



MARCHING ALONG



WRANS – Naval Women's Association (ACT) Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 5

November 2018



Jindabyne Trip – Left-Right –

Jill Kelly (Hildebrand), Pauline Gribble (McCormick), Vicki Chin (Neville),
Heather Milward (Gunner), Trish Goddard (Thurston), Margaret Smith, Christine Lamb (McNicol)

Newsletter of the WRANS – Naval Women's Association (ACT)
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WRANS – Naval Women's Association (ACT)

September - October 2018

WRANS - Naval Women Association (ACT)

Activities

Events/Representations

September



On 5 September, Pat McCabe, Merle Hare (Storrie) and Pauline Gribble (McCormick) attended the Battle for Australia at the Australian War Memorial. This event was well attended and Canberra schoolchildren created a wreath during the ceremony. Representatives from the ACT Government and representatives from the foreign embassies, the Australian Defence Force, ex-Service Organisations attended.

Informal Coffee Morning



On 5 September, it was the first informal coffee morning we had at Tulips in Pialligo. *Unfortunately, a clash with other events meant only a few could attend.* It was the first coffee morning and a few attended such as Margaret Smith, Sigi Kropp (Engel).

Note: The first Wednesday of every month is the scheduled day for the informal coffee. I hope that with a specific day per month it will enable people to plan to attend or not.

WRNS lunch



On 9 September, Heather Milward (Gunner) and Pauline attended the WRNS lunch at the Ainslie Football club. It was a relaxing and fun lunch. During lunch, we discussed the embroidered material with signatures and the next steps to take. The WRNS have photos of the material and they are exploring options in the UK on where to display or store the embroidered material. Once they have an answer then we will discuss.



The Last Post and Honouring Women United by Defence Service



On 11 September, as part of the end of Centenary of ANZAC celebrations, Honouring Women United by Defence Service 2018 held two events to commemorate all women whose lives have been impacted by service.

The day honoured the broad scope of service, sacrifices and contributions of women effected by defence service, including:

- Women who are widowed as a result of their partners' service
- Women who are currently serving in the Australian Defence Force
- Women who are ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Force
- Women and their families whose lives have been impacted as a result of service—mothers, spouses, sisters and children who have suffered as a result of a family member's service

Chris Lamb and Pauline Gribble participated in the wreath laying during the Last Post Ceremony. Those WRANS who did not lay wreaths gathered in the cloisters and around the Pool of Reflection during the ceremony.



On completion of the Last Post Ceremony, a group photograph of the ex-serving and serving women was taken. Merle Hare sat with the WWII veterans during the ceremony and she met and spoke to Prime Minister Scott Morrison.



sacrifices and contributions attributed to Defence service. This dinner offered an opportunity to meet new and old friends.

After the Last Post ceremony, the Honouring Women United by Defence Service 2018' dinner was held, at the Realm Hotel in Canberra. Dr Brendan Nelson AO, Director of Australian War Memorial delivered a presentation to honour women's service,



Informal lunch – Woden Southern Cross



In 16 September, we had an informal lunch at the Woden Southern Cross club after its renovations. Approximately ten members and one spouse attended the lunch and we sampled the new menu. We discussed and agreed on the venue for the Christmas dinner.

As well Lyn McCoy (Middleton) and Heather Milward volunteered to participate in the Annual WRANS Memorial Service in October.



ASSIST course



On 17 and 18 September, Pauline Gribble attended and participated in the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) applied suicide intervention skills training (ASSIST). The course had 20 participants from various ex service organisations and the Ombudsman's Office. It is a worthwhile course but also confronting and it is not for everybody.

Defence Widows lunch



Defence Widows Group

For further information contact

Chris Lamb - lambcr67@gmail.com or 6286 4617

On 20 September, a number of WRANS attended the Defence Widows lunch. This was very enjoyable lunch with an entertaining guest speaker, Genevieve Jacobs, a popular print and media journalist.

