all, crediting their outstanding experience to the efforts of RSL volunteer coordinator Geoff. "Geoff's professionalism, dedication, and support at every event made the experience truly memorable," said team member and former RAAF CPL Maria.

After an inspiring week of sport and camaraderie, Damian summed up the team's experience with a message to fellow veterans: "It is never too late, irrespective of physical or mental injuries, to get active!"

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT:
Maria competing in the 8km cross country.
Phil and Wayne - silver medalists in Lawn Bowls pairs.
Richard achieved personal bests in the 25m and 100m freestyle swim.
Maria and Damian.
Ari, gold and bronze medalist in Sabre Fencing, shakes hands with Geoff - Team RSL Coordinator.

RSL Active supports recreation, events and activities for veterans and their families.
Learn more: **rslaustralia.org/rsl-active**

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Wounded HEROES Australia

COMPASSION • HOPE • PURPOSE

WOUNDED HEROES SUSTAINABILITY MODEL

Jim's Café

COME AS YOU ARE. LEAVE AS A FRIEND.

opshop

As a part of our sustainability Wounded Heroes has opened 2 Veteran Centres located in Bundamba and Townsville. These centres create a safe place for people to meet that is free of pokies and alcohol. The Veteran Centres consist of an OpShop and Cafe (called Jim's Cafe, named after our Founder Jim Shapcott).

The purpose of these centres is to offset the cost of wages for Wounded Heroes staff to provide 24/7 crisis support nationally.

The benefits of the Veteran Centres are multiple including veterans in the local area that are experiencing crisis can come for immediate support; local veterans often utilise the centre for coffee catchups with other veterans with lived experiences which assists with social inclusions; the local community are very generous and regularly donate to the OpShop; both Veterans and the local community take advantage of our food rescue programs.

COFFEE4HEROES

Our Coffee4Heroes brand delivers 100% of its profits to support Wounded heroes, our veterans and their families.

SCAN HERE

At Coffee4Heroes, we believe your coffee can do more than just fuel your day - it can change lives.

Our mission is simple yet powerful: to support Australian veterans and their families through the sale of an exceptional coffee that's as meaningful as it is delicious.

Crafted with care by renowned coffee expert Phillip Di Bella, Coffee4Heroes is made from World Golden Bean Award-winning roasted beans. This premium coffee is 100% Australian, embodying both excellence and generosity. Every bag you purchase contributes directly to the vital support services provided by Wounded Heroes, an organisation dedicated to helping veterans in need.

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A Tale of 2 Cities - Istanbul & London

Two incredible, vibrant cities that are equally appealing but so vastly different. They are around 4 hours flight time apart, from one end of Europe to the tip of Asia.

Photos: Monique March.

The population of Istanbul exceeds London by 6,000,000 but its London that feels more populated. London has huge, expansive parks, more than 5 times the amount that is in Istanbul, so that might be one explanation of why the inner areas of London feel more bustling. When it comes to activity on the harbour though Istanbul is hands down a lot busier than London. The Bosphorus Strait is a hive of activity with ferries coming and going every few minutes. On the bridges there is nothing like witnessing the row after row of fishermen trying to snag a bite at the end of their long rods.

Both offer picturesque scenes and historic buildings from the water. From The Thames, buildings such as The Tower of London can be passed and on The Brosphorous Strait some of the buildings built within its 2,500 year history may be seen. Mosques pervade every part of Instanbul, with approx 3,000 covering the city. The Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia are both stunning. In London, St Pauls and Westminster Abbey are splendid Baroque styles.

London has some of the best galleries in the world, Tate Modern, Tate Britian, National Gallery and the recently updated Nat Portrait Gallery as well as the spectacular V&A. What sets London apart from Istanbul is that most galleries and museums are free, excluding any special exhibitions. Istanbul on the other hand do not have the arts funding so none offer free admission. In every other area Istanbul is more affordable. One of the most stunning attractions in Istanbul is Basilica Cistern where there are 336 columns underground.

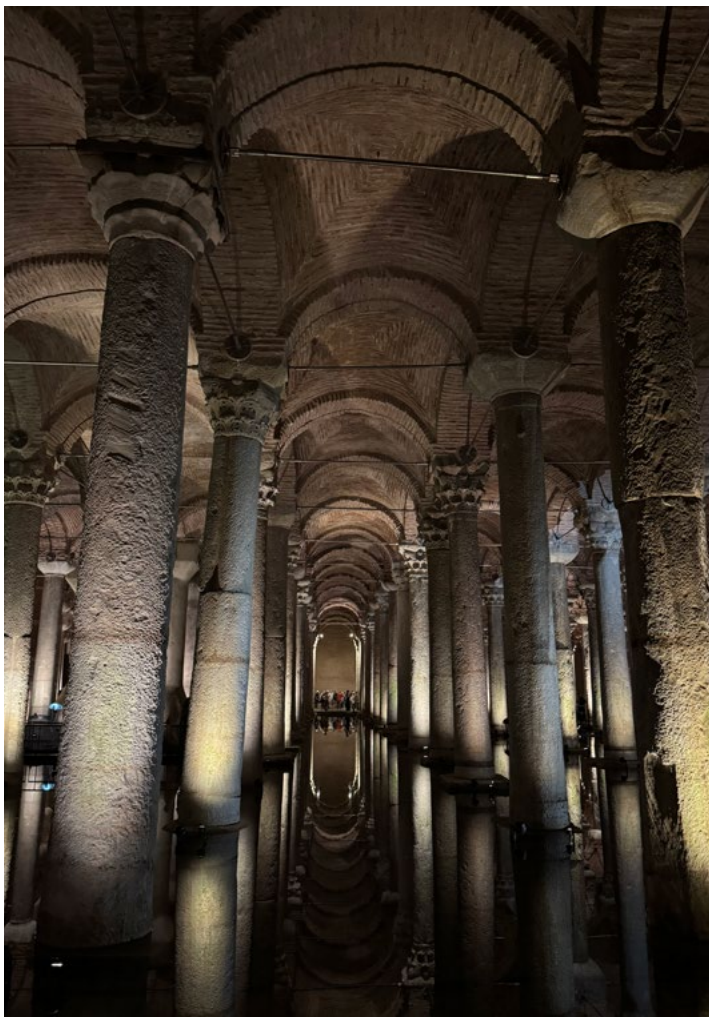
The markets in both places are vastly different, many in both cities are outside but the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul is under cover and offers 4,000 shops. To visit the endless cafes and restaurants especially the rooftops in Istanbul is a real treat, nothing like looking at the spectacular panoramic views. Over the years London has increased the amount of rooftop bars and restaurants. Both have eclectic live music scenes and London's theatre scene is sublime.

