

# BIRDWOOD BUGLE



The quarterly newsletter of Geraldton City RSL Sub Branch, Birdwood House, 46 Chapman Road Geraldton WA

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**Autumn 2024**

## Executive Committee:

### President:

[Glenn Law](#) .....0427 442 504

### Vice President:

[Ken Morris](#) .....0427 010 548

### Treasurer:

[Barry Stinson](#) ..... 0408 222 653

### Secretary:

[Mike Reymond](#) .....0427 569 515

## Committee:

### Asst. Treasurer:

[Glenn Law](#) .....0427 442 504

### Bar Manager:

[Paul Nevill](#) .....0427 418 003

### Public Relations Officer:

[Ken Morris](#) .....0427 010 548

### Asst. Public Relations Officer:

[Scott Norman](#) .....0409 573 391

### Welfare Officer:

[Glenn Law](#) .....0427 442 504

### Membership Officer:

[Mike Marsh](#) .....0458 806 311

### Warden

[Ross Davies](#) .....0458 299 892

[Norm Chant](#) .....9923 1602

[Karl Edwards](#) .....0417 952 916

[Phill Morgan](#) .....0437 422 341

[Paul Shearer](#) ..... 0498 486 270

## Committee Meetings

Monday 1700 hrs

11<sup>th</sup> March

8<sup>th</sup> April

13<sup>th</sup> May

10<sup>th</sup> June

## General Meeting

26<sup>th</sup> May 2024

11.00 am

Sausage sizzle and  
fellowship after.



## \* BAR HOURS

Thursday 1200 -1400

Friday 1700 - late

Sunday 1200 -1500

**Happy Hour on Thursdays  
and Sundays!**



## FRIDAY BBQ NIGHTS

March 8<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>

April 5<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>

May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>

June 14<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>

Theme meals on alternate  
Fridays. See bar notice for  
details

**\* PLEASE NOTE:** It is at the discretion of the Bar person on duty at the time if s/he remains open beyond the nominated closing times.

## Dates to Remember

**ANZAC Day 25<sup>th</sup> April**

## Birdwood Military Museum

### President

[Barry Stinson](#) ..... 0408 222 653

### Secretary

[Mark Gilligan](#) .....9938 1911

### Treasurer

[Mike Marsh](#) .....0458 806 311

Contributions for Winter Bugle 2024 can be emailed to Bugle Editor [editorbirdwoodbugle@gmail.com](mailto:editorbirdwoodbugle@gmail.com) or dropped into the RSL at Birdwood House. Deadline for Winter Bugle is 25<sup>th</sup> May 2024. No articles can be accepted after that date.

Earlier makes it easier for me to get the Bugle assembled, printed and circulated on time if you are able to do that. Publication will be 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024.

Items generally should not exceed 400 words if there are to be pictures inserted; up to 500 words without picture(s) should be fine. I'm happy to discuss and assist as required.

**-Ed**

## President's Report

Since taking on the task of President last August it has been a very busy period. Various functions, ceremonies, committee, social events and general administration of the RSL. A very steep learning curve for me and it is ongoing. Thankfully I, we, have a number of committee members that are very knowledgeable and active. I depend on these people, so a big thank you from me.

Speaking of committee members, I have put forward a SUCCESSION plan/programme to continue the good work and support. There are members of the committee that have been active for a very long time, and are ill. All wish to see out their committee time, therefore I need you to volunteer and learn their trade or positions on the committee. Positions that will become available are:

Vice President, Bugle Editor, Warden, Welfare Officer, General Committee member and President. We will also need someone to be our Poppy Day organiser. Ken and Jenny Morris have been doing it for years and would like to show the ropes to a new volunteer this last year of their doing it.

Yes, I include President. I will do my two years, but would like someone to take on the Welfare position as I have been doing that for approx. 4-5 years.

It is important that we have a very active, younger committee to grow, broaden our scope in this RSL and with veteran families of Geraldton.

Kitchen Auxiliary: nonexistent. It is vital that this issue get resolved.

We all know what actions I have been forced to enact. The BBQ, and Theme nights are vital to the welfare of this RSL. Any members can form a working party to clean up. As it is we have one lady, who will only do it for a short time. So, Fella's and Gal's give us a hand and maybe we can get rid of the fibre plates. We only have to do fighting irons and general clean. Also, as a reminder, those attending the BBQ should, if you remember, bring a salad to share with all. Hopefully if we get an Auxiliary Group, we can go back to providing the salads (costs adjusted). For Theme nights it is important you put your names down on the list provided at the bar for catering purposes.

See a stranger at the RSL? Say hello or G'DAY, you never know you may have just met your next best friend. Membership has been growing, especially social membership. Encourage your family to join us or previous service personnel that need that nudge to join. We need them all. And on that note....

To encourage more participation on Thursday and/or Sunday's, coordinating with our Bar Manager and staff, we will be having a HAPPY HOUR on those days. The hour will be up to the duty bar staff. If numbers increase, we may be able to include a nibble or two? Yes I have been told – tried that failed- WHY? Suggestions welcomed; constructive ones only please.)

*Glenn Law* – President

**Kids Christmas Tree** on 10<sup>th</sup> December was well attended – the kids all enjoyed meeting Santa at Birdwood House.



## Laurel Club



**Laurel Club Ladies**

Meet on the 1st Monday of every month (regardless of public holidays) at Birdwood House - 10:30 am  
Tea and Coffee available prior to meeting.

**All War Widows Welcome.**

Hello dear readers. I trust all are well and surviving our current heat wave...just when we thought summer was over!!!! A cooling thought...winter is approaching.

We held our Christmas lunch on Monday 4th December and had an excellent "roll call" once again. Several of our ladies have ventured into nursing home care and as always the more able bodied of our "clan" assisted in providing transport for these wonderful Laurels to our lunch. In addition to the support of our wonderful band of "merry Legatees, we also express appreciation and very grateful thanks to the Goddess of each our Legatees.

*"Alone we can do so little but together we can do so much."*

We had the mandatory pre-lunch drinks and novelty award presentations, recognition of service during the year awards and of course the winning, second and third placing in the 2023 Melbourne Cup. Sweep one was the ever speedy and resilient Barb Duncan galloping into first place, a short neck away was Pearl's daughter Sherral with third place by a nose was Colleen Kennedy. Paula managed to get scratched before the bell with Marg Piper running into last place. Roy failed to finish and is still searching for answers.

