Member Director Gwen Cherne had the opportunity as a widow and a ClubsNSW Ambassador for the Invictus Games Sydney 2018 to climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge with Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, the Prime Minister and three athletes from the Aussie Team.

The group raised the Invictus flag at the top of the Bridge to mark the start of the 2018 Games. As they descended Gwen spoke with His Royal Highness at length. HRH was invested in the conversation which spanned issues of mental health, grief and loss. HRH has used his influence to help people better understand mental health issues and to break down the barriers which stand in the way of many people getting the support they need. He dedicated a significant portion of his remarks at the Closing Ceremonies to mental health and the issues discussed on the bridge with Gwen:

“Asking for help is courageous. It will improve your life and lives of those around you immeasurably. In the moment you admit you are struggling, you take that first step towards a better future, for you, and your friends, and your family. You allow those around you to show you the love and concern that is central to the cure. I’ve been there. You’ve been there. And we now need to reach out to those who can never imagine themselves in that place. When you accept a challenge is real, you can have hope. When you understand your vulnerability, you can become strong. When you are brave enough to ask for help, you can be lifted up. You can start living, doing, feeling — not simply surviving... When you share your story, you can change the world...I can’t think of a better way to continue serving your country.”
Greetings to all Guild members and thank you to those who attended the Annual General Meeting in July. It was wonderful to meet so many members and share some of the work we are doing on your behalf with our recent advocacy collaboration with the National Guild.

I’m pleased to confirm the proposed amendments to our Constitution were passed at the AGM, with an overwhelming majority of votes in favour of the changes that bring our Constitution in line with modern standards and legislation. The Board and I will continue to work on developing policies that support the interests of war widows as part of the new Constitution.

In August I attended the ESORT Conference in Canberra and heard from a range of speakers from Defence and DVA about the work they’re doing to build a more veteran-centric system that includes the role of partners and families.

The ENGAGE system, run through DefenceNet, provides a ‘one stop shop’ linking both government and not-for-profit services with individuals in the Defence community and has recently been made available to widows and partners of serving personnel/veterans. We have registered the NSW Guild as a service provider through ENGAGE to continue to offer support and friendship to all generations of war widows.

As you know, the Guild continues to provide social support and advice to members through our Clubs and Community Services Workers. I’m pleased to advise we have secured further funding for this important work through the BEST Grant. The BEST Grant is awarded by DVA in recognition of the cost to provide advocacy and support to veterans and their families, and the amount awarded this year is more than twice 2017 levels.

We are also continuing to promote digital literacy and confidence online for members, and through 2018 have run the ‘Great IPAD Adventure’ through face to face and online sessions for over 100 Guild members, both country and city. We’ve connected with the Office of E-safety, a Federal Government Office responsible for supporting older Australians to build their digital skills, and have secured an $8000 grant to cover some of the costs incurred.

For all those of who have attended the course in 2018 – we look forward to hearing your feedback, and invite those who want to be part of future programs to call Head Office and register their interest.

MADELINE DERMATOSSIAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
First of all, WELCOME, to all our new members! You will see on page 24 that we have a large increase in new members due to the closure of the Tasmanian Guild after 70 years. Meg Green and I are looking forward to visiting our new members in Tasmania very soon, but in the meantime please don’t hesitate to contact us if there is anything you need. I’ve received a lovely letter from Tasmanian member Marie Kays which outlined her role in advocating for Guild members during her time as National President (1992-1994). Her memories of this time highlighted just how important it is that we continue to have a presence at the national level, otherwise we will get left behind.

The Honouring Women United by Defence Service event in Canberra in September was an unqualified success. Bringing together the Guild, Legacy, RSL, TPI, DVA and the ADF for the first time, it was an emotional and inspiring experience and I’m excited about a future where we can all collaborate and achieve real change. Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, The Hon. Darren Chester MP was effusive in his praise for the initiative and is very keen for an expanded version in 2019 – watch this space!

It was wonderful to see so many Guild members make the journey to Canberra. As one member wrote: “Looking around at the amazing crowd at the War Memorial was a very humbling experience and I can honestly say there have been very few occasions where I have felt such pride to be so solidly connected to our Defence Force and what it means to our country. The pride swelled even further to be sitting at the dinner in such illustrious company, and to share the meal at our table with a former serving soldier, a very young lass who had lost her husband and a beautiful kind and caring young woman who is a Veteran Services Manager with RSL WA, not to mention our own YM Widows.”

The Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial featured an all-female catafalque party and a tribute to Norma Violet Mowbray who served with the Australian Army Nursing Service and died aged 32 in Egypt in 1916 of pneumonia. Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten led a large contingent of wreath layers. A Guild highlight was member Shirley McLaren (WRAAF) laying a wreath with son Noel (RAN) and granddaughter Brooke Walsh (RAN) in remembrance of their husband, father and grandfather, Warrant Officer Roy Gordon McLaren RAAF.

The Dinner was a chance for all of us to share our unique experience and hear from people like Rach Ranton – Prime Minister’s Veteran Employee of the Year 2018 – who spoke powerfully about the many roles women play in service to Defence. There were many other highlights from the evening. Country music star Lee Kernaghan performed two beautiful songs in tribute to our Defence personnel. The three ‘The Longest War’ paintings, on loan from the Australian War Memorial thanks to Dr Brendan Nelson AO, provided a memorable backdrop to the room and it was an honour to have artist Ben Quilty and the subjects of his paintings – Leesa Kwok, Elvi Wood and Elle-Lou Diddams – join us for the Dinner.

This October, widows, children and grandchildren led the march at the Invictus Games Sydney 2018 Opening Ceremony, recognising those left behind and equally damaged by service.

Jodie Hitchcock, Artist Liaison for the Opening Ceremony wrote to me: “A big thank-you to you and all the families you coordinated to march into the Opening Ceremony. You all truly represented the spirit of the Invictus Games... I particularly enjoyed seeing the children’s faces leading the procession and hope it brought comfort to you all to participate in this way.”

RHONDDA VANZELLA OAM
STATE PRESIDENT
"We rise by lifting others"
MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

HONOURING WOMEN UNITED BY DEFENCE SERVICE 2018

Service, sacrifice and courage are the ties that bound our nation together in its infancy. They are the ties that continue to keep Australia safe.

In honouring the women united by defence service, we say thank you to those brave, devoted and loyal women who have contributed so much to securing Australia’s freedom.

We say thank you to the women who have served with bravery as soldiers, peacekeepers, military planners and commanders, and tended to the war wounded as highly trained medical professionals.

We say thank you to the women whose personal sacrifice as mothers, wives, partners and daughters, as sisters, sweethearts and friends, for their love and care to those who served in the past and who serve today.

We say thank you to those women past and present who kept Australia together, providing critical home-front support for our nation’s war effort, and in doing so took Australia forward, opening up opportunities for women to more fully participate in the life of the nation.

Above all, we remember that, for every life taken in war, so much of that loss has been carried by women, many just beginning to share the joys of married life when wartime intervened, others facing the unimaginable pain of life without their child.

For all Australians, these women are heroes in their endurance and courage, and in the way they have both served and channelled their own grief in to the care and assistance of others.

Today we honour them with remembrance and gratitude, and pay special tribute to those who made the supreme sacrifice or were injured in the service of our country.

I commend all of you for paying tribute to women united by defence service, and hope the whole Australian community will be touched and inspired by these very special commemorations.

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia

30 August 2018
Honouring Women United
United by Defence Service

Special Event
As usual I have had a number of meetings, functions and commemorations to attend during the last three months. I must however thank Jenny Gregory, Queensland State President for attending the 56th Anniversary of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) Commemoration at Cunungra on my behalf. Jenny was able to lay a wreath on behalf of all widows and one of the Queensland members, Val Rooney was also present. Val’s husband served with the AATTV and Val is currently a member on the Queensland Board. The National Guild would also like to welcome Natasha Oickle to her position as CEO in Queensland.

Continuing to raise our members’ voices

Of great importance is the advocacy work that has been undertaken by the National Guild on your behalf. This has been done in collaboration with other States but particularly New South Wales.

There have been a number of enquiries announced by the Federal Minister for Veterans’ Affairs.

1. Productivity Commission – Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans
2. Veterans’ Advocacy and Support Services Scoping Study
3. Transition from Australian Defence Force by members of the ADF
4. Development of an Australian National Military Covenant

In July the National Guild prepared a submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry ‘Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans’.

This Inquiry is intended to identify areas of improvement in the current arrangements and also set a future direction for a more supportive and enabling system. The Guild’s submission began by pointing out the importance of hearing widows’ voices to shape the future system, noting that the term ‘veteran’ was mentioned 236 times in the Issues Paper, and ‘widow’ only twice, yet there are 61,500 war widows Australia-wide.

The submission covered a range of issues Guild members have raised over the past 12-18 months, with a focus on the integration of family services for Contemporary (post 1999) widows and the treatment of the War Widow’s Pension when entering aged care. Currently the War Widow’s Pension is deemed as assessable income when a widow applies to enter aged care or receive home care services, whereas a Special Rate pensioner’s income is not. As both of these payments are compensation for recognised Service-related injuries and loss we believe they should be treated the same way, and the War Widow’s Pension should be exempt from the income assessment. This position and the potential financial impact on war widows was detailed at length.