Both cities are wonderful and lively to roam around day after day. London has become a very bike friendly destination. If you love cats, Istanbul is a must, there is even a cat museum or if it's pubs you love London is an essential destination. Lastly, the people! I've always loved the English but I've got to say the Turks rate as being a bit more helpful and friendly but go and see what you think!

MONIQUE MARCH 'MEANDERING MON'


MONTANA

Photos: Monique March.



The Grinton Collection

BENDIGO MILITARY MUSEUM

This collection is part of the story of two young brothers from Central Victoria, Jack and Bert Grinton, who found themselves serving in the trenches of France and Belgium.

In 1916, John 'Jack' Grinton and Albert 'Bert' Grinton left their family farm in Tragowel, 100 kms north of Bendigo near Kerang, to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force. Bert, just 17, joined on 21 January - like many young men of his time, he lied about his age. His older brother Jack, aged 23, enlisted shortly after in Bendigo on 3 February.

The brothers served together in C Company of the 38th Battalion, enduring the mud and terror of the Western Front. They were separated only when one was wounded, sent for training, or granted leave that could not be taken concurrently. Remarkably, they both returned home in August 1919 and later farmed neighbouring properties on the outskirts of Bendigo. Like so many of their generation, they rarely spoke of their wartime experiences.

Over 90 years later, in 2007, an extraordinary discovery brought their story back to life. Hidden inside a biscuit tin in a shed near Bendigo was a collection of 896 photographic negatives - images captured by Jack and Bert themselves. Taken on fragile and notoriously unstable cellulose nitrate film, the photographs had survived both the war and nine decades of harsh Australian weather. The cache was destined for the rubbish tip until a family friend recognised its historical importance.

Today, the Grinton Collection comprises more than 1,500 images, along with postcards, ephemera, and personal objects. The photographs offer an intimate view of the war, revealing moments and details that official photographers often overlooked. They document daily life behind the lines, the faces of comrades, and the landscapes of devastation and endurance.

What makes the collection even more remarkable is that Allied soldiers on the Western Front were officially prohibited from carrying cameras. The Grinton brothers' quiet defiance and artistic curiosity have left Australia with an irreplaceable record - a deeply personal lens through which to see the human side of war.

The survival of these images is a story of chance and preservation, but also of legacy. Through their photographs, Jack and Bert Grinton continue to illuminate the lived experience of ordinary soldiers, adding depth and humanity to our understanding of the Anzacs on the Western Front.

DELL WINSER

Curator, Bendigo Military Museum

ABOVE: The biscuit tin that stored the collection.

See the Grinton Collection at the Bendigo Military Museum, one of the largest memorial museums in the country and home to a broad range of military memorabilia that showcases the contributions of our local heroes in various conflicts and peacekeeping operations.
bendigorsl.com.au/museum

1 PERSON 009

Reflection and Remembrance at the National Anzac Centre

Set against the stunning backdrop of King George Sound in Albany, Western Australia, the National Anzac Centre offers one of the country's most moving cultural experiences. Located within the expansive Albany Heritage Park, this award-winning museum brings the stories of World War I to life through powerful personal narratives, immersive displays, and a deep connection to the very place where the ANZACs last saw Australian shores.

Officially opened in 2014, the Centre stands as Australia's foremost museum dedicated to honouring the ANZACs of the First World War. It offers a deeply personal connection to one of the most significant chapters in our nation's history.

In 1914, Albany was the departure point for more than 41,000 Australian and New Zealand troops heading to the battlefields of World War I, cementing its place in ANZAC history.

At the heart of the experience, visitors follow the real-life journey of one of 32 ANZAC characters through immersive multimedia displays, rare artefacts, archival footage, and personal accounts. This unique storytelling approach brings history to life through the eyes of those who lived it, offering an honest and powerful perspective on the realities of war.

The Centre's spectacular location enhances the narrative, with sweeping views over King George Sound where the convoys once assembled. Visitors can further connect with the ANZAC story by exploring Albany Heritage Park, including Padre White Lookout, the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial, and the historic Princess Royal Fortress. The Fortress precinct features heritage-listed buildings, coastal and naval guns, and offers insight into the region's crucial military history.

Beyond the museum, Albany Heritage Park's scenic trails invite visitors to reflect amid native bushland and rugged coastline, providing a peaceful space for remembrance. A visit to Padre White Lookout, believed to be the site of the first ANZAC Day dawn service, offers a poignant moment to honour those who served. Whether you're a veteran, a family member, or a supporter of the ANZAC tradition, the National Anzac Centre creates a lasting connection to the courage and sacrifice that helped shape our nation.

Plan your visit at **www.nationalanzaccentre.com.au**.

Photos: Moira Partridge.

Vietnam and Cambodia - The Mekong journey

As our riverboat chugged towards the Cambodian border after the first week, I was filled with relief and trepidation. I was keen for new experiences, but we were expecting Customs officers to board our vessel on this day.