Sweep two saw Dianne running at speed to win by a short neck to Gillian with third place by a nose was Paula's Marg. Sherral was scratched before the bell and Dulcie ran a gallant last. Roy had the same horse in both sweeps and hence he continues to ponder his failure to finish.

During our lunch we acknowledged our Laurels who have reached milestone birthdays and our nursing home ladies were given a small novelty faux succulent garden.

Congratulations and a small presentation was made to acknowledge the milestone wedding anniversary of our devoted Legatee Brian and his wife June.

A very sincere and grateful applause was extended to Jim at Jungle News Wonthella for his generous donation of \$5 Scratchie tickets for each of our attendees with left overs for second dipping. These were scratched between courses. Sadly no-one went home dripping in riches however a lot of fun was had scratching. Thank you Jungle News.

Again we send accolades to Joyce for her excellent catering abilities. A superb hot roast meal was served, two meats with vegetables presented in a variety of ways. Gravy and condiments were also on hand. An excellent array of sweets to the highest order finished the meal. Joyce you do an amazing job.

Also a thank you is extended to the RSL management for arranging for the bar to be open to quench the odd thirst or two and for the use of the facilities, not only for our regular meetings but for our functions. We appreciate this consideration greatly.

### *We rise by lifting others*

We will meet again for the first time in 2024 on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024. We have some forward planning to discuss, being, sausage sizzle March meeting, consider April meeting and Easter obligations, Mother's day luncheon first Monday in May and bus trip to Chapman Valley to celebrate Dulcie's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Legacy is conducting its Badge Day collection on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and our dear Laurel ladies will be manning queens IGA and Northgate shopping centre collection points. A roster will be formulated closer to the event. Yes... it is going to be a busy first half of 2024.

### *"Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans"*

Dear hearts, whatever you are doing, enjoy, stay cool, stay safe and if in pain...remember...laughter is the best medicine and it is free.

### *"A good laugh heals a lot of hurt"*

**Cheers for now Barb – Geraldton Laurels 0417 098 905**

**GERALDTON and DISTRICT SENIOR CITIZENS ACTION GROUP (Inc) NEWS**

**Website:** [www.seniorsactiongroup.org.au](http://www.seniorsactiongroup.org.au)

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**Seniors Action Group meets every**

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month for a meeting and lunch (\$15)

Venue: QE2 Centre, Durlacher Street. Time: 10am Morning Tea.

Come and Join us, have fun and make new friends.

Next Lunch Meeting Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2024.

**CARPET BOWLS:** All day Mondays from 8.30am

**DARTS:** 9am Monday Mornings. **TABLE TENNIS:** 1pm Monday Afternoons.

**CARDS:** 1pm Friday afternoon.

AGE GROUP: 55 YEARS AND OVER . Cost \$5

**ALL WELCOME**

*Jan Wennekes*

**Welfare Assistance Geraldton** provides a full range of welfare services to the veteran community including allied, currently serving members and their dependants. Welfare can take a variety of forms, such as monetary payments, subsidies and vouchers, housing assistance, home and hospital visits.

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| ▪ Emergency relief                        | ▪ Financial assistance       |
| ▪ Advocacy referrals                      | ▪ Referral to other services |
| ▪ Overseas Pension applications           | ▪ Home and Hospital visits   |
| ▪ Crisis counselling to point of referral | ▪ General crisis assistance  |

All applications are treated in the strictest confidence by the sub-branch welfare committee with the Welfare Officer being the first point of contact. Applicants are required to provide proof of service, financial situation and quote or account from service provider. Contact Glenn Law on 0427 442 504 if you wish to make an appointment to discuss your needs.

*Glenn Law* -Welfare Officer

Any DVA patients in hospital who need a visitor or some help, if access is permitted under COVID rules please ring Gillian Sharp on 0439 956 244.



## Legacy



Legacy badge day is on Friday 19th April this year at all the usual outlets around town. The Geraldton branch now have a card scanning machine so people can pay by credit card (very modern) Max Jones is happy to give people lessons in its use. The Geraldton Golf Club will be holding an ANZAC day auction with proceeds going to Legacy. The Laurel club ladies next event will be a Mother's day lunch in March.

Cheers, *Dave*

## Naval Association of Australia – Geraldton Sub Section



December saw our General Meeting followed by our Christmas function. Bevan and Diane once again hosted the event which was enjoyed by all.

In January we invited NAA Members and RSL Members to join us at the Geraldton Races. Gary arranged access to the Members area which included a delicious meal and comfortable viewing. All up 21 were able to attend. Unfortunately the horses won on the day.

On Australia Day we were invited to the Naval Cadet Unit for their Open Day and a BBQ. We were able to inspect our NAA Sailing Club Geraldton's two Corsairs. Mat gave us instructions on how to sail them and we hope to take to the water when the wind is favourable.

On 10th February we joined with the RSL in presenting a commemoration service for the 60 year Anniversary of the HMAS Voyager tragedy. The Naval Cadets formed the Cenotaph Guard and performed admirably in the 44deg heat. In attendance was the sister of one of the sailors who perished. She later expressed her appreciation of our friendly and personalised service.



The NAA at the Races



Christmas meeting and function



HMAS Voyager Commemoration Service



HMAS Voyager Prayer by the Chaplain

*Pat McLeod* - President Geraldton Sub Section.

## The Sinking of HMAS Voyager

The 10<sup>th</sup> February marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Australia's worst peacetime naval disaster with a loss of 82 of the 314 crew and men of HMAS Voyager (II).

On the night of 10<sup>th</sup> February 1964 the Daring-class destroyer HMAS Voyager (II) was in close company with the Majestic-class light aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne (II) whilst she conducted night flying operations. Both warships had recently undergone refits and sailed from Jervis Bay on 6<sup>th</sup> February to conduct a series of post refit trials and exercises. The *Voyager* was performing duties of 'guard escort' or 'plane guard' and stationed some 1,000-2,000 yards off *Melbourne's* port quarter to provide rescue operations for the crew of any ditched aircraft. It was a dark, moonless night and both warships only had minimal navigation and operational lighting in use.