Our submission, and others, can be downloaded from the PC website https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/veterans/submissions (or you can request a copy be mailed to you by Head Office).

The National Guild is also included on the committee which is discussing a National Military Covenant. This Covenant will acknowledge all veterans and their families and their service and sacrifice. It is hoped this will pass all requirements and be accepted by the end of 2018.

The National Guild will meet with Robert Cornall AO who is conducting the Veterans’ Advocacy Scoping Study. There are two questionnaires available which may be completed should you wish to do so. The first is for organisations and the second for veterans and family members who wish to share their personal experience. These questionnaires can be accessed at www.dva.gov.au/advocacystudy/questionnaires

MEG GREEN
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
Contemporary Widows

In late 2017, the Guild Board approved the establishment of a Contemporary Widows Advisory Committee to inform the Board of the priority and emerging issues for this group. Membership of the committee consists of National President Meg Green, NSW President Rhondda Vanzella OAM, along with two Contemporary Widows, Gwen Cherne and Bree Till, and myself as Chair.

The Committee convenes on a quarterly basis and to date has been very busy meeting with the Secretary of Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) Liz Cosson AM CSC and the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, The Hon Darren Chester MP to bring to their attention the issues facing contemporary widows and families. I am pleased to advise they do listen and are keen to ensure they put in place services that meet their needs and address any gaps in service.

To ensure the Committee hears firsthand the issues raised by widows and families of veterans, a weekend workshop was held at the end of June at Legacy House, Moss Vale in partnership with DVA and Legacy. Fourteen ladies from Queensland, NSW and ACT arrived on a crisp and cold Friday afternoon to be greeted by the members of the Committee and Sydney Legacy Chair Paul Lane and his wife over dinner.

After a healthy breakfast, the ladies heard from Liz Cosson AM CSC about the importance of the weekend. She also said DVA was looking forward to the feedback to inform policy and program development. Saturday was spent undertaking a number of activities facilitated by Veterans and Veterans Family Counselling Service (VVCS). The first session explored their individual stories and issues impacting on them and their families. This session highlighted some of the differences and similarities in participant’s experiences and how services can be improved across governments. The afternoon sessions were focussed on wellness with art therapy, creating master pieces that are sure to be hung in the National Gallery. The yoga session resulted in some new recruits to the activity and, despite some laughter, most completed the session.

We woke on Sunday morning to be greeted with a heavy winter frost, with cars completely covered in ice - a sight many had not seen before. The morning was spent talking about the weekend and the experiences and friendships gained. There was encouraging feedback, such as “after listening to other people’s stories I know I am not alone anymore” and “I finally connected with people who understand what I am going through.”

Time was also spent clarifying the items the ladies want the Committee to take forward to DVA and Government, such as improvements in communication, service delivery and policy changes.

The weekend finished with Rhondda thanking the ladies for coming to the weekend. She said “while we still have a lot to do, when women like us come together collectively, magic happens. We are all part of a book and each of your stories are a chapter for others to read and to learn and be inspired.”

JENNIFER COLLINS
CHAIR,
CONTEMPORARY WIDOWS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Commemoration & Events

The Hon David Elliott MP, NSW Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Nicholas Crozier, French Consul General to Australia, Marie Varnier-Gittard, President for Australia, Association of the National Order of Merite, Rhondda Vanzella OAM and Gwen Cherne with daughter Emily, at a cheque presentation for $36,000 raised by the French community for the War Widows’ Guild of Australia NSW, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Meg Green, Harry Allie BEM, Chair of the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Commemoration Service Committee and Di Vogt at the 102nd Commemoration of the Battle of Fromelles, Anzac Memorial, Sydney.

Rhondda Vanzella OAM at the Boer War Day Remembrance and Wreath Laying Ceremony, Anzac Memorial, Sydney.

James Griffin MP, Member for Manly, The Hon Tanya Davies MP, NSW Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, Minister for Ageing, Gwen Cherne, Adrian Talbot, Invictus Games Ambassador for ClubsNSW, Patrick Kidd OBE, Invictus Games Chief Executive Officer, at the Invictus Games Panel Session, Parliament House Sydney.

Di Vogt with Guild member Thelma Crawley OAM, at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, Concord to commemorate the 73rd anniversary of Victory in the Pacific.
Commemoration & Events


Jan McQuillan Di Vogt, Sharon Keeners and Sharon Polese attended a beautiful and moving commemoration at the Cenotaph for the 50th anniversary of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral.