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Volunteer planting 5000 poppies project- at the Australian War Memorial

To commemorate the 100 years of Armistice that ended the First World War, 62,000 handcrafted, red poppies have been planted in the Australian War Memorial's grounds, symbolically representing Australian lives lost in World War One. On 20 September, a number of



During September, Pauline Gribble, Trish Goddard and Kathryn Spurling participated in planting the poppies outside the Australian War Memorial. Some of the poppies had been to Chelsea Flower show and graced the fields of Frommels' in France. The people who volunteered with this project came from varied backgrounds such as the knitters to the planters. As a planter, the work was really rewarding but hard work. It took a few days for the aches to leave the knees. Some of the poppies were displayed at the Chelsea flower show in the United Kingdom and graced the fields of Frommels' in France. The volunteers with this project came from varied backgrounds. We will be removing the poppies on 12 November.



Informal coffee morning



On 3 October, another informal coffee morning was held at Tulips in Pialligo. The relaxed atmosphere ensured we had a good opportunity to catch-up.



Floriade



On 13 October, Pat McCabe, Merle Hare and Kathryn Spurling attended the ACT Minister for Veterans Affairs, Gordon Ramsay activity at Floriade commemorating the Armistice Centenary.

WRANS Annual Memorial Service – HMAS Harman



On 20 October, the Annual WRANS Memorial Service was held at HMAS Harman. This year we had over approximately 50 people attended. I have attached a copy of the speech that was delivered at the service.

TS Canberra cadets provided a female catafalque party and supported the service. The cadets did an excellent job.

This year we had attendees from interstate WRANS, the WRNS and family and friends. Jean Nysen is a WWII WRAN who lifetime member and now lives in Sydney. Heather Schmitzer (WRNS) was the wife of a former Commanding Officer of HMAS Harman - Clem Schmitzer 1963 to 64. Tessa Lessels a WWII Australian Army Medical Women's Service who served in Hiroshima after the bomb was dropped.



Many photos were taken and have been uploaded to our website. Rose's husband Pieter Van Dijk – was our photographer.



See page 10 for the Memorial address which was given by President Pauline Gribble.





Coffee at Bungendore

On 24 October 2018, Pauline Gribble and Kerry Holmes (Wallis) met with Carole Sharpe (WRNS) for coffee in Bungendore. Carole attended the WRANS Memorial at HMAS Harman on 20 October while visiting her family in Bungendore. Heather Milward looked after Carole during the ceremony. Carole is a very independent woman who has a full life in the UK from being a church verger to lecturing university students on aeronautical engineering.



Bus trip to Jindabyne



On 31 October, seven WRANS travelled to Jindabyne on a bus trip hosted by the HMAS Sydney Vietnam Association and the Wild Brumby distillery.

During the coach trip we saw emus in a paddock and a bunch of goats that escaped from a paddock and avoided being hit by the bus. The weather was exceptional and the food and schnapps was very enjoyable. The Association thanks Jim Quick and the HMAS Sydney Association for making the trip possible.



Flowers for unwell WRANS



During October, Pauline Gribble delivered flowers and had a catch up chat with Beth Roberts (Cozens) and Rose Van Dijk (Wood). Both women are fine but restricted freedom due to injuries and surgery. Please let us know if anyone needs cheering up, as it is important we support each other.



Do you know of a Member who is ill?

Please let the Association know as flowers always lift the spirits and help to know we care.

HMAS Harman - WRANS Memorial Address
Given by Mrs Pauline Gribble (McCormick) – 20 October 2018

Today we are here to acknowledge the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS), formed 77 years ago. While the world has changed, it is important to acknowledge and remember the past, and to celebrate the ongoing friendships many WRANS still maintain.

In 1939, Mrs Florence Mackenzie (known as Mrs Mac) was a female electrical engineer, who formed the Women's Emergency Signalling Corps (WESC). Mrs Mac offered free training for telegraphic and visual signalling to men and women who went on to join the Defence forces and Merchant Navies.

In April 1941, fourteen women of the WESC formed the nucleus of women's involvement with the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). The WRANS was formally gazetted in October 1942 as a non-combat branch of the RAN, carrying out jobs that were previously considered male-only. The WRANS freed men to go to sea, and enabled the shore establishments to maintain their full strength.