The *Voyager* ended up out of her station following a series of course change manoeuvres and on *Melbourne's* starboard bow. Presumably in an attempt to regain her station *Voyager* altered course to starboard away from the carrier then altered course again back to port towards and in front of *Melbourne*. Evasive manoeuvres were attempted by both vessels but their proximity didn't allow sufficient time or space to avoid a devastating collision. *Melbourne's* bow struck *Voyager* just aft of her bridge severing her in two. The *Voyager's* bow section passed down *Melbourne's* port side and sank within 10 minutes of the collision; her aft section remained afloat eventually succumbing to the ocean some three hours later.

A recovery operation was promptly launched by *Melbourne's* crew recovering survivors from both the water and the aft section of the *Voyager*. The search was joined by two RAN search & rescue boats (*HMAS Air Nymph* and *HMAS Air Sprite*) dispatched from the nearby shore establishment *HMAS Creswell*. Their crew's rescuing an additional 70 personnel. RAN helicopters and minesweepers were also dispatched to assist with search and rescue operations. Of the 314 crew and men of *HMAS Voyager* 82 (14 officers, 67 sailors and 1 civilian dock worker) were lost including the commanding officer and most of her bridge crew. While speculation is rife with theories the actual reason that *Voyager* altered course back towards the carrier largely remains a mystery some 60 years on.



Pat McLeod - President Geraldton Sub Section NAA



An artist's impression of the collision

## Frank Sharp's aeroplanes

Most of us have fond memories of one of the sub-branch's most memorable and stalwart members, Frank Sharp. Frank came in one day with a book where he had recorded his flying career. This had a long list of different aircraft types, from trainers to jets. There's too many to go into here but I have selected some that he flew, focusing mainly on his RAAF and RAF service.

**Avro Lincoln** – was a development of the famous Lancaster bomber. It was first flown towards the end of World War Two but saw most of its service in the 1950s. The RAF operated them in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. One was shot down by Soviet MIG 15s on a radar reconnaissance flight towards Berlin. The RAAF operated them from Queensland and Malaya until retirement in 1951. The Argentines also flew them, including a modified one to do air drops to their base in Antarctica.

**English Electric Canberra** – was developed in the late 1940s, entering RAF service as its first jet bomber in 1951. During the 1950s it flew higher than any other aircraft in the world, setting a record of over 20,000 metres in 1957. It was a very popular aircraft and had many export customers. It was used for reconnaissance flights, including secret ones over Soviet territory. The RAAF selected the type for its bomber fleet. The government decided to build them locally and it entered RAAF service in 1953. It was operationally deployed to Malaya and Vietnam. It saw service with India, Rhodesia, South Africa, New Zealand, Sweden and South America. The USAAF developed its own version, the Martin B-57. Frank broke a speed record in this type.

**Gloster Meteor** – was the first British jet fighter, entering squadron service in 1944. It saw limited action in WW2, initially intercepting V-1 flying bombs. They flew ground attack and reconnaissance missions later in the war. Post-war saw further variant development, including a night fighter, and export sales. The RAF used them in Europe and the Mediterranean. The RAAF acquired 133 Meteors between 1946 and 1952. They were used by 77 Squadron during the Korean War, mostly in the ground attack role. When replaced by CAC Sabres in the mid-fifties, they were sent to CAF units and used as pilotless drones. They had many overseas users, including Israel, Egypt and Syria, all of which saw action against each other and/or the RAF.

**de Havilland Vampire** – was the RAF's second jet fighter and first to use one engine. Developed during WW2, it had a twin boom design. It entered RAF service in 1946, retiring in 1966 from its final role as advanced trainer. The plane was developed into a variety of models, including a carrier version. It saw RAF service in Europe, equipping 19 squadrons at its peak, as well as the Middle East and Asia. The RAAF bought some aircraft before building others locally. The RAN also used a version. RAAF service extended from June 1949 till they were retired in 1954. However, numbers of these were flown by Citizen Air Force squadrons until the early 1960s. A number of variants were flown by both the RAAF and RAN. The aircraft had a very successful export market, with many countries flying differing models.

**de Havilland Tiger Moth** – is one of the most famous basic trainers, seeing widespread military and civilian use. Entering RAF service in 1932, it became the primary trainer there, throughout the Commonwealth and elsewhere. During WW2, it had a stint as a coastal patrol aircraft and experiments were done to fit them with weapons in case of German invasion in 1940. The type went on to have a long post-war career till today in various civilian roles. It was replaced in RAF service by the Chipmunk in the early 1950s. de Havilland Australia also produced the type during WW2, exporting some to the US and Royal Indian air forces.

**Airspeed Oxford** - saw widespread use for training Commonwealth aircrews in navigation, radio-operating, bombing and gunnery roles throughout WW2, particularly in Bomber Command. Its chief advantage was that it could train bomber crews in their various jobs simultaneously. It also served in communications, anti-submarine and air



ambulance roles during the war. The last left RAF service in 1956. The RAAF received 391 Oxfords during WW2. It served in many foreign air forces.

**De Havilland Canada Chipmunk** - is another famous trainer, being developed in Canada. The RAF took them on strength during the 1950s, acquiring 735 of the type. They remained in service till the mid-1990s and were also used by the Air Training Corps, British Army and Fleet Air Arm. Some are still flying in historic flights. They were also flown by Canada and a wide range of foreign users, both military and civilian.

**Commonwealth Aircraft Factory Winjeel** – was an Australian designed single engined trainer, entering RAAF service in 1955 and retiring from this role in 1975. A few went on to serve in a target marking role until 1994, when the type was finally retired.

**Cessna Crane** – also known as the AT-17 Bobcat, it was an American twin-engined advanced trainer. It was taken into service by the USAAF in December 1940 and the last few served until 1949. It also saw service in Canada as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Post-war, many were exported and came into widespread civilian service.

**Avro Anson** – was a famous British twin engined multi-role aircraft, serving with the RAF, FAA and Commonwealth air forces before, during and after WW2. It entered RAF service on 6 March 1936 and went on to serve with Coastal and Bomber Commands. It then moved onto its training role, where it is best known here and overseas. It served as a communications aircraft in the RAF till 1968. The RAAF order was delivered in 1936, initially for maritime reconnaissance. It carried out this role and training, including at No. 4 SFTS Geraldton, throughout WW2, serving till 1955. It had an extensive post-war career here and overseas by civilian operators.