Meg Green, Rhondda Vanzella OAM, Bree Till and Gwen Cherne at the Sydney Legacy Annual President’s Changeover Lunch, Parliament House, Sydney.

Gina Parelli, Meg Green, Rose Speranza and Mrs Hurley with (front) Vietnam War entertainers Little Pattie and Sylvia Raye at the NSW Premier’s Vietnam Veterans Reception, Government House, Sydney.
More than 100 Guild members joined the Board of Directors and staff at the Guild’s Annual General Meeting in late July. Members enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel and were encouraged to ask questions and get involved in the meeting. There was particularly strong interest in Meg Green’s presentation, which highlighted the advocacy work of the National Guild, strongly supported by NSW.

CEO Madeline Dermatossian presented an overview of the performance of the Guild over the last 12 months and introduced new Directors Lynne Boyd and Gwen Cherne.

Outgoing Directors Wendy Thompson and Dot Haines were fondly farewelled with flowers and a set of engraved glasses as a small token of appreciation for their six years as Directors. At the end of the meeting, more than 50 handmade laundry bags for Invictus Games athletes, coordinated by Director Brenda Morrison, were presented to Pauline James, President of the RSL Central Council of Auxiliaries.

Nola Hill was the lucky winner of the raffle, taking home a striking indigenous artwork generously donated by member Veronica Chapman and her daughter Gloria Gardiner.

The Guild would like to particularly thank our country representatives for travelling to Sydney and participating in the AGM and dinner.
Life Members
We are pleased to recognise five new life members in 2018: Margaret Crisp, Jennifer Robertson, Judith Seiler, Noelene Taylor and Judith Thompson.

Jennifer Robertson
Born in Bathurst to a soldier father and a mother who was a machinist, Jennifer swapped the country life for Bondi beach soon after the war. An occasional truant from St Anne’s, Jennifer loved the beach and spent endless hours there. She returned to the country for her teenage years and completed her intermediate certificate at Parkes High.

Jennifer’s favourite job was as a clerk in the Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC), enlisting in 1962. It was at Kapooka Army camp that she met her husband Arthur. They welcomed their daughter Tracy in April 1967, the same month as Arthur was deployed to Vietnam. In December 1967, Arthur contracted malaria and died shortly thereafter.

Following Arthur’s death, two ladies from the Parramatta War Widows’ Guild visited Jennifer with some beautifully knitted garments for Tracy and invited her to join their meetings. Although she was only able to attend a few meetings due to full time employment as a bookkeeper, she has always admired what the Guild stands and fights for – other women, and in turn their children – and enjoys reading the Guild Digest from cover to cover.

Jennifer now enjoys a very busy retirement spent with close friends, traveling, gardening and dabbling in genealogy. She also values her close relationship with daughter Tracey, son-in-law Craig and her role as ‘Grandy’ to their beloved boxer dogs.

Judith Seiler
Judith was born in Paddington, Sydney and attended Granville Public School and Auburn North High School. Judith met her husband Ronald at a dance when she was 15 and by the time she was 21 she was living in Wagga with three children. In 1967 Ronald was killed in Vietnam. The following year Judith joined the Guild on the recommendation of a Legatee who thought the Guild might be able to help. Judith recalls how good the Guild was to her, especially in the beginning, and how much the Guild has helped all war widows, regardless of membership. Judith now enjoys the numerous activities of nine grandchildren and seven great grandchildren – with two more on the way.

Margaret Crisp
Margaret was born and bred in Sydney’s inner west and attended Burwood Public School. She went on to work in the office of Anthony Horden’s Department Store and fondly recalls many hours spent ballroom dancing in her spare time. It was in the ballroom of Sydney’s Piccadilly Arcade where she met her husband Frederick, who was originally from Queensland. After marrying in St Paul’s Church of England Burwood, Margaret and Frederick moved out to Chester Hill and went on to have four children, seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Frederick served in Darwin and the Pacific during WWII and died in 1968.

Shortly after his death, Margaret joined the Guild and is very appreciative of the many “marvellous” things the Guild has done to help her.

Sadly, Margaret passed away in September. Margaret is survived by her children Lesley, Karen, Julie and Colin, seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.
Taking Charge in the WRAAF

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 led to the reformation of the three women’s services, which had been disbanded at the end of World War II. This allowed thousands of Australian men to be released from shore duties to head overseas for the war effort.

