



# MARCHING ALONG



## WRANS – Naval Women's Association (ACT) Newsletter

Volume 11 Issue 1

Jan – Apr 2020



January - April – Happenings in WRANS ACT

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

# January – April 2020

## WRANS - Naval Women Association (ACT)

### January

#### Merle's birthday lunch

On 12 January 2020, a large group of WRANS and their families celebrated Merle's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday at the Ainslie Football Club. We enjoyed celebrating such a milestone with Merle. Pauline Gribble (McCormick) giving the short speech below:

*Today we are here to wish Merle a happy 100<sup>th</sup>/centenary birthday. She is barely four foot ten inches tall but a strong and able woman. The sparkle in Merle's eyes has not dulled by age, but the 36,516 days she has lived on this earth is a major milestone. Merle was born during the flapper era, which was a vision of sophistication and freedom for young women globally.*

*She lived through the Depression served in the WRANS in World War II, and raised a family through the Korean and the Vietnam wars. After the loss of her husband Robert, in typical Merle fashion she packed herself up, moved to Canberra to be with family, and ended up finding us.*

*During Merle's life, she has witnessed history through the inventions and discoveries such as penicillin, the pop-up toaster, the blender, deodorant and television.*

*Merle is a life member of both the Victorian and ACT WRANS associations. She has influenced many of our lives through, listening to our woes providing advice and giving a hug when required. Yet, never can I remember her admonishing me with, 'back in my day....' Merle shares moments of her history at the most amazing times*

*She is an inspiration to us. I often here 'I want to be like Merle when I grow up!' Her enthusiasm for and interest in life is something we should all aspire for.*

*Thank you all for coming to celebrate this amazing occasion we love you Merle and wish you good health in the coming years.*



Merle received letters from the Queen, the Governor General and the Prime Minister.





## Chief of Navy

Before the Last Post ceremony on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020, the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Noonan presented Merle with a gold medallion and flowers to mark her birthday.



Vice Admiral Noonan said

“On behalf of the men and women of the Navy, I wish you a very happy birthday and thank you for your service. The present and our future Navy is founded on its history which is only possible because of people like you.”

The daily ceremony shares the story behind one of the names on the Roll of Honour; on 20 January 2020 was a particularly poignant occasion as it was held for Sergeant Donald Kelway Storrie the twin brother of Merle Hare (Storrie) the day of their joint birthday. Sergeant Storrie was presumed killed in action, 75 years ago.

A crewmember on a Catalina flying boat, Sergeant Storrie had flown 18 missions with the



squadron when, on 7 March 1945, his aircraft failed to return when minelaying in the South China Sea, its crew never found.

Merle' family and friends attended the Last Post ceremony. The Navy was well represented by the Maritime Logistics – Personnel who made the journey to pay tribute to Merle who helped pave the way in their category and members from HMA Ships *Harman*, *Penguin* and *Albatross*.

Merle's lasting memories of Donald:

- "The last time I ever saw Donald was on his wedding day,"
- "After all these years there might not be tears, but he is always in my heart, I always think about him.
- "He was a lovely man with blue eyes and blond hair, we were always together but we never had an argument.
- "If there was ever anything I needed, he was there to help."

Despite all the attention, Merle took it all in her stride.

Merle said

"When you get to 100 nothing fazes you anymore."

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## ***February***

### **Executive Meeting**

On 04 February, the executive committee was held at the Southern Cross Club Woden to prepare for the Annual and General meeting which was scheduled for 10 February.



### **Informal Morning tea**

On 06 February, an informal morning tea was held at Tulips café at Pialligo. Morning tea is usually a two-hour activity and commences at 1000. Some come for the full time but others come on their way to their next activity. Everyone is welcome and if you need a lift please ask.

### **Annual General Meeting**

On 10 February 2020, the Annual General Meeting was held at the Southern Cross Club Woden followed by a relaxing dinner.

Some decisions made were:

- Amend the Rules to reflect the change in the number of Executive and General Meetings to be held each year.
- Donation of \$500 to Mogo Zoo for bushfire appeal.
- Donation of \$500 to Cobargo Country Women's Association.
- Donation of \$100 to Training Ship Canberra.