Women of the WRANS came from varied backgrounds and adapted to living as part of a group, to shift work and to keeping secrets. WRANS developed an ability to handle the toughest jobs handed out over the years. The girls in service:

- *had fun;*
- *they laughed at themselves, and*
- *Mostly they laughed along with the jokes against them.*

WRANS learned naval traditions and a new language, such as,

- *'come aboard' or 'go ashore' when entering or leaving establishments*
- *telling a story was 'spinning a dit',*
- *food was 'scran',*

- *the kitchen the 'galley', and*
- *Laundry or showering was 'dhobying'.*

The WRANS served in many shore establishments and performed various duties as,

- *communicators,*
- *coders,*
- *writers,*
- *drivers,*
- *radar counter-measure,*
- *mechanics,*
- *cooks,*
- *stewardesses, and*
- *Sick berth attendants.*

In addition, some of the WRANS worked for the intelligence organisations and as domestic staff at Government House in Yarralumla.

To honour those pioneers and our own WWII WRANS still with us, I would like to speak today about some interesting WRANS activities in WWII, which may be unknown.

Third Officer Olive Boye – WWII Coastwatcher - an unpaid honorary WRAN

Olive Boye, known as Ruby, was an Australian woman who lived in the Solomon Islands with her husband Skov Boye. He was the manager of the Kauri Timber Company on Vanikoro, an island - part of the Santa Cruz group – of the Solomon Islands.

After the timber company radio operator left to join the RAAF, Ruby decided to 'do her bit for the war effort' and took over the radio operator's duties. Ruby was the only white woman within hundreds of miles. She relayed messages via voice radio, she

taught herself Morse code so that she could work in the highly classified unit of Coast watching.

The height of the radio aerial on Vanikoro, gave Ruby a wide transmission coverage range. She sent weather reports to the Australian Forces four times a day. She sent coded information on all enemy troop and ship movements. Ruby also organised the native inhabitants to pass information to headquarters.

In 1942, after America entered the Pacific theatre of war, Ruby reported to the United States Army and consequently to Admiral Halsey. Admiral Halsey and the men at the Coastwatchers headquarters held Mrs Boye in high esteem. They complimented her by saying:

Mrs Boye could use the Morse code key as fast as almost any male operator could.

After the Japanese murdered and tortured a Coastwatcher in New Guinea, the RAN enlisted or commissioned all Coastwatchers into uniform. In theory, combatants in uniform could not be executed as spies. On 27 July 1943, Ruby received her honorary rank of Third Officer WRANS. Her uniform was parachuted to her on the same day.

Ruby spent many hours on her own as her husband worked in another part of the island. The Japanese were aware of her work and identity and they threatened several times to “come and get her”. Ruby’s plan for escape from the Japanese was to melt into the forest.

Third Officer Boye was the only known female Coastwatcher in WWII. In 1944, she received the British Empire Medal (Civil) for her work as a Coastwatcher.

On 30 September 1946, Ruby’s appointment as Third Officer WRANS ended. It is noteworthy that Ruby did not receive any money, allowances, or benefits for her

honorary WRAN rank during WWII except her uniform. After Skov’s death, Ruby remarried and was known as Ruby Boye-Jones.

The NSW Ex-WRANS Association have dedicated a page in the Garden Island Chapel Remembrance Book to Ruby. In 1985, at the age of 94 Ruby received a letter from the RAN informing her an accommodation block at the Australian Defence Force Academy –was named Boye House.

Ruby was born on 1 July 1892 and died on 14 September 1990.

Australian women also served in WWII in the Allied ‘Services. One example was Kathleen King who joined the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRNS) because she was in England during the war.

In Perth 1939, Kathleen King, known as Peggy, completed her honours degree in modern languages - French, German and Italian. She travelled to England where conscription applied to all people during WWII.

In May 1942, Peggy enlisted into the WRNS as a Special Duties Linguist. She received one-week of training in terminology, cipher and code, and two weeks on radio direction finding. Peggy posted to the Isle of Wight and Algiers to intercept and translate information.