For 18 year old Shirley Lemon, this was an exciting opportunity and she jumped at the chance to join the Women’s Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF). Not surprisingly, they were overwhelmed with more than 2,000 applications. Despite some reluctance on her mother’s behalf - worried about ‘a girl amongst the boys’ - Shirley’s father was a career soldier so military life was not an unknown concept and Shirley’s application went ahead.

In January 1951 Shirley was one of 50 women accepted into the first intake and moved onto RAAF Base Richmond NSW for four weeks training. As a physical education teacher, drills and parades came easily and Shirley soon settled into her role as a drill instructor, training women in drill practice, air force laws and physical training.

Women weren’t allowed to leave Australian shores, but worked in various roles such as teleprinter operators, tailors, drivers, stewardesses, medical orderlies, equipment assistants, cooks, parachute packers and service policewomen. Shirley become the senior NCO in charge of the WRAAF stationed at RAAF Fairbairn in
Canberra, but also spent time at Williamtown (NSW), Point Cook (VIC), RAAF Base Amberly (Qld) and Glenbrook (NSW).

Shirley thoroughly enjoyed being a ‘mother hen’ to the girls and rarely left the base when she had new recruits to train, working seven days a week, although she recalls enjoying movies on the base and playing tennis. Shirley estimates she was responsible for the training of at least 300 female civilians in her four and a half years with the WRAAF.

By 1955, Shirley had met Warrant Officer Roy McLaren and they were soon married. Her marital status meant she had to leave the WRAAF, to Shirley’s great disappointment.

Shirley and Roy lived on the Williamtown RAAF Base, where her daughter Debbie was born. They were subsequently posted to Penang Island, Malaysia, for two and half very enjoyable years. Highlights of this time included the birth of her son Lance and completion of an early childhood degree by correspondence.

By 1961, the family was back in Australia and their third child, Noel, was born. Shortly after, Roy went to the United States for training on the new Orion aircrafts and in 1967 the squadron was posted to RAAF Base Edinburgh in South Australia.

A posting to Victoria followed in 1970, but sadly Roy passed away Christmas Eve 1972, leaving Shirley alone in Melbourne with three young children. Given only a couple of days to move out of the married quarters, Shirley packed up her three kids and their dog and drove to Sydney, stopping with friends in Canberra for a break along the way.

Arriving in Sydney in early January 1973, Shirley discovered she couldn’t afford to buy a house, so promptly turned around and returned to Canberra. Within days, she had made a down payment on a house and land package in the newly developed area of Belconnen. Quickly choosing all the house fittings over two days, including carpet, lights and paint, the family continued on to Melbourne in time for Debbie, Lance and Noel to start the new school term. Barely six weeks had passed since Roy’s death.

The house was completed by July 1973 and they all returned to Canberra to settle into their new home. Shirley soon found full time teaching work. Sons Lance and Noel continued the proud family tradition and joined the Air Force and Navy, respectively. Shirley’s granddaughter Brooke served in the Navy and is also married to a Naval Officer.

Shirley is now happily ensconced at RSL Anzac Village on Sydney’s northern beaches. The village is run with military precision, which appeals to Shirley’s ingrained sense of order and discipline. She is the coordinator of the ex-services women at the Village, in addition to patron of the Sydney WRAAF, an RSL Sub-branch ‘Angel’ and Coordinator of the Guild’s Northern Beaches Social Club.
Member Story – Shirley McLaren cont’d

Shirley has many happy memories of her time in the women’s services. She loved the comradeship and lifetime friendships she formed and in 2018 attended the 67th national reunion in Adelaide. As Patron of the Sydney WRAAF Shirley regularly attends the NSW State ex-WRAAF reunions and has proudly led the ex-WRAAF in every Anzac Day March in Sydney for more than 30 years.

Would you like your story preserved for family and friends? The Jessie Street National Women’s Library is a unique specialist library dedicated to the preservation of Australian women’s work, words and history. Their Tapestry project aims to honour ordinary Australian women by collecting their life stories. The Guild would like to encourage members to write their stories, or have a family member or friend help them. Stories can be up to 2,000 words and photographs can be included. Registration of your story costs $20 – the Guild will happily cover this cost for our members. Please contact the Guild for more information or assistance with recording your ‘story’.

Guild History

Free Book Offer


Free to collect from Head Office, or $15 postage in NSW. Call us today on 9267 6577 to request your free copy or to enquire about postage costs outside of NSW.

“This meticulous history recounts the inspired leadership of Mrs Jessie Vasey, widow of Major General George Vasey, in mobilising the attention of Government, of the wider community, and above all the resilience and energy of the widows.”