## The 2020 Committee results

### Executive Committee:

- **President** Pauline Gribble (McCormick)
- **Vice President** Heather Milward (Gunner)
- **Secretary** Kerry Holmes (Wallis)
- **Meeting Secretary** Judith Rowe (Knight)
- **Treasurer** Leanne Tingey (Kimpton)

### Committee Members:

- **Assistant Treasurer/Membership:** Christine Lamb (McNicol)
- **Events Co-ordinator:** Kerry Holmes (Wallis) and Kerry Macklin (Franklin)
- **DVA Liaison//Webmaster:** Pat McCabe
- **General committee:**
  - Sarra-Jane Gill
  - Sigrid (Sigi) Kropp (Engel)
  - Rae Milfull (Cooper)

### Ex-Officio Positions:

- **Facebook manager/Web manager:** Rose Van Dijk (Wood)
- **Welfare Officers:** No nominations
- **Scrapbooking:** Di Sell (Julian)
- **Librarian** Sigrid (Sigi) Kropp (Engel)

**Note:** If you would like to take on any of the positions not filled please let me know. Please remember that most of the committee will stand down next year so it may be a good way of understanding what the positions do.

### Women of the Royal Navy (WRNS)

The WRANS - Naval Women's Association (ACT) have invited the WRNS to participate in our social activities. Like most organisations, the WRNS are experiencing dwindling numbers, which are now below ten. This invitation is possible due to our organisational rules.

Under the WRANS rules section 2 Objects part 3 it states

*to encourage all women who have served in the WRANS, RANNS or who have served or are serving in the RAN and allied Naval services to join the Association.*



## Informal lunch



On 16 February, the informal lunch was held at the Ainslie Football club. It was a lively catch-up discussing the Christmas break



and holidays taken. Dollah West (WRNS) came to lunch and fitted in seamlessly in the varied conversation.



## March

### Informal morning tea

On 05 March, the informal morning tea was held at Café Pialligo. It was a lovely day and Carol was us about her upcoming cruise. I wonder if Carol actually went?



Tulips telling

## Informal lunch

On 15 March, the informal lunch was held at the Ainslie Football club. We had a good mixture of WRANS and WRNS. The conversations were fast and flowing. Genuine friendships flourished and much laughter was had.



Little did we know that this was the last lunch until the coronavirus is over?



## **Warrant Officer Lennie Maiden – 30 March**

On 30 March 2020 Agnes Lenore Maiden (Lennie) (W84591) passed away after a life well lived. Lennie serviced from 16 January 1956 until 17 September 1984.

It is important to note that Lennie was promoted to Warrant Officer in 1972 and it took 48 years before the RAN promoted a female to Warrant Officer of the Navy.

Lennie has requested her medals be retained in HMAS Cerberus. She did not want a funeral but a plaque in Lennie's memory in the memorial garden in the future.

## **Navy tribute to first female Warrant Officer**



**The Navy community is mourning the passing of one of the Royal Australian Navy's most influential sailors, who died aged 82 in Brisbane. Warrant Officer Agnes 'Lennie' Maiden was the first woman to be promoted to the highest rank as a senior sailor.**

Maiden served in the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) for nearly 29 years, from 1956 until 1984, and continued to support the Navy through the WRANS Association during retirement. Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel Darren Chester said Maiden paved the way for women wanting to serve in the Australian Defence Force.

"Lennie was a pioneer for women as she worked her way through the WRANS ranks at a time when the service of women in the ADF was not given the status and credit that it received today," Minister Chester said.

"Lennie was a mentor and trainer, and she inspired countless young women to continue careers in the WRANS and other services."

Maiden was promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer in 1972. Forty-seven years later in 2019 the Navy promoted its first female most senior ranking sailor in the Navy, Warrant Officer of the Navy, Deb Butterworth. Warrant Officer Butterworth said Maiden's legacy will be remembered.



“Lennie demonstrated through her devotion to duty that women were fully entitled to be promoted on merit to high rank,” WO Butterworth said.

“Her rich legacy will be remembered and cherished by those she mentored and served with. The female sailors and officers who work as equals alongside their male shipmates across today’s Navy owe a debt to Lennie and her generation which can never be repaid.”

The Royal Australian Navy has changed considerably since Maiden’s days: women were not permitted to serve aboard ships until 1983, and by 1985 the WRANS were integrated into the RAN.

As of October 2019, women make up 21.7 per cent of the Navy’s workforce and can serve in any role.

Vice-Admiral Michael Noonan, Chief of Navy, wrote to Maiden to thank her for her decades of service and her devotion to duty.

“You and your generation of WRANS showed Navy the way forward towards the modern integrated workforce in which every rank and career path is open to all our members,” VADM Noonan wrote.



### **The Hon Darren Chester MP**

Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel

## **First Navy female Warrant Officer leaves a lasting legacy**

31 March 2020

The Navy community is mourning the passing of one of the Royal Australian Navy’s most influential sailors, who died aged 82 in Brisbane.

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“Her rich legacy will be remembered and cherished by those she mentored and served with.

“The female sailors and officers who work as equals alongside their male shipmates across today’s Navy owe a debt to Lennie and her generation which can never be repaid.”