The mighty Mekong River! Main artery and lifeblood of these two countries, it surges with life all day and night. Boats (that should never even float) carry sand for building and terra cotta production, every form of fruit and vegetable grown in the vast delta, plus fishermen eking a meagre living from its waters. In over two weeks I saw not one pleasure craft. It is a living, working river.

Our journey began in Saigon (locals will not use the term Ho Chi Minh) in the central Bay Hotel from which we explored the chaos and colour of ten million people living under the shadow of a former war zone. Generational differences are stark due to propaganda and the education system, but family here means everything. Where and how people live and future choices are dependent on the actions of past family and ratings given by Govt.

Such a chequered past in this country is hard to grasp until visiting the War Museum and Chi Chi tunnels, where suffering and tenacity existed in tandem during the most well-known war of the region. I was keen to fire my first AK 47 on the shooting range but found that I did not have the heart for it - not for any of it. The jungle made me sick and anxious with its mud, steam and centipedes and the violent echoes of the past. The place and its history will haunt me always.

A special time for me was a day spent at a workshop where victims of agent Orange produced craft goods made from rosewood and eggshells. Their skill and patience truly was inspiring. Needless to say I spent most of my dhong in that place (which went straight to the workers) and I will always treasure those items. I always travel with only hand luggage, but now needed to buy a bag!

The city traffic in Saigon is a nightmare, like a bad LSD trip and the only rule seems to be to avoid collision (make it the other guy's problem.) There are several scooters per person in the city, for different purposes and they scream around in all directions at once. Horns blare 24/7 and music and recorded ads assault the senses as we sat on tiny chairs on pathways with Vietnamese coffee and beer, soaking in the atmosphere and gasping at the near misses. The infinity pool at the top of our hotel high above the city was a welcome anathema to all this chaos at times.

The energy of that place was palpable and exhausting and we welcomed visits to the cultural centres which were more gentle. We were honoured to visit many small riverside villages once our boat journey began and to spend a day on Tiger Island. The local people are outwardly happy and embracing but the squalor in which they live horrified me. Foul odours pervade the villages which share a run-down septic (if they are lucky) power is minimal and refrigeration is scarce. Large families exist in lean to shacks from which they work at feudal trades and grow rice, sesame, jackfruit and breed chickens.

People sleep in basic hammocks to avoid the mud and as wet season approaches the slush and humidity, the steam and the stale air is overwhelming. Ancestors are buried in rice paddies and backyards to signify land ownership often under concrete or tile tombs. I found this fascinating in a country so otherwise heavily regulated. Now, back to the Mekong and our journey.

The mighty river has its own rhythm which takes visitors a few days to attune to and the floating hyacinths were our constant companions, gently bumping the hull as they floated by. It is hot here, we averaged 35 - 40 C and the humidity was stifling. Each day we got a vivid storm and torrential rain but only for a couple of hours at most. Water colour in the Mekong is brown due to sediment and clay on the bottom and swimming is not advised due to the number of working boats and the cobra who call it home. I was ok with that…

We went in our tender to the floating markets, where middle men sell all forms of farm produce. They buy in bulk from primary producers on the river and the delta and their wares often end up in town and village markets. These boats are

Photos: Moira Partridge.

amazing, at first glance decrepit but the tiny spaces are highly organised homes for families with kitchens and room to sleep. (You just have to stay bent double!)

It is no wonder that rice is so treasured here - its 1001 uses from food to firewood was beyond anything I'd imagined and I have great admiration for the creativity of the Vietnamese. Incidentally, they have cast iron stomachs too! The sight of fly blown meat and fish being laid out in the sun for selling and cooking astounded me. It was tempting to turn vegetarian on this trip. We visited floating fish farms and bamboo workshops and of course the bustling village markets, agape at the colour and noise and variety which is part of normal life here. In the end the Custom's officers treated us well at the border although we lost a day confined to our vessel until we were cleared for entry into Cambodia.

First stop Phnom Penh. A lovely tree lined city where the traffic was once again, crazy. We explored the streets and central markets by tuk tuk which was great fun. Cyclo is a useful way to travel here too, allowing time to soak in the sights and sounds and adjust to this new tempo. Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy so whilst in Phnom Penh we toured the King's palace, had lunch at Malis (known for the best Khmer cuisine in the country) and had a drink at the famous Elephant Bar in Raffles Hotel. There are 3.2 million people living and working in the capital, it was much more relaxed than Saigon which has over three times that number.

We felt compelled to visit the Killing Fields at Choeung Ek whilst in the region, with some trepidation. The pain and fear laden atmosphere there was stupefying and the atrocities committed under the regime of Pol Pot were beyond any words which could be written to describe them. I need time to process this insanity - but I doubt I ever will.

Next day upriver a visit to a silversmith village where these artisans have lived for generations and on to the beautiful peace of the Buddhist centre and temple, which I was genuinely sorry to leave as the sun went down.

As we travelled towards Angkor Ban we moored near Silk Island, a tiny outcrop of only a few kms where the most beautiful silk in Cambodia is made. On the tuk tuk back to the river I was thrilled with the silks resting on my knee (but not about my budget, ouch!)