- Professor Marie R Bashir AC, CVO, former Governor of New South Wales
Lessons Learned by a First Time Patient

After 67 years of good health, I was recently admitted – unexpectedly - for major surgery which for me was life-changing. Every action was now focused on survival and from there, improving my quality of life.

Thankfully, I was not alone trying to navigate the medical, emotional, practical domestic and financial issues. The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) kindly provided numerous services in order to return me to independent living.

I had to learn:

- to ask DVA for what I needed. Approvals were processed efficiently and promptly.
- to accept all offers of help, which is difficult for those of us who feel independent and used to helping others.
- to utilise every relevant medical resource advised by the medical team to maximise and speed my recovery. DVA provided the following:
  - Community nurses
  - a Physiotherapist
  - a Dietitian
  - an Occupational Therapist
  - a Pharmacist
  - a Gymnasium at the Rehabilitation hospital
  - transport to and from doctors’ appointments by taxi
- that energy and enthusiasm come in short bursts and for a limited time. I tailored my days to allow for regular rest stops however no two persons experience is the same.
- that once at home, the resources used by the hospital are transferred to DVA approved services. There can be a delay in communication which may mean contacting these services personally to ensure they come when needed.
- that the homecare nurses from a DVA approved private company are friendly, helpful and experienced, however there can be delays with receiving medical products and services. I had to call and enquire.
- to use the DVA provided taxis to get to and from medical appointments to relieve the stress of driving, parking, etc and to conserve energy.
- to finally, be patient – it takes time to heal - and to be kind to myself.

My thanks to the surgical team, the two excellent hospitals, my fabulous family and friends who rallied to assist, the wonderful women from the Guild who provided advice based on solid knowledge and personal experience and importantly, DVA who provided the means for me to survive and thrive.

To all, I am extremely grateful.

DIANE GRIFFITHS
Health

 Depression – help is available

It might surprise you to know that depression is a common condition and that one in five of us experience a form of depression at some stage during our lives. It can affect anyone; it might be you, a family member or a friend. With the right care and support, most people recover. For others, ongoing support and care is needed.

A good place to start on the road to recovery is to talk to someone you are comfortable with about how you are feeling. That might be your family doctor, a close friend or a family member. The good news is that no matter what your situation, help is available.

Let’s talk a little about what depression is

We all feel sad at times, but when you constantly worry, are not able to sleep, find it difficult to be interested in anything much, and feel constantly sad for more than a couple of weeks, and those feelings interfere with your every-day life, it might be depression. This is when talking to your doctor can help because he or she can decide if these symptoms are depression or perhaps another problem. The important thing is to seek help early.

You might wonder what sort of treatments can help?

There are a range of effective treatments available. Your treatment will be tailored to fit you and your needs, and the severity of your depression. Even if you have mild depression, seek help early to avoid it becoming debilitating. Psychological therapies and exercise work well for many people and might be all that is needed, especially for those with mild or moderate depression. Psychological therapies can be conducted face-to-face, provided individually in private, in a group setting or online with support from your counsellor, psychologist, doctor or another health professional. Depending on how well you respond and the type of therapy, sessions might only be needed for 8-12 weeks or for as long as you feel you need them. If you do undertake an online program, make sure you complete the full program to get the most benefit from it.

For some people, taking an antidepressant medicine might form a part of your treatment plan. Antidepressant medicines work best when they are combined with psychological therapies, exercise and other strategies that help to improve your mental health and wellbeing.
If you need to take an antidepressant, ask your doctor the following questions:

- How will this medicine help me?
- How long will I have to take it before I start to feel better?
- Does it have any side effects and how long will they last?
- Do I need to avoid any other medicines (including herbal and complementary medicines) or foods while I am taking this medicine?
- What do I do if I forget to take my antidepressant?
- What other treatment will help me feel better?
- What will happen when it is time to stop taking my antidepressant?

When you start an antidepressant, you will see your doctor every one to two weeks to begin with to monitor how you are going. Don’t stop taking your antidepressant without first talking with your doctor, even if you don’t think they are making a difference, because you might experience some unpleasant symptoms from stopping the medicine abruptly. When it is time to stop your antidepressant, your dose might need to be reduced slowly over weeks. Your doctor will monitor how you feel during this time.

There are lots of things you can do to help

- You can talk to your doctor about a ‘stay well plan’
- Set time aside each day for yourself to do the things you enjoy
  Finding enjoyment in the things you do will help to reduce your stress, improve your ability to cope with difficult situations and give you an overall sense of wellbeing.

- Make it a priority to be active
  Aim to be active for 20-30 minutes each day. Being active increases your energy levels, enables you to sleep better and releases feel-good chemicals to lift your mood. Choose activities that you enjoy and are fun to do, for example, walking with a friend.