In February 1944, with the ANZIO landings, Peggy flew to Italy as the first WREN posted to the Admiral’s staff in Naples. The front line was 30 miles away, she watched the troops move out and the dockyard was regularly bombed. Peggy spent long hours listening to the medley of voices coming from the German U-boats, planes and shore. There were many hours of quite time interspersed with the odd tense moment.

In January 1945, Peggy commissioned as a Third Officer. She posted to the staff of Flag Officer of the Fleet, and went to the forward areas of Malaya and Singapore.

After 9 years in England and the WRNS service, Peggy took her discharge and returned to Australia.

Our Local WRAN - Merle Storrie (Hare) a WWII WRANS

In March 1943, Merle (Storrie) Hare enlisted in the WRANS and served her enlistment at HMAS Lonsdale in Melbourne. Lonsdale was a gunnery-training establishment, which received new entries to the WRANS. Merle served as a Leading WRAN Writer and Supply Assistant. She notes that her uniform was tailor made. Whereas those who came after did not have the same luxury.

In June 1944, Merle married Robert who was an AIF soldier on active service. Merle's wedding dress was made of tulle fabric and, five other wartime brides wore it afterwards.

In 1946, Merle discharged from the WRANS and remained in Victoria to raise her family. Merle had a knack with numbers and would do the account books for friends. Merle was active in the fundraising community in her local area in Victoria.

In 1997, after the death of her husband, Merle loaded up her car and moved to Canberra to be near her two children and their families. Her family played soccer and Merle took over running the soccer club canteen. Merle enjoys ringing the local radio station and educating listeners with her opinions.

In 2003, at the age of 77 Merle participated in the steering committee to form the WRANS Association ACT.

Merle lives independently, still has her driver's licence but she gave her car away to her grandson. Our lives are richer for Merle's ongoing presence in the WRANS association.

WRANS in WWII at HMAS Harman

HMAS Harman means something special to many WRANS, as it is the birthplace for the WRANS. WRANS were engaged in duties of a secret nature, worked long hours under exacting conditions. For many, this meant absolute silence about their work, which continued after discharge. While others were released from the secrecy code.

On 19 November 1941, when the HMAS Sydney was lost, three WRANS and two RAN telegraphists were on watch at Harman. When nothing was heard from the Sydney, it was assumed the ship was maintaining radio silence.

Three nights later the duty WRAN operator was instructed to call the Sydney continuously because the ship was overdue. A senior officer from the Department of Defence stormed into the receiving room and said:

'The Sydney's lost I hope those damned women haven't missed the message.

As a nineteen-year-old WRAN, this accusation was hard to cope with and many WRANS continued to be haunted by these words for the next four years.

On 7 December 1941, after bombing Pearl Harbour, Harman became the communication centre for ships of the allied navies working in the Pacific region - RAN, the Royal Navy and the United States Navy. For the WRANS at Harman, the war became all too vivid and real with the threat of the Japanese invasion. Air raid shelters were built, slit trenches dug with ongoing practice drills.

As the Japanese moved south, the WRAN operators from Harman worked right up to the last moment taking down final messages from the radio operators in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore stations as they fell.

Final messages were:

The Japanese have arrived.

Closing down. Keep smiling.

As each station closed, the WRANS operators wondered how soon the same fate would occur to Coonawarra (Darwin). Priority outward messages piled up for overseas stations, and these would never be transmitted. However, as the tide of the Pacific war turned, the WRANS had the

privilege of contacting the stations and the people who had been isolated from civilisation for so long.

In conclusion

The pioneers, who achieved a first for women in the RAN, have made the path easier for those who followed. There have been many changes over the years and every WRAN has a different story to tell. However, the one thing that has not changed is the spirit that existed from the beginning of the WRANS.

When the time came that our service was no longer required some of us went home, got married or started a new career. However, some of our fondest memories are those of being a WRAN.

Veterans support gets a new look



The Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) has changed its name and look.

On 19 October, VVCS became *Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling*.

“This new brand better represents how the service has evolved and is more recognisable,” National Manager Dr Stephanie Hodson said.

“Open arms are a very powerful symbol of support, safety, and security, particularly for Vietnam veterans, whose lifeline was the Huey helicopter.