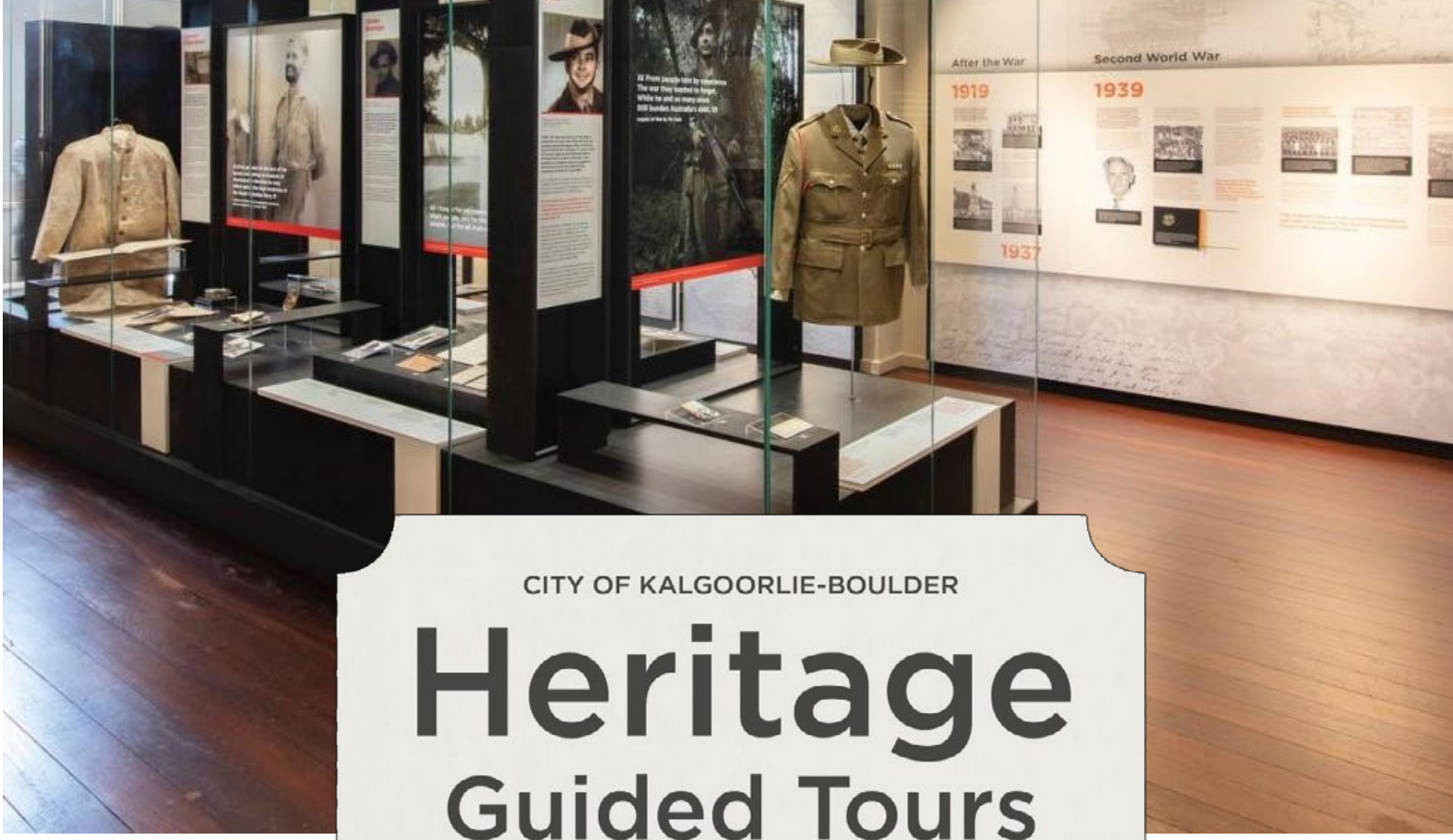
We left the Mekong at Kampong Cham and bussed to the delightful centre of Siem Reap, checking into the iconic Somadevi Angkor Hotel and Spa for some luxury and rest. This last phase of the journey involved much walking and adventures by tuk tuk when the heat and humidity were just too much. A wonderful town for market shopping (yes, I bought more silk, and jewellery) and eating and massage and visiting Pub Street to mingle with the few other Western tourists. Of course the amazing temple at Angkor Wat was a highlight and we found Siem Reap truly amazing and very cheap (as we discovered all through Vietnam and Cambodia.) This alone makes it a good holiday destination for Australians. We will be hopping a plane back to Saigon tomorrow though, ready to catch the long haul overnight flight back to Tasmania - it's time to go home.

What I have learned from my time in Vietnam is to be ferociously grateful for everything in my life, and from Cambodia that to smile in spite of any adversity is the road to true happiness. And from the mighty Mekong River - that life and growth has a continuous rhythm which requires trust and respect.

Oh, and beware any cobras along the way. Live simply, rest well and often and enjoy earth's bounty - but don't take more than you need. Find the joy in simple pleasures. This blessing was given to us by example each and every day by the humble Vietnamese and Cambodian people. I hope never to forget it.

Thanks to our "Sticky rice" family.

MOIRA PARTRIDGE



CITY OF KALGOORLIE-BOULDER

Heritage Guided Tours

Boulder Town Hall

Tuesday & Thursday 10:30am

Kalgoorlie Town Hall

Monday & Wednesday 10:30am

(excl. public holidays)

Goldfields War Museum

Thursday 1:30pm

Pricing

Adults $10, **Concession** $8

Children 16 years & younger $4

Price includes tour badge

City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. Heritage Services.