- Keep your connections with friends, family and your healthcare team
  Don’t be afraid to ask for support when you need it. Talk with your friends, family and partner about your goals and plans.

- Maintain good sleep habits
  Getting a good night’s sleep is one of the best things to help you recover from depression.

More information
To access further information about this and other Veterans’ MATES topics, visit
www.veteransmates.net.au
Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) 24 hours a day on 1800 011 046, or go to their website at: www.vvcs.gov.au
Call DVA on 133 254 or 1800 555 254 or visit www.dva.gov.au

Acknowledgements
This article is adapted and reproduced from the Veterans’ MATES Therapeutic Topic, Depression: help is available.
Aged Care and Available Services

As Guild Community Services Workers, one of our main topics of discussion with members concerns aged care and the available services. People use many different terms such as RAS’s, DAPS, ACAT’s, VHC, packages, CHSP’s, basic care fees, daily care fees and government subsidies. Understanding services and support for older people can be like finding your way through a maze.

Where do I start?

- **Identify your strengths and challenges.**
  You can make a home cooked meal but struggle to hang the sheets on the line. Home support services can assist with hanging the sheets. Accepting support often assists with keeping independence, not removing it.

- **I want to stay in my home.**
  Most of us move several times throughout our lives. Usually this move is planned, personal needs and desires considered for the best home and location. Staying independent may require you to move from a two-storey home to a villa, from a 50 acre property to living in town or moving into an over 50’s village.

- **Mary Smith did ABC.**
  Everyone is unique. Their circumstances are different. The best option for you may be XYZ. All options and alternatives need to be considered.

- **My family do not live near me but I speak to them regularly.**
  Talk to your family, honestly and openly, about your goals and any struggles you have. Although they may not be there to physically help, they probably have access to the internet and other resources and are able to research all the support options available.

- **I have no family.**
  Speak with your friends about any concerns or struggles you are facing – they may be able to help. There are also many organisations that can assist you – contact the Guild for some recommendations.

- **I do not need help.**
  Many members live independent lives, with little or no support. While independence is often the preferred option, it is important to have a back-up plan which has been discussed with family and friends.

The Guild’s annual Reference Guide included in the June Guild Digest lists many resources. The Guild’s Community Services Workers are available to chat about these issues or concerns. Telephone 02 9267 6577 or 1800 451 615 or email guild@warwidowsnsw.com.au

MYAGEDCARE provides information on government subsidised aged care services. Telephone 1800 200 422 or www.myagedcare.gov.au
Fees and charges for the various home support services can vary greatly. Giving away money (gifting of assets) that you believe you don't need now may cause financial difficulties and limit your choices in the future. Seek independent advice before making financial decisions.

It's never too soon to start having discussions about the future. Don't wait until there is an emergency.

**Pension Increase**

The war widows' pension was adjusted on 20 September 2018. The pension is now $931.50 per fortnight, an increase of $9. The Income Support Supplement (ISS) has increased by $2.80 and is now $275.40 per fortnight.

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs provides you with your pension and can give you exact details the amount you receive. If you are unsure about your pension payments, contact DVA for an update on 133 254 or country members 1800 555 254.

**Cervical Screening**

The new Cervical Screening Test is more accurate at detecting changes in the cervix than the Pap test and you’ll only need to have one every five years, instead of every two. The test, free for DVA Gold Card holders, is recommended for women between the ages of 25 and 74. Contact your healthcare provider to book an appointment.

**myGov and DVA online**

DVA is transforming its services to become better connected and more responsive. As part of this program, DVA online services MyAccount and MyService have now transitioned to myGov.

Veterans and their families can now access DVA services in the same place you connect with Medicare, the ATO and Centrelink, making it easier to manage all of your government transactions.

The next time you visit MyAccount or MyService online, you will be redirected to myGov to log in or create an account with myGov. You can then link with DVA to access our online services. This will only need to be done once and you will use the same login and password to access myGov and DVA online services.

If you need help with myGov or using the new services, call the myGov support line: 13 23 07.
The Entrance and Long Jetty members enjoyed a combined birthday celebration lunch with Legacy.

Coogee Randwick held a lively Fun, Food and Friendship Day, with a fire safety presentation and exercise program by a physiotherapist from Recovery Station. Thanks to Coogee Diggers for their support of the Club.

Northern Beaches members at their Fun, Food and Friendship Day, where they enjoyed presentations, games and a lovely lunch.

CSW Adrienne Bowman visited North Ryde members to assist with their enquiries about concessions and personal concerns.
Campsie members hosted CSW Adrienne Bowman for a discussion on concessions and entitlements.