The sole source for these articles has been Wikipedia - <https://www.wikipedia.org/>

*Mark Gilligan*

**The Australia Day Brunch** at Birdwood House was well attended with plenty of good hot BBQ food served.



On duty at the grill were Phill Morgan, Ken Morris and Glenn Law. Photo by roving reporter Jenny McCagh.



## Meet the Members - Ross Davies



Ross was born in Katanning in the 40's and his family moved to Kalgoorlie when he was 5 because of his Dad's work with the WA Government Railways.

He was conscripted in July 1966 and served with the RAE as an Army Seaman, Stevedore and ships clerk. This service comprised two years in the Army, 18 months of it at sea; this included two voyages to New Guinea and another two to Vietnam which was for a total of 271 days.

Ross and Hazel first met in Kalgoorlie while Ross was serving in the Army as a National Serviceman in late 1966, while he was home on his first leave to celebrate his 21st Birthday. The relationship developed from there, they communicated regularly by 'snail mail', (the only option in those days, not even phone contact was available) as Ross was overseas in either New Guinea or Vietnam.

Ross next flew home to Kalgoorlie on a short break where Hazel and Ross became engaged, much to the surprise of many of Hazel's friends as they had not seen Ross and Hazel together, they continued to write to each other until Ross's next leave for Christmas 1967, during this time they travelled to Carnarvon, as they would be living there after their marriage.

Ross returned back to his unit and back overseas once more (still communicating by the only means available "snail mail") until discharge on 12th July 1968, and they married the next day in Kalgoorlie. "Out of one institution into another".

They took up residence in Carnarvon where Ross was employed by the Main Roads Department, until he was transferred to Port Hedland where they welcomed their first child in 1972, a boy.

In 1976 they once again transferred, this time to Geraldton where they were blessed with their second child, a girl, and decided to settle down and build their home. Since being in Geraldton they extended their family, a boy and girl, they now have their 4 children and 6 grandchildren.



Ross joined RSL on 09/02/1998; later he was forced into early retirement from his full time employment in 2002 because of ill health due to his military service. He was elected to the RSL Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2003, and then to Senior Vice President on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2004. He continued in this position until elected President on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2006, and retired on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2015 on medical advice.

He served on the State Executive representing Midwest Region from 2008 until the Executive was incorporated into the Board of Directors in 2014 (a total of 6yrs service) and was subsequently elected to Director on the RSL State Board, representing Midwest Region from 2014 until 2017, a total of 3yrs service.

Ross was elected as a Rate Payer member of the Sailors, Soldiers and Airman's Memorial Trust on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2005 – currently serving. This is the body responsible for the management of Birdwood House, RSL Geraldton HQ. He was deeply involved with the HMAS Sydney II Management Advisory Committee to the City of Greater Geraldton for the HMAS Sydney Memorial on Mount Scott, before and after the ship was found. This Committee no longer exists after being

dissolved by the City. Some may question Ross's uniform in the picture at left but due to the confines of the ship members of 32 Small Ships Sqn never wore slouch hats, much the same as the Armoured Corps.

**Editor's note: This item would be incomplete without listing Ross's many achievements for and contributions to the benefit of Geraldton RSL. His long and tireless efforts are too numerous to fit in this article so are listed on the next page. Well done Ross! We all owe you. -Ed**

## Ross Davies - Contributions to Geraldton RSL

Major improvements Ross has been involved in, which benefit the running and comfort of RSL Members are as follows:

- Construction and paving, (with slabs borrowed from the City) of the Birdwood House outside shelter. The most used area of Birdwood House.
- Brick paving of the Birdwood House forecourt and Parade area, this included all the underground drainage for the building and paved area. Procured 600m<sup>2</sup> of paving bricks, all under-lay material and labour all free of charge. Organised and supervised prisoners for labour.
- Extensions to the Birdwood House Memorabilia display area with fire escape exit come loading area. This was achieved by firstly removing the old caretaker's cottage (done by Kerry Ross and others) out the back, also removal of old scouts hall, with both premises containing asbestos. This also increased more room in the adjoining kitchen and included a storage area and passage to rear exit/fire escape.
- Underground lighting to the Cenotaph flag pole and memorial wall. With the installation of these lights, Ross ensured that an Australian flag flies at Birdwood House 24/7
- Securing of the leopard tank and the concrete pad for the Memorial park, all at little if any expense to the Geraldton Sub Branch.
- Replacement of the main hall ceiling and the removal of the asbestos roof and replacing with colour bond material.
- Installation of the initial security cameras to inside and outside of Birdwood House for Security.
- Arranged for the prisoners work party to maintain the lawns and do some of the outside maintenance.
- Arranged and conducted many services for ANZAC Day/ Vietnam Veterans' Day /Pilgrimage's to the Geraldton War cemetery prior to and including Remembrance Day/and HMAS Sydney 11 Memorial Service.
- Attended many local school ANZAC Services and also represents the RSL at funeral services of ex -service personal, when requested to do so.
- Bar manager (assisted by his wife Hazel) from 2005 until retirement in August 2015. During this time made many improvements for the smooth running of the bar - e.g. Upgrade of the fridges by purchasing three 2<sup>nd</sup> hand large ones which were far more efficient (much colder and more space.) The old ones were hired at approx. \$250/\$300 per month and were not very cold, or efficient. The new ones cost approx. \$1700 each and paid for themselves in less than two years, and are now an asset to the Sub Branch. Ross also acquired a 2<sup>nd</sup> hand glass washer which has since been replaced, and also purchased an icemaker. Ross took control of all stock in the bar keeping it well stocked up, and usually personally picked up the majority of it himself on a regular basis. i.e. soft drinks, chips/peanuts, paper goods etc. for the bar, toilets & kitchen. Also any extra alcohol that is required between delivery days. He has spent many long hours involved with the bar, increasing profits tremendously, which has made the Treasurer very happy!
- Along with his wife (Hazel) Ross edited and produced the 'Birdwood Bugle' photocopying in excess of 300 copies, these had to be printed, addressed then folded before posting, for as long as 10 years.
- Ross was also presented with a "Paul Harris Fellow Award" from the Rotary Club of Batavia Coast. The then President, Robin McDonald said "It was fitting to recognise Mr Davies for his dedication and community service achievements. Ross is a remarkable man, giving untiring service to his fellow RSL members and continues to do so". The Paul Harris Fellow Award recognises awardees for their exemplary work in community service or helping those in need. Ross was informed that it is very rare for a non-Rotarian to receive this award.