“The Hueys would either take them out to safety, or provide critical supplies. But to let the pilot know where to land, one soldier had to stand in a field with open arms, completely vulnerable.

“Our new logo reminds us of those brave soldiers, while also representing so much to contemporary veterans —families welcoming soldiers home, land crew directing planes—and, of course, our policy to welcome those who need support.

“This brand change comes at a time when we are expanding eligibility to anyone who has served for one day or more and their immediate family, who can now seek counselling about any issue they face.

“It was developed after extensive consultation with Vietnam and contemporary veterans, current personnel, reservists, partners, families, and peer network advisers across Australia.” The nationally accredited service has been the cornerstone of the Australian Government’s veteran mental health support for more than 35 years, when it was established to support Vietnam veterans.

It provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling to former and current Australian Defence Force personnel and their families.

“As a contemporary veteran, I fully understand and appreciate the amazing legacy the Vietnam veterans have provided to my generation.

“Since 1982, we have provided more than 1.6 million counselling sessions to close to 300,000 veterans and family members,” Dr Hodson said.

“With this more memorable brand that clearly represents what we do, we hope to better connect with current and former ADF personnel and their families, so that even more can get the support they need.”

If you need support, call 1800 011 046 any time of day or night. Or for more information, including Group Programs, go to the new website - www.openarms.gov.au

Any mental health condition now covered under NLHC



A new way to claim
for current and former serving ADF members and their families

Register for MyService

Sign in with myGov

MyService makes it easier for you to access DVA services online

NLHC does not depend on lodging a compensation claim and is open to all current and former members of the ADF who have rendered at least one day of permanent or continuous full-time service. A formal diagnosis is not required to seek treatment under NLHC.

NLHC treatment is accessed through a DVA White Card and may include services provided by a general practitioner, medical specialist, psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist, psychiatrist, hospital services or specialist PTSD program. You can also access counselling services through the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service.

VetAffairs – Spring 2017

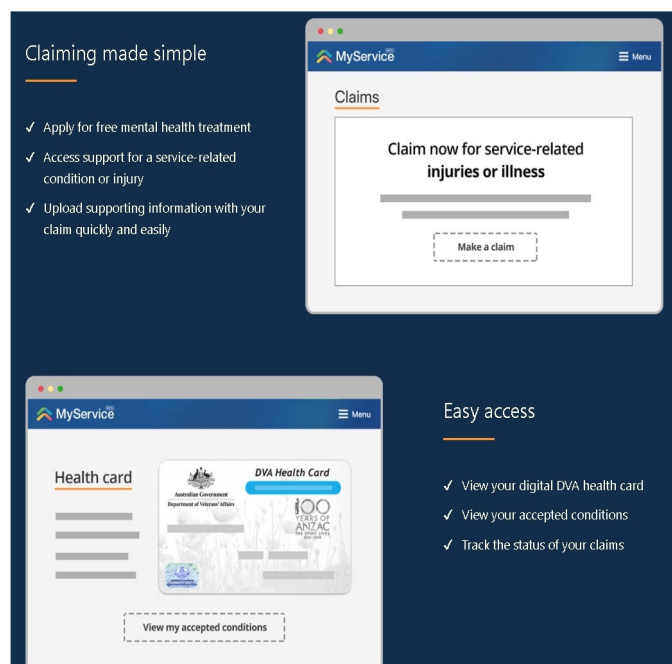
Aged Care Royal Commission

The Australian Government has called for a Royal Commission into the Aged Care sector. The Royal Commission will primarily look at the quality of care provided in residential and home aged care to senior Australians. The Royal Commission's interim report is to be provided by 31 October 2019, and its final report no later than 30 April 2020.

If you or a family member have immediate concerns please contact the [Aged Care Complaints Commissioner](#) on 1800 550 552 or you can [lodge a complaint online](#).