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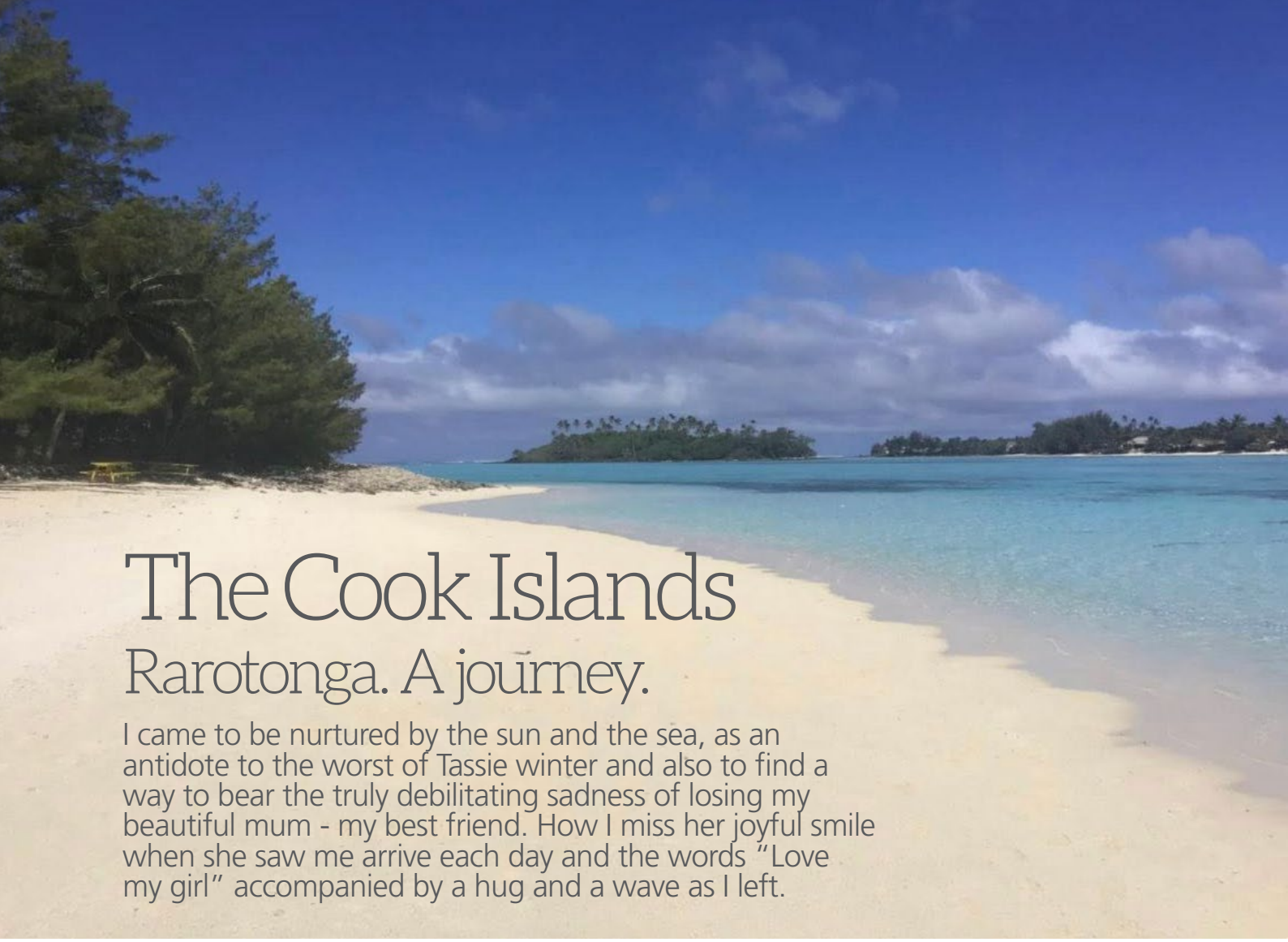
City of Kalgoorlie Boulder

GOLDFIELDS WAR MUSEUM

In the TLP Radio Show Podcast, Kalgoorlie Boulder historian, Timothy Moore, speaks with Greg T Ross about POW Camps, the first act of terrorism on Australian soil and the community spirit that saw card games and dances set up to aid the fighting funds for our overseas troops.

Scan the QR code to listen.

thelastpostmagazine.com/the-last-post-radio-show-podcast



The Cook Islands

Rarotonga. A journey.

I came to be nurtured by the sun and the sea, as an antidote to the worst of Tassie winter and also to find a way to bear the truly debilitating sadness of losing my beautiful mum - my best friend. How I miss her joyful smile when she saw me arrive each day and the words "Love my girl" accompanied by a hug and a wave as I left.

I have buried her now, with my beloved dad and the void in my life is a physical ache from which I must kickstart my life again….somehow.

Sarongs and grief thrown into my trusty carry-on (and dog sorted) the long flight from Sydney traversed the International date line to land at Rarotonga airport in the Cook Islands at dawn the 'day before.' A strange new experience for me and hard to get my head around for the duration of the trip.

The happy cries of "Kia Orana!" at Rarotonga airport were slightly tempered by the worry of the tsunami warning in place here. Islanders and tourists alike were frantically removing boats from the water and sharing the latest weather reports and nearest evacuation routes, should the worst happen. I must admit I felt somewhat unaffected, I guess grief is a numbing companion. Loosely translated "Kia Orana" is a warm greeting, meaning 'may you live a long and happy life.' In the end the tsunami disaster had little effect on these islands except for big seas and wave surges and strange weather, and the warnings were downgraded a few days later. The weather itself though continued to be unpredictable throughout our stay.

Cook Islanders are believed to be closely related to the Maori people of New Zealand and the Maohi of the Society Islands, the Rapuni of Easter Island and the Kanaka Maoli of Hawaii.

Early in its history the land was divided among 6 tribes headed by an Ariki (tribal king) and all indigenous people belong to one of these 6 family clans - despite Christian missionary influence and the Westminster system of Government in place today.

It is indeed a true pot pourri of colourful traditions, dress and people here. I can clearly see a Samoan flavour to the people on Rarotonga and the Maori influence is very strong, both in local dialect, accent and the tattoos adorning the men and women.

Mostly these are beautifully done and have true cultural significance, but my Western mind finds it daunting to see full face tattoos, on some of the young men in particular.

The Cook Islands are very small (Rarotonga is the largest island of 67 square miles) and there are two buses here, one runs in a clockwise direction and the other anti-clockwise. You just wave your arms at the roadside and climb aboard. Bus circuits of the Island are a good way to pick the spots you favour visiting and walking is great as the coast road is flat with rugged bush covered volcanic peaks filling the centre.