## Oberon Class - The First Australian Submarine Squadron

The "Oberon" class was one of the most advanced types of conventional submarines, combining high speed with great underwater endurance. They were attack submarines, with both anti-surface and anti-submarine capabilities. They were amongst the quietest operational submarines in the world. They were therefore extremely difficult to detect and were ideally suited to operations on an enemy's "doorstep". Equipment included sensitive long-range underwater listening devices and electronic fire-control systems. They were fitted with a "snort" system, which enabled batteries recharging while submerged. Moulded fibreglass had been used extensively in the construction of the casing and fin (aka 'sail').

The Royal Navy's 4th Submarine Squadron, which included "T" class submarines, was disbanded on 10 January 1969 when the 1st Australian Submarine Squadron comprising OTWAY and OXLEY was founded.

The rebirth of the Australian Submarine Service followed the decision of the Naval Board, in 1963, to order four of the highly successful British "Oberon" class vessels for the RAN. The orders were placed with Scotts yard at Greenock and each vessel took just under three years to build. In the tradition of their predecessors of some forty years before, they were named in honour of men who figured in early Australian exploration.

The RAN sent volunteers for submarine training with the Royal Navy. This flow of personnel was maintained as the building programme progressed, and so as each vessel was commissioned she was manned almost entirely by RAN officers and sailors.

HMAS OXLEY, the first submarine built for the RAN for almost forty years, was launched on 24 September 1965 and commissioned on 27 March 1967. She reached Sydney on 18 August 1967, where she was moored at HMAS PLATYPUS. This was the new RAN submarine base which was commissioned on the day of OXLEY's arrival. She was the first RAN submarine to pass through the Panama Canal. OXLEY's original pennant number was S57 and in 1969 it was reduced to 57.

HMAS OTWAY was the second Oberon to be completed for the RAN. She was launched on 29 November 1966 and commissioned at Greenock on 23 April 1968. On 23 July OTWAY departed Portsmouth for Australia and arrived at Sydney on 7 October 1968. Her pennant number was 59.

On 10 January 1969 OTWAY escorted HMS TRUMP, last of the Royal Navy's 4th Submarine Squadron based in Australia, out of Sydney Harbour as TRUMP departed for the United Kingdom.

The third submarine was HMAS OVENS. She was launched on 4 December and commissioned on 15 April 1969. OVENS arrived at Sydney on 17 October 1969. OVENS was the first RAN submarine to serve with ANZUK forces under the Five Power Defence Agreement in the Far East in 1972. Her pennant number was 70.

HMAS ONSLOW was the fourth one completed. She was launched and commissioned on 22 December 1969. She departed for Australia in April 1970 and arrived at HMAS PLATYPUS on 4 July that year. Her pennant number was 60.

Two further "Oberon" class submarines were completed for the RAN some eight years later. They were similar in most respects to the earlier four "Oberons" but incorporated important design improvements including the provision of long range passive ranging sonar, which was retro-fitted to the four earlier submarines.

HMAS ORION was the fifth submarine to be completed. She was launched on 16 September 1974 and commissioned on 15 June 1977. Her pennant number was 61. The name ORION is linked to the constellation of Orion, which is visible in the Southern Hemisphere.

The sixth and final Oberon completed for the RAN was HMAS OTAMA. She was launched on 3 December 1975 and commissioned on 27 April 1978. OTAMA's pennant number was 62. The name OTAMA is a northern Aboriginal word meaning 'dolphin'.

### The Update Programme

By the early 1970s, it became apparent that the original Royal Navy sensors, weapons and fire control system of the "Oberon" submarines were becoming obsolete and would not meet requirements until the end of their lives. An overall programme known as the Submarine Weapons Update Programme (SWUP) was initiated. Due to the lack of RN and USN development in conventional submarines, the selection, integration and design was carried out by the RAN.

The heart of the SWUP was the digital Submarine Fire Control System (SFCS) which was built by Singer Librascope to RAN philosophy. Other equipment included in the SWUP were CSU3-41 Attack Sonar, AN/BQG Passive Ranging Sonar, WSN-2 Gyro Compass, MK48 Torpedo and later modifications for the UGM-84 Encapsulated Harpoon Missile. HMAS OXLEY completed her SWUP update on 18 December 1979, OTWAY on 30 April 1981, OVENS on 12 August 1982, ORION on 12 August 1983, ONSLOW on 21 September 1984 and OTAMA on 12 September 1985.

## End of an Era

With the realisation that the ageing “Oberons” would have to be replaced that the decision to build six new submarines utilising Australian industry, was forged by the Commonwealth Government placing an order with Kockums in 1987.

Subsequent to placing this order a plan was then devised to progressively decommission the ageing “Oberons”. HMAS OXLEY was decommissioned on 13 February 1992, OTWAY on 17 February 1994, OVENS on 1 December 1995, ORION on 4 October 1996, ONSLOW on 29 March 1999 and OTAMA in December 2000. The Oberon class submarine base in Sydney for almost 32 years, HMAS PLATYPUS was decommissioned on 14 May 1999.

## A Case Study

**HMAS OTWAY (S 59)** was one of the first four *Oberon*-class boats ordered for the RAN. OTWAY was built in Scotland during the mid-1960s, and commissioned into naval service in 1968. The submarine was decommissioned in 1994. The submarine's upper [casing](#), [fin](#), and stern are preserved at [Holbrook, New South Wales](#).

She arrived in September 1968 after sailing from the United Kingdom. During this voyage, it became the first RAN vessel to visit [Ghana](#), and the first RAN submarine to round the [Cape of Good Hope](#). On 10 January 1969, the submarine escorted [HMS TRUMP](#), the last submarine of the Royal Navy's Australia-based [4th Submarine Squadron](#) out of Sydney Harbour.