Vice President, Pat McCabe, will be lodging a submission to the Royal Commission via the TPI Federation of Australia. At this time, the Terms of Reference have been published but no further information on the timeframe for submissions has been advertised. If any member would like to contribute to that submission, or would like a copy of the Terms of Reference, you are invited to email me at vicepresident@wransact.org or mail it to me at PO Box 402, Woden, ACT 2606

As announced in the 2017–18 Budget, current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) (*in the 2018-19 budget now includes direct families*) are now able to access treatment for any mental health condition through DVA's Non-Liability Health Care (NLHC) treatment arrangements. There is no need to prove the condition is related to their service.



Hearing services for DVA clients



If you are a DVA client with an accepted hearing disability, including chronic or severe tinnitus, you have access to fully funded devices and services to help manage your hearing loss.

The Australian Government Hearing Services Program provides comprehensive hearing assessments and prescriptions for over 160 hearing devices, as well as fitting of the device, ongoing training and support to DVA clients. These services come at no cost if you have a DVA Gold or White card.

You also have access to assistive listening devices (ALDs) through the DVA Rehabilitation Appliances Program at no cost. ALDs are used with hearing aids to enhance hearing in specific situations such as watching television with family or eating out with friends. Using ALDs with hearing aids can provide greater benefits.

If you are experiencing hearing loss, speak with your local doctor for advice. Providers know the devices and services available to DVA clients and are best placed to help you on your journey to better hearing.

More information can be found on the [DVA Hearing Services Factsheet 22](#) or by visiting the [DVA Hearing Services webpage](#).

Remember, you **NEVER, EVER** pay for your hearing aid DVA entitlements. The Audiologists **MUST** always request prior approval for any requirement over the basic needs provided by the Department of Health.

The next **WRANS reunion** will be held in Perth between 27 - 30 August 2020.

<http://www.wranswa.org.au/wrans-ran-perth-reunion-27-30-august-2020/>

WRANS - RAN Women's Association WA

warmly invites you to Perth for the 2020 National Reunion
27th August – 30th August 2020.

Expressions of interest to be returned by email to: - reunion2020@bigpond.com
Or post to

Reunion 2020, PO Box 3094,
Mandurah East. 6210

Registrations will commence in January 2020.

Name:.....

Maiden Name:.....

Service No:.....

Years of Service:.....

Contact Details: (Address, email or phone no)

.....
.....
.....

Please pass this Newsletter along to your Navy friends for information.

WRANS – Naval Women's Association (ACT)

Proposed - EVENTS PROGRAM 2018

DATE	TIME	FUNCTION	VENUE	RSVP
Mon 12 Nov	1800	General Meeting and Dinner	Southern Cross Club Woden	To secretary@wransact.org Ph: 0412 122 527
Wed 5 Dec	1830	Christmas Dinner	Southern Cross Yacht Club, Yarralumla	To secretary@wransact.org Ph: 0412 122 527

Upcoming events

- 7 Nov Informal coffee morning 1030 at Tulips in Pialligo. All welcome.
18 Nov Informal lunch in the Ainslie Football Club. All welcome.

MEMBERSHIP DUES 2019

Membership renewals are now due so if you have not already done so, could you please pay your annual membership subscription of \$20.00 before the next Annual General Meeting either by –

cash or by cheque made out to the WRANS – Naval Women's Association (ACT) and forwarded to

The Treasurer,
WRANS – Naval Women's Association (ACT),
PO Box 402,
WODEN ACT 2606

or if you prefer you could pay online by direct transfer. The account details are –

BSB Number 633000
Account number 120 827 027
Account name WRANS - Naval Women's Association (ACT)

Payee Reference – your Surname/Mship 2019

**NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME JOINING FEE IS \$10.00 PLUS THE
ANNUAL \$20.00 SUBSCRIPTION
(Application Form on website)
INVITE YOUR NAVY FRIENDS ALONG TO OUR MEETINGS!**

Personal Details - New email address – have you moved?

We need to continually update our contact details so if you have changed address, email etc., would you please complete the following and either return it to the Membership Secretary, PO Box 402, Woden ACT 2606 or hand it in at the next General Meeting.

PERSONAL DETAILS – UPDATE

Surname Given Names
Address
Telephone (Home) (Work)
(Mobile)
(Email address)