Although a tiny place, I was amazed at the diversity of the population here, from the mixed local groups to people from New Zealand, America, Bali, Japan and Fiji. Many are working here as Islanders left in droves after Covid to seek better paid work in neighbouring NZ and did not return.

It is very safe on Rarotonga, crime is minimal so visiting beaches at night is a relaxing experience, as is walking anywhere and everywhere.

What surprised me most is how little tourism is focussed upon on the island, but I really like this aspect of life here. Beyond boat tours to the lagoons and atolls and flights to outlying islands, the spas, quad bike tours and one party bus, you really do have to make your own way, your own fun.

The lagoon at Muri is magical with its glittering light blue waters and cream sandy bottom and it is very worthwhile to book a glass bottom boat trip here, but wise to do it before you arrive. We enjoyed a glorious boat tour and our time spent swimming, snorkelling and exploring uninhabited islands was just as the brochures depict. A truly breathtaking experience - and so much singing!

Cook Islanders truly love to sing and also to dance and play box drums and

Photos: Moira Partridge.

ukulele. (Oh, and to challenge people to climb coconut palms.)

I had a yen to swim with turtles but the company offering this experience were just not operating during our time on the islands. Next time….

The main town on the island is Avarua - a sleepy little village with a dozen or so local shops and a police station. Arriving here on a Wednesday, sleeping off the journey and exploring the island plus our trip to Muri put us in town on a Saturday. It was shut. Also, nothing at all happens here on Sundays - the day is reserved for rest and Church. Rarotonga is not a tourist Mecca, it is a tiny island with its own ebb and flow which you join, or not.

It was exactly what i needed at this time.

Sitting on the rugged beach at Ngatangiia absorbing the incredible power of giant waves on the rocky coastline became a daily ritual which I found cathartic, even in the rain. After all it remains warm, even in a deluge. We were lucky in our waterfront abode, but during our visit the road and several hotels were flooded due to the constant sea surges the island endured during this unusual time.

A highlight of this trip for me was visiting a local Church for Sunday service. I had read about these and I went for the “Imene” - the incredible celebratory singing which is a feature of all Church services here. The incredible vibrancy, colour and noise was truly joyful and good for the soul. Ladies wore their Sunday best with beautiful formal hats and many of the men wore white three piece suits and shoes. (I got a strong James Brown vibe from the men…) People swaying, holding hands, sharing infants, and greeting one another made me realise how culturally and socially important Church attendance is on this Island, to these people.

I got a shock to hear my father’s favourite hymn “How Great Thou Art” sung with gusto in three different languages here in remote Polynesia from 30 years ago. I felt close to both my parents in this moment.

Traffic here is minimal and slow. The speed limit of 50kms is observed by drivers of buses, cars and the myriad variety of motorbikes people use to get around. (It is pure delight after the chaos of Saigon and Phuket!) People do often ride on the back of trucks, but it doesn’t seem to be illegal here or cause problems. Sometimes even in arm chairs.

We met many local dogs on Rarotonga, they seem to wander about greeting people and other dogs, visiting shops and cafes and sleeping in the sun. As an animal tragic I love this, especially as they all appear to be shiny and healthy and quite fat. They have no fleas, are well cared for and never ask for food. It’s just a pure social agenda for them as it is for the chooks which totter about the island with their noisy, colourful roosters up front and in charge.

In the Cook Islands, diabetes and heart disease are major health problems and obesity is endemic. Fast food outlets appear to be non existent but the local hamburger hubs serve the hugest, greasiest burgers I have ever seen (forget the salad!) Seafood is a staple of the diet here but served with mountains of hot chips and tapas is very popular where tourists gather. Fizzy drinks are consumed by the gallon and it seems that the sheer magnitude of portion sizes underpins the health crisis of the people. So very sad. Only recently have gym activities and sports been encouraged in the young but it’s clear to see the trajectory is yet to change. Like many Pacific Islanders, Rarotongans appear very comfortable in their skin, and paradoxically this is wonderful to see. I just hope enough education and resources are implemented to ensure the long term health of these beautiful people.

Throughout the Cook Islands, tourism is necessary and respected but not revered. It is akin to stepping back in time to the Bali of the 80’s, and as all land is owned by the locals this hopefully will not change anytime soon. Within the melting pot of the population, tradition and clan (and the associated value of these) drive all life and activity. As a visitor to these shores you are accepted and welcomed so long as the social structure is maintained.

Personally, as I learnt to sit with my grief this was the perfect environment. No social expectations, organisation, fanfare or fuss.

Just a gentle rhythm to the days and total privacy to rest, relax and enjoy the sunrise, sunset, pristine waters and wander around the natural beauty of one of the loveliest set of islands in Polynesia. My time here has been a blessing, but now it’s time to go home.

Meitaki to Rarotonga - Thank you.

Aere na to the Cook Islands. - Farewell.

MOIRA PARTRIDGE

The Fromelles and Pozieres Anniversary Tour – not your average battlefields tour

If you are one of the many thousands of people who attend an ANZAC dawn service or proudly attest to having a Digger as an ancestor, then the Fromelles and Pozieres Anniversary Tour offered by Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours might be of interest to you.

As the title implies, this ten-day luxury coach tour coincides with the commemorative anniversaries of the World War 1 battles of Fromelles and Pozieres. The tour also includes visits to many other places from the Battle of the Somme, including but not limited to Ypres, the Menin Gate, Polygon Wood, Passchendaele, Hill 60, Tyne Cot, Bullecourt and Villers-Bretonneux.