During 1970, the submarine visited New Zealand and was involved in training exercises in the Indian Ocean. In March and April 1971, OTWAY participated in [SEATO Exercise Subok](#). On 26 August 1971, her [fin](#) was struck by a dummy helicopter-dropped torpedo during training exercises in Jervis Bay. The damage to the submarine was quickly repaired. On 1 September, the fin was damaged again when a periscope mast was hit by a whale: repairs were completed in Sydney that day. In October, the submarine visited Brisbane for Navy Week, but sailed on short notice and with only two-thirds of her personnel to rescue the crew of the ketch ONE AND ALL, which had run aground on [Middleton Reef](#).

HMAS OTWAY [paid off](#) on 17 February 1994. The submarine's [fin](#) was donated to the town of [Holbrook, New South Wales](#), an inland community with strong ties to submarines since World War I, when the town was renamed after British submariner and [Victoria Cross](#) recipient [Norman Douglas Holbrook](#). The community tendered to buy the rest of the submarine, but did not win the tender. The submarine was sold to [Sims Metal](#) for [scrapping](#) in November 1995. Undeterred, the working group used the money raised to buy the upper section of the casing plus the submarine's tail section, from Sims Metal.

The casing was sectioned, transported and reassembled on site. OTWAY was dedicated as a submarine memorial on 7 June 1997. The Holbrook Submarine Museum was later established nearby. In 2013, the fin was fitted with periscopes and masts of the type fitted while in service.

NB In researching the OTWAY, it was noticeable that on public domain sites, there's very little about their service histories. This possibly reflects a certain reticence by the Navy and Defence about the activities of the boats during their service.

## Sources

Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMAS\\_Otway\\_\(S\\_59\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMAS_Otway_(S_59))

Submarine Institute of Australia and its Australian National Submarine Museum sites: <https://www.submarineinstitute.com/> and <https://ansmpilot.org.au/>

## Further reading

For extensive illustrated histories of *Oxley II* and *Ovens* – see the RAN Sea Power Centre *Ships Histories*.

Mark Gilligan

Beware of a new Amazon scam. My husband ordered me some expensive jewellery, but motorcycle parts came instead. Thankfully they fitted his bike....



This article appeared in the West Australian on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February. -Ed

# For many soldiers, the transition to civilian life is confronting

**KYLIE  
RUSSELL**



— or families that have a member serving in the Australian Defence Force, there's always the dread of receiving that knock on the door. This day came far too early for our family.

On February 16, 2002, my life changed.

So too did the life of my one-week-old daughter Leisa. Serving in the Special Air Service Perth-based regiment, my late husband Sgt Andrew Russell was the first Australian to be killed in action since the Vietnam War.

After Andrew's death, I was overwhelmed by support and outreach from those who had themselves experienced tragedy, or simply wanted to do something to help. Over time, my grief and story changed from raising awareness about war widows and their experience, to the soldiers who had returned home.

Tragically, for some veterans the transition from the defence force to civilian life can be confronting.

Triggered by the loss of the defence community, relocation to a new home and city, or adjustment to new work routines. For some, this can lead to reduced mental health and wellbeing, unemployment, and family breakdown. No veteran ever plans to be without a home, but for some this is their story: couch surfing or living in their car.

The sobering truth is that veterans often experience dark days and while most will find a way through these, when they can't they need a safe place, to connect with the veteran community and receive the specialist support they require. Research has confirmed that veterans are now three times more at risk of homelessness than other Australians and suicide is more prevalent with those experiencing homelessness than those who are not. The recent Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has heard the

harrowing accounts of lost hope, broken promises of support, and suicide in our defence and veteran community.

For me, meeting with veterans and hearing their stories of loss, pain and suffering left me feeling ashamed.

I had the love and support of my daughter, family and friends to find my place in this world without Andrew. I had my profession as a registered nurse to pursue new opportunities, to build a career.

Not everyone has this foundation or support. I'll always remember a veteran telling me that on leaving the defence force, and in the time needed to find a job, it left too much time to think, to relive the memories.

And in reliving the memories came the sorrow and the fear.

Then came the drinking, followed by the arguments with family and friends. Then came the divorce and absence from children — and what followed was homelessness. With 90 per cent of veterans

at risk or experiencing homelessness not seeking help until it's too late, what we're witnessing in WA is a silent cry for help.

In response to these sobering facts and figures, my family and I joined forces with RAAFA and I joined forces with RAAFA to develop the WA Andrew Russell Veteran Living program, which will see the development of the first purpose-built emergency veteran accommodation in our State.

In honour of Andrew's service, ARVL will ensure our veterans receive the support they need and undoubtedly deserve, when they most need it. Just as our veterans have been there for our community when we have most needed them. Not only in defence of our country, but through fires, floods and COVID.

Always at the frontline, always putting service first.

Twenty-two years ago, Andrew put service first. This week our daughter had her 22nd birthday. Service has a consequence. A child never meeting her father, a veteran

managing a lifetime of triggers, and for our most vulnerable veterans, homelessness.

Upon completion, RAAFA's ARVL program will see an accommodation site consisting of 16 purpose-built units and it will provide vital services to connect veteran residents with wellbeing and health services.

These services will help support the four in five veterans reporting mental health conditions, including PTSD, while experiencing homelessness.

But, to make this program a reality, we need the help of West Australians. We're calling on all West Australians to join forces with us to help end veteran homelessness by donating to the ARVL Appeal.

The ARVL Appeal will help raise money to build RAAFA's ARVL emergency accommodation and deliver the services needed to support our veterans.

**Professor Kylie Russell is the widow of Sgt Andrew Russell. Donate to the ARVL Appeal online.**

## The Wedgetail.

The US Air Force (USAF) has selected the Boeing E-7A Wedgetail to become its next-generation airborne command and control aircraft. While this news may seem a world away to the average Australian, there is actually a direct link to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), as the E-7A was originally developed in response to the RAAF's "Project Wedgetail" requirement for a new Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) aircraft.

The Wedgetail was the first of a new generation of large digital AEW&C aircraft and was designed from the ground up to meet Australia's needs. Not long after Australia committed to the aircraft's development, South Korea and Turkey also joined the program with four aircraft each, while the UK ordered five in 2018.

Because of its advanced design, the Wedgetail program was delayed by about three years. The first aircraft flew in 2002 and was to have been delivered by 2006, but integration issues with the radar and the aircraft's sophisticated electronic warfare system saw that schedule slip a couple of times to 2009. The first two RAAF E-7As were built by Boeing in Seattle in the US, while the four others were converted from standard "green" 737 airframes at Boeing Defence, Australia's facility at RAAF Amberley in Queensland.