Warrant Officer Maiden passed away from cancer on 30 March 2020.



## **Mogo Zoo**



At the WRANS annual meeting it was agreed to donate the sum of \$500 to the Mogo zoo. After discussions with the representatives on behalf of the Mogo Zoo Foundation, the money will go towards the Mogo zoo's new animal hospital.

A registered letter containing the cheque was forwarded to the Mogo zoo on 19 March 2020.

## **Country Women's Association (CWA)**

At the WRANS annual meeting we agreed to donate the sum of \$500 to the Cobargo Country Womens' Association.

One of our members Pat Quick (nee Hyland) came from Quaama which was badly affected but there is no CWA Branch there. However, Cobargo is just a bit further up the highway and I have contacted the association and awaiting a response before we send the donation.



## **Welfare check**

During this isolation period it is important for all of us to take care of yourself and family.

We are lucky to be living in the age of technology. Remember what it was like before mobile phones, the internet and many different television shows.

You all have my phone number if you need to call or if you need anything. If you need someone to pick up food etc just let us know.

## **COVID 19**

### **Activities cancelled for the next 6 months**

#### **April**

- Thursday 02 April - informal morning tea cancelled
- Wednesday April 22 The Canberra Hospital wreath laying – cancelled
- War Widow's Guild Field of Remembrance Ceremony - cancelled
- Sunday 19 April – informal lunch cancelled
- ANZAC Day march and lunch – cancelled

#### **May**

- Thursday 07 May – informal morning tea cancelled
- Monday 11 May – General meeting cancelled
- Sunday 17 May – informal lunch cancelled

## **June**

- Tuesday 02 June – Executive meeting - cancelled
- Thursday 04 June – informal morning tea cancelled
- NSW WRANS church memorial - 14th June 2020
- Mid-winter lunch – cancelled

## **July**

- Thursday 02 July – informal morning tea cancelled
- Sunday 19 July - informal lunch cancelled

## **August**

- Tuesday 02 June – Executive meeting - cancelled
- Thursday 06 August - informal morning tea cancelled
- Monday 10 August – General meeting cancelled
- WRANS Reunion in WA cancelled
- Sunday 16 August – informal lunch cancelled

## **September**

- Thursday 03 September - informal morning tea cancelled
- Sunday 20 September – informal lunch cancelled

## **DVA News**

### **National Commissioner for Suicide Prevention**

The Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, announced on 5<sup>th</sup> February that a new independent body will be created to investigate any suspected Veteran and ADF suicides.

### **Anzac Day**

The Australian War Memorial will go ahead with a private, nationally televised Anzac Day commemorative service on 25 April 2020. The traditional Dawn Service, National Ceremony and veterans' march will not take place.

This revised ceremony will be held in the Commemorative Area and Hall of Memory of the Memorial at 5.30 am on Anzac Day.

The event will not be open to the public but will be broadcast live across Australia by the ABC and streamed online.

### **New Cabinet Appointment**

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Darren Chester MP, has been promoted to Cabinet. This is the first time in 15 years that this has occurred. The elevation of the portfolio to Cabinet recognises the importance of Veterans to the Government.



## Open Arms

The Open Arms' workforce is able to work from home with minimal disruption to services. Their workforce continue to see clients by telephone and online video counselling, and are also continuing their care coordination and community engagement work

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, they have brought forward the commencement of the 24/7 operation of our Client Assist Contact Centre—enhancing our ability to support Open Arms clients with a workforce trained in veteran issues. Client Assist is accessible 24/7 by calling 1800 011 046

Safe Zone Support is a free and anonymous counselling line, created for vulnerable cohorts of veterans and their families who might not otherwise seek mental health care due to concerns about protection of anonymity. It is accessible 24/7 by calling 1800 142 072. This service provides immediate access to Open Arms counsellors who understand military culture and experience.

The Open Arms website ([openarms.gov.au](http://openarms.gov.au)) has been updated with additional self-help resources to support the Veteran community, including a specific COVID-19 – Calming and Coping page. Content includes guidance for maintaining wellbeing and staying connected while social distancing, and information on talking to children.

They have also implemented a regular schedule of COVID-19 related posts on their social media channels. Content includes updates on their services, a creative distractions series, and shared content from their partners.



*Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling, provides support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families. Free and confidential help is available 24/7.*

*Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 1800 011 046 or +61 8 8241 4546) or visit [www.OpenArms.gov.au](http://www.OpenArms.gov.au)*

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/>

has been cancelled

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 –

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

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

**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!**

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.

Surname ..... Given Names .....

Address .....

Telephone (Home) ..... (Work) .....

(Mobile) .....

(Email address) .....