Our encounters however were not just limited to 'visiting' these places. We were immersed into them. Not only did we see all sorts of locally-made Australiana in these very distant places, we listened to tales from several members of the local community as they spoke of their enduring gratitude to our soldiers and their own continuing efforts to ensure that every missing soldier is located and given a respectful resting place.

In an effort to provide you with the broadest experience of the life on the western front, the tour also includes visits to Monash's headquarters in Bertangles and the towns of Vignacourt, Poperinge and Naours where soldiers rested, recovered and escaped from the horrors of the frontline.

The tour itself is led by Mike Peters, a renowned military historian, author and army veteran who is a walking encyclopaedia of knowledge on the battlefields of the western front. With him is Lambis Englezos AM, who in discovered and led the recovery of 250 missing WW1 soldiers now interred at the Pheasant Wood Cemetery at Fromelles and now advocates for the recovery of other lost soldiers.

In our 2025 tour, it was very evident that from the very outset that our guides who aside from each being a wealth of information about the history, had gone to great lengths to customise our tour to make it a personal journey for the participants. In our small group of eighteen, many of our travellers had fallen servicemen whom they wanted to commemorate and visit across the myriad of cemeteries that scatter the region. This aspect in particular grabbed me as to just how much Mike and Lambis endeavoured to attend to each participants' desire. So much so that not only was every serviceman visited, both Mike and Lambis encouraged us to share the story of our special person and to take away the anonymity of their headstone. In every case, each graveside tale was then dignified by the playing of the last post and a minute's silent reflection.

Their respectful approach ensured that "Their name liveth forever more" is not just a respectful phrase carved at each cemetery, but a truly meaningful and touching message that all of these people each had their own stories that were brutally cut short through the savagery of war.

This tour also offers some truly unique experiences such as walking in the footsteps of soldiers on the Fromelles battlefield and visiting the actual location where 250 missing soldiers of Pheasant Wood Cemetery were discovered.

As for meals and accommodation, the layout of the tour is such that your 'hotel-hopping' is kept to a minimum, with accommodation at high quality 4 star hotels in Paris (2 nights), Ypres (4 nights) and Amiens (4 nights). Meals are included for several, but not all days of the tour, but this affords you the opportunity to check out many of the local restaurants and other eateries nearby – and if still you're unsure, just ask (or follow) Mike.

Having previously done a five-day, generic 'battlefield, cemetery, museum, repeat' style tour, I found that this tour and it's combination of having of highly knowledgeable guides, a broad range of locations to visit, interacting with today's town residents and importantly, hearing the graveside stories made this tour truly something special.

This tour left me with wonderful memories and a quiet pride to be the descendant of an Aussie Digger. As such, I highly recommend this tour to anyone who has an interest in or connection to the soldiers of the Western Front during World War 1.

MIKE DIAMOND

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP:
Menin Gate.
Walking the Fromelle Battlefield.
Remembering our fallen.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Villers Bretonneux.

MAT McLACHLAN
BATTLEFIELD
TOURS

History's Waterways

There's a German pillbox on the bank of the Scheldt River, half-hidden by blackberry vines and crumbling slowly back into the Belgian earth. A local farmer uses it to store fertiliser bags.

His grandfather probably tried to blow it up in 1945, gave up and decided to make peace with it instead. That's the thing about Europe's rivers – they've seen so much history that nobody bothers to clean it all up. The past is just there, woven into the landscape.

Rivers are the arteries that have carried European history for thousands of years. At Ypres, the Yser Canal was the last line of defence when the Germans came in 1914. The Belgians opened the sluice gates and flooded the countryside. Later, in 1917, Australian soldiers slogged through that waterlogged landscape during Third Ypres, fighting for Polygon Wood and Passchendaele Ridge. The headstones in the cemeteries around Passchendaele tell you they were 19, 22, 24 years old. Most have inscriptions from families back home who never got to visit. An Anzac, One of Australia's Best one says. Across the French border the Somme winds through countryside that looks too peaceful to have swallowed 60,000 casualties on a single day.

The Seine carries you into the heart of the D-Day story in 1944. The river was the German defensive line – hold the Seine and you hold France. But the Allies didn't give them a chance. Today you can stand on Omaha Beach where 2000 Americans were killed or wounded in a few hours, or at Pointe du Hoc where the Rangers climbed the cliffs with grappling hooks. In the nearby cemeteries there are Australian graves, a reminder that Australian airmen flew in those skies and played a vital role in the campaign that liberated France.

The Mekong in Vietnam and Cambodia is nothing like European rivers. It's massive and brown, carrying half of Southeast Asia on its back. During the Vietnam War it was Highway One for the Viet Cong. Allied soldiers learned to hate the Delta, that maze of waterways and jungle where the enemy moved like smoke. At Long Tan, 18 Australians died in a rubber plantation during a monsoon. The trees are still there, taller now. So is the cross that remembers the dead. You can visit the Cu Chi tunnels where the Viet Cong lived underground, narrow passages that make you understand the kind of war this was.

There's something about approaching a battlefield by river that changes how you see it. You're moving slowly, watching the terrain unfold the way armies did, seeing the landscape as a whole instead of jumping from site to site. The rivers connect the dots - from Amsterdam to Ypres along the waterways of Flanders, from the Normandy beaches up the Seine to Paris, from the Mekong Delta to the battlefields of southern Vietnam. Walking the ground matters. But following the rivers shows you why the ground mattered in the first place.

MAT McLACHLAN

Getting There

Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours is offering a series of exclusive history river cruises in Europe and the Mekong in 2027, on board luxurious AmaWaterways vessels.

Accompanied by expert historians, cruises visit battlefields including Waterloo, the Ypres Salient, Normandy, A Bridge Too Far and the Vietnam War.

Mat McLachlan himself will escort an 8-day cruise in September 2027 from Amsterdam that visits Waterloo, WW1 and WW2 battlefields.