The E-7A is based on a commercial Boeing 737-700 airframe, but features a large and distinct "surfboard" radar on its rear fuselage as well as several other modifications. The radar is a fixed multi-mode electronically scanned array (MESA) unit that was developed by Northrop Grumman and, instead of spinning like conventional radar antennas, has thousands of individual transmit/review (T/R) nodes. Whereas conventional radars refreshed every few seconds as the antenna spins, the fixed MESA allows for continuous 360-degree monitoring of all parts of the airspace around the aircraft and can even divert power to specific parts of the antenna to electronically focus on, or "stare", at certain segments of airspace if required.

Rather than the 160 or so passenger seats a standard 737-700 airliner carries, the Wedgetail has about 10 side-facing consoles at which airborne radar and electronic warfare officers monitor the airspace and surface out to 300 km or beyond. The interior also has a large bank of computers, a galley and a crew rest area for long-endurance missions.

Externally, numerous antennas are added for communications, electronic self-protection, infrared self-protection and datalinks. The engines each have an additional generator so sufficient electrical power can be produced for the MESA and computers and an air-to-air refuelling receptacle has been added above the cockpit for long-endurance missions.



- from the RAAF School of Radio [magazine](#) and reprinted here with the kind permission of its editor.

## Ron Winstone – a tribute

The late Ron Winstone was a true supporter of the RSL and for any other organization he was involved with, he gave 110% to all. Some of his achievements, but not limited to these or the order of them are: the acquisition of the two blocks adjacent to Birdwood House, being the Memorial Park and the block at the rear of the park for vehicle parking, this particular property generates a regular income to the RSL as well as extra parking for members attending Birdwood House.

Once the Memorial Park block was acquired he proceeded to organize the construction of the Wall of Remembrance, this included the required building materials, such as the granite stone and both the backing brick and pavers as donations. The construction was done by local stonemason Frank Scioto. Ron also negotiated supply of the wharf bollards and the 105mm Pack Howitzer which still feature in the park to this day.

His next project was the outside shelter; this shelter started as a shade cover when smoking was forbidden in Birdwood House, long before it became law. Over time it developed into what it is today, it had to be negotiated with the heritage authorities and local authorities; most of this was done by Ron. Much of the material required for this project were donated or organized by Ron, he dug all the footings manually.

All the time these projects were being achieved, Ron was either on the committee, Secretary, Treasurer or up to something else like arranging ANZAC Day and the like.

He was a stickler for accuracy and total honesty when dealing with Sub-Branch property, money, bar stock or food. Heaven help those who transgressed or were unable to account for or justify an expenditure claim or purchase on one of our trading accounts.

Ron's *legendary* merchandise and bar stocktakes had many a bar manager on their toes. Who can remember the bottle measuring gauge tabbed off by the nip?

At one point in time Ron was asked to come out of retirement from the committee to assist by way of sorting out the Sub-Branch's financial records and data entry for the accounting package (MYOB); due to the then Treasurer being unable to keep up the work load, thus averting a looming insolvency.

Ron was instrumental in introducing and pushing for the adoption of staggered (split) elections of two years duration, for the executive & committee positions of the Sub-Branch's Management Committee. This together with the elected president serving a maximum to two consecutive terms has ensured the continuity of experienced committee members.

Ron also took a keen interest in the Sub-Branch's memorabilia collection and saw a need to formalize the collection's management, preservation & display.

As a member of a museum management group he was instrumental in creating Birdwood Military Museum Society (Inc) a separate incorporated Association responsible for the management of the Geraldton RSL's extensive collection of military objects. As the inaugural president of the newly formed Association he worked closely with the Western Australian Museum advisory staff and the Royal Western Australian Historical Society in this task.

Birdwood Military Museum currently continues its memberships of AMaGA (Australian Museums & Galleries Association) and the Royal Western Australian Historical Society, which were initiated by Ron.

**Many thanks to Ross Davies for these recollections of Ron Winstone's major contributions to our RSL – Ed**



## Message from the Minister



The Australian community rightfully expects that Defence personnel, veterans and their families are well looked after. This is an important task and responsibility of government – a solemn commitment and one we take very seriously.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has called for

the simplification and harmonisation of veteran compensation legislation. This has been both agreed and pursued by the Albanese Government. We want to get this right.

The Australian Government recognises that the veteran compensation system is overly complicated. It can be difficult to understand, stressful to navigate and complex to administer, resulting in delays, backlogs and confusion for veterans and families.

The Government recognises that reform is needed to simplify and harmonise legislation governing compensation, rehabilitation and other supports for veterans and families so they can get the support that they need and deserve.

In 2023, the Australian Government engaged closely with the veteran community on a proposed pathway to simplify the veterans' legislative framework, to better support veterans and their families in the future.

This draft legislation has been developed taking into account the views of veterans, families and ex-service organisations.

The draft legislation seeks to simplify the veteran compensation system, with all claims to be considered under **a single Act**, transforming the veterans' entitlement scheme to one solid foundation instead of three.

Moving to a single Act will make it easier for veterans and families to understand their entitlements and receive the support they need, when they need it. This will also contribute to streamlining and speeding up claims processing within the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).

Critical safeguards will be in place including grandparenting existing arrangements so there is no change in compensation payments currently being received by veterans and to ensure that current payment rates are maintained and indexed as they would be under the current system.

This is without a doubt, the biggest improvement of veterans' compensation and rehabilitation laws for more than a century and it is important our veterans and their families help guide the decisions that impact them.

I encourage you to join one of our consultation sessions, which will be promoted on the DVA website. Take the time to understand what this change means for you ([www.dva.gov.au/scenarios](http://www.dva.gov.au/scenarios)) if the legislation is approved and provide your feedback to help us shape the veteran entitlement support system for future veterans and their families.

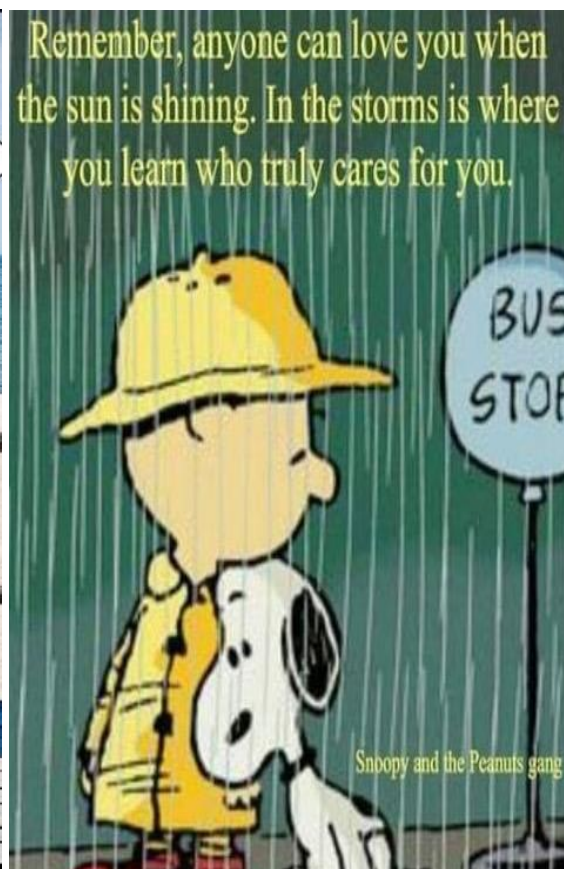
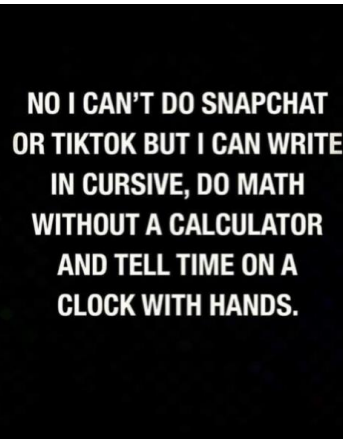
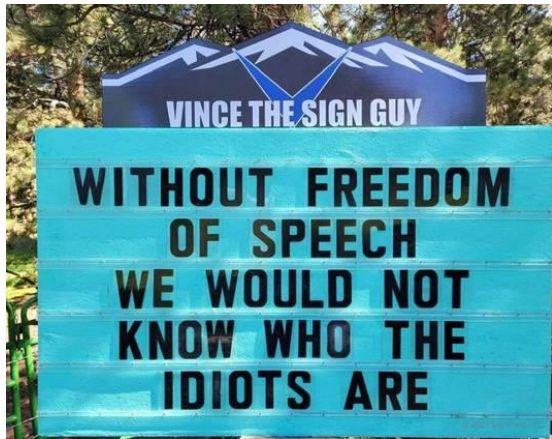
Australian veterans deserve the best, and this important reform seeks to simplify the complexities of the current system to make sure veterans and their families receive the support they need and deserve. I look forward to hearing your views so that we can move towards creating a system that delivers a better future for our veterans and families.

**The Hon Matt Keogh MP**

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Personnel





## Wearing of Rosemary

Have you ever wondered why rosemary is worn?

Rosemary has long featured in Anzac Day ceremonies, pinned to the lapels and collars of servicemen and school children alike. While it's unclear when rosemary was first worn, Anzac Day was first observed on 25 April 1916, and the aromatic herb has since become synonymous with the day. The reason for wearing rosemary is two-fold: firstly, the smell of rosemary is thought to improve the memory, with reports of Greek scholars wearing rosemary in their hair to help them while they studied. Secondly, rosemary has a direct link with Gallipoli, where our troops fought in 1915 - rosemary can be found growing wild all over the peninsula. So now you know, tell your mates and pin a sprig to your jackets.

– from [news.com.au](https://www.news.com.au)

Ed.

## Dress Code

Sadly, this article needs repeating yet again as some folks still haven't got the message. The committee you have elected make every effort to make our sub branch a clean, tidy and congenial place to visit and/or to entertain guests. We try to maintain standards appropriate to the prestige that our organisation enjoys in the public eye. Our primary income is from membership fees and bar sales, so the last thing we want to do is turn away or offend our valued members, yet a very few insist on ignoring our dress code, which is quoted on the door and reads in part "No Singlets and No Thongs after 1800 hrs."

Even some of the rougher pubs around Geraldton do not allow people wearing singlets or thongs in at any time of day. Happily most of our members show respect for the RSL by dressing appropriately when they attend – please do not be one of those few who do not. Being asked to leave is embarrassing for the person asked and for the person asking, and causes needless friction in our club. Surely it is not too hard to dress respectfully. - Ed.

## Membership Renewals

All membership classes (Service, Affiliate and Social) expired on 31st December 2023. Renewal notices for Service members are posted out from Perth and can be paid either locally or direct to Perth. Affiliate and Social memberships are paid only directly to the Geraldton Sub Branch, not Perth. For both Affiliate and Social membership renewals, please use the form on the table outside the bar. The fee may be paid either over the bar with cash or eftpos, or at the office when open. The form gives the office up to date information on our data, also helps record the payments, so bring it with you when making the payment. Thank you. To save \$1.20 per person postage, when you make your renewal payment you will be issued with the 2024 membership card. I have printed them and they will be available when paying, so make sure you get it!

If you are unable to pay personally by not being able to come to Birdwood House, the renewal may be posted, complete with the renewal form. The fees have remained the same (one of the few items with current inflation), being \$20 for Affiliates and \$15 for social members. If in doubt about whether you are financial, on the whiteboard near the museum doors are lists of members and their RSL financial status.

Mike Marsh, Membership Officer, Geraldton Sub-Branch Tel 0458 806 311

## Valé



535641 **Winstone - Ronald Leslie** 29.12.1943 - 18.12.2023 Passed away at Nazareth House Geraldton. Ron was a major contributor to Geraldton RSL. See page 15.

Ron received the following medals:  
 Australia Day Honours 2024  
 Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) Posthumously  
 50 year clasp VFRS Medal  
 20 year clasp BFB Medal  
 5 year service medallion SES



55121 **Terry Gadean** 30/12/1942 – 15 /2/2024

Terry was an infantryman with 6RAR A Coy. (Long Tan)

He founded a veterans' retreat at Marble Bar.

Terry worked for 15 years as a prison officer and was a skilled bootmaker who ran a bootmaking business and taught the skill to prisoners. RSL members formed an honour guard at Terry's funeral service on 29<sup>th</sup> February.