Details at
www.battlefields.com.au

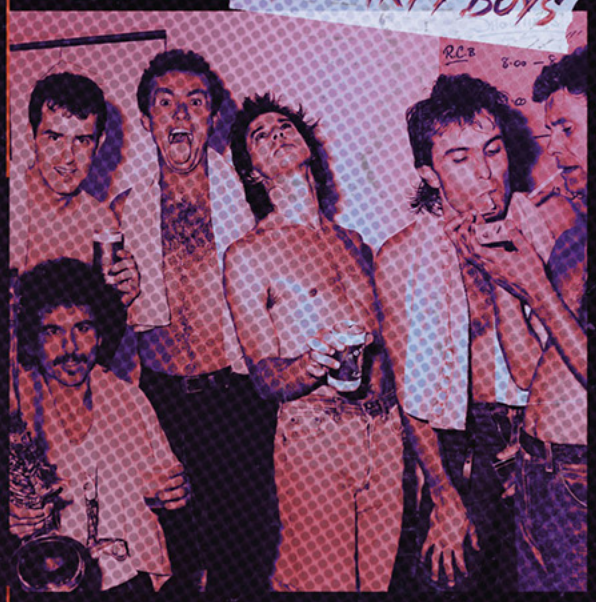
TOP: WWI German pillboxes in several places on the Western Front, pictured is at Hill 60 in Flanders, Belgium.
BOTTOM: Polygon Wood is a moving place to visit today.

GRAHAM 'BUZZ' BIDSTRUP

NO SECRETS

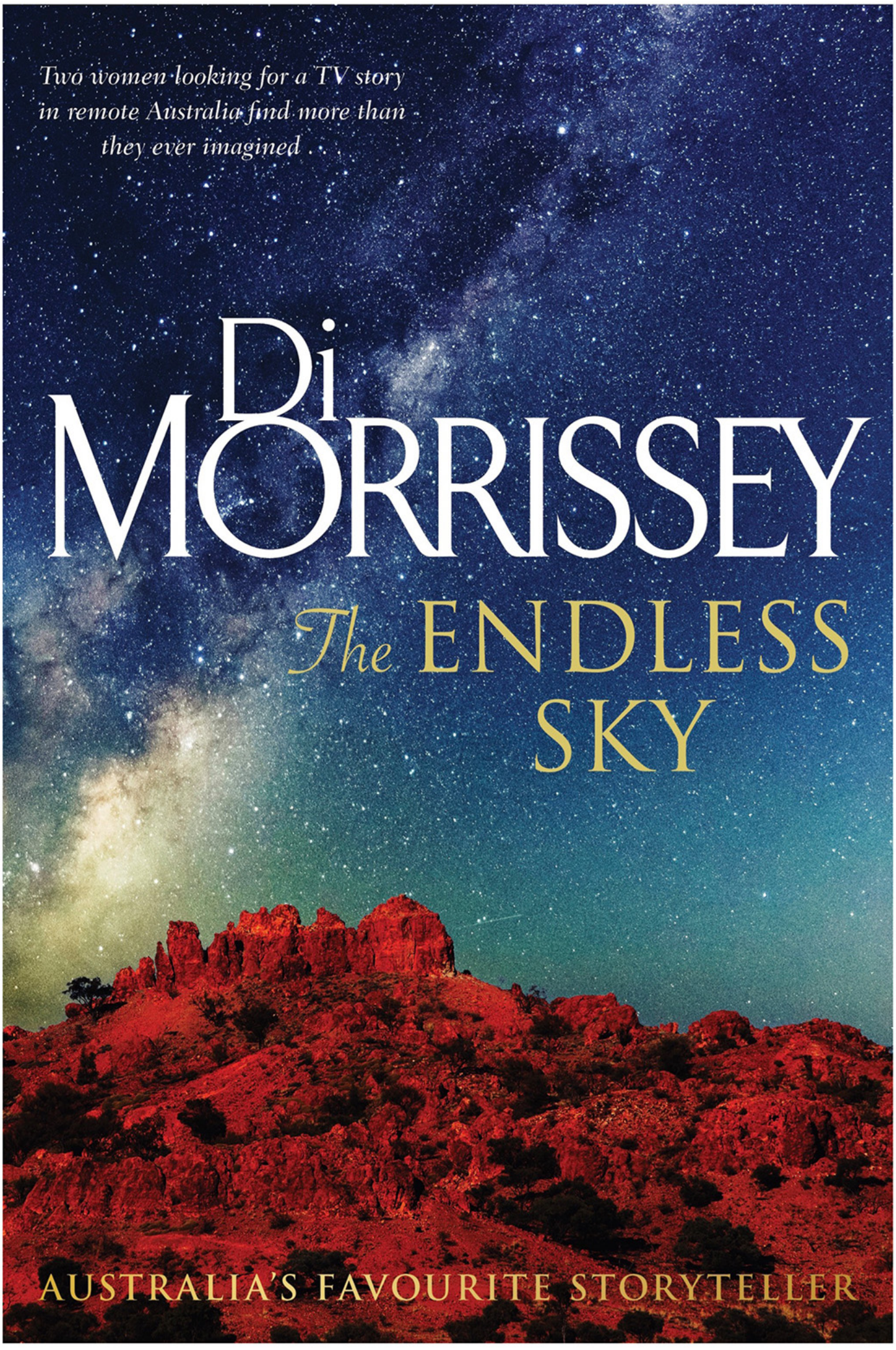
THE ANGELS

AN OZ-ROCK MEMOIR OF MUSIC AND MAYHEM



THE PARTY BOYS

GANGgajang


Two women looking for a TV story
in remote Australia find more than
they ever imagined . . .
Di
MORRISSEY
The ENDLESS
SKY
AUSTRALIA'S FAVOURITE STORYTELLER