Queanbeyan members Bessie Halloran and Fay Hosking at the Club’s Christmas in July celebrations.

Queanbeyan’s Elaine De Mamiel enjoying the Club’s Christmas in July celebrations.

Parramatta members hosted CSW Adrienne Bowman for a discussion on various welfare matters.

Campsie members hosted CSW Adrienne Bowman for a discussion on concessions and entitlements.

A group of nearly 20 Younger Members and friends recently enjoyed an outing to Leura. It was a perfect day in the Blue Mountains, with blue skies and warm weather. The excursion was a boon to the local economy as the ladies patronised the interesting array of shops and enjoyed lunch at Bygone Beautys Teapot Museum. Following lunch, the Museum owner shared the history and personalities behind some of the more interesting teapots in the collection, much to the delight of Guild member Myra Lucas, who was revealed to be a serious teapot collector!
ClubGrant Thanks

The War Widows’ Guild thanks the following organisations for their generous donations towards activities such as special occasion luncheons, room hire and assisted transport and bus outings for Guild and Social Clubs:

- Orange Ex Services Club
- Orange City Council
- Wagga Wagga RSL and Commercial Club
- Lismore Workers Club
- Queanbeyan Leagues Club
- Hornsby RSL
- Asquith Magpies
- Penshurst RSL Club
- Cronulla RSL
- Diggers @ The Entrance
- Port Macquarie Panthers
- North Ryde RSL and Community Club
- The Epping Club
- Dee Why RSL
- Crescent Head Country Club
- Kempsey Macleay RSL Club
- Chatswood RSL
- Gladesville RSL and Community Club
- Yass Soldiers Club
- Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council and Councillor Peter Bray

The Guild would like to thank the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and Club Five Dock for their donation which assists with the annual War Widows’ Walk at the Kokoda Memorial Track.

Club Updates

Cowra Social Club is pleased to share that Elaine Clements (103 years) and Joan Gay (104 years) still regularly attend meetings. Well done ladies!

Vale to Cootamundra coordinator Beryl Collingridge. Please contact Head Office until a new coordinator is appointed.

Murwillumbah Guild Club members voted at their AGM to convert to a Social Club. The Club was formed in 1985 and has been a strong voice in the local area. Thanks to coordinator Marj Norris, assisted by Judy Pluis.

Thank you to former Bowral coordinator Amanda Duesbury for your dedication to the Club and to Nina Ferguson for taking on the position.

Cronulla Guild Club secretary Maxine Thompson has retired. Thank you Maxine for all your work and thanks to Helen Petrie for taking on these duties.

New Members

After more than 70 years, the Tasmanian Guild has ceased operation. We warmly welcome the Tasmanian members who have decided to join the NSW Guild. Representatives from the NSW Guild will be heading to Tasmania as soon as practical, to meet our new members and discuss ways we can support them. The Guild warmly welcomes the following new members:

Therese Bakker, Church Point
Jenny Bawden, South Murwillumbah
Maura Braithwaite, Sandy Bay TAS
Mary Burke, Battery Point TAS
Rosemary Charleston, Glenorchy TAS
Miriam Collison, Grafton
Jean Cowlislaw, Norwood TAS
Patricia Cox, Geilston Bay TAS
Roslyn Cribb, Mayfield
Member’s News

Happy 100th Birthday
Mrs Coral Isaacs
Mrs Hazel Bryce
Mrs Vera Lawrence
Mrs Joyce Wood
Mrs Hazel Budden

Dot Davie, Ballina
Christine Day, Avalon Beach
Anne Denney, Shearwater TAS
Phyllis Dennis, Rosny TAS
Faye Dillon, St Helens TAS
Jennifer Dooley, Blaxland East
Norma Easton, Glenorchy TAS
Violet Ellwood, Launceston TAS
Jan Giles, Mt Riverview
Audrey Gill, Dubbo
Gwynne Glendenning, Georgetown TAS
Elli Hagebusch, St Helens TAS
Shirley Harvey, Glenorchy TAS
Patricia Hedrick, Doonside
Saskia Hobbs, North Hobart TAS
Carmel Hyatt, Howrah TAS
Marion Iles, Glenorchy TAS
Jean Jeffery, Crosslands
Cynthia Johnston, St Helens TAS
Loretta Jones, Bonville
Marie Kays OAM, New Town TAS
Mary Kingsford, Macgregor ACT
Gwen Leggo, Sandy Bay TAS
Margaret Lippiatt, East Ballina
Bessie Lovett, Norwood TAS
Gay MacLennan, Yass
Fely McNamara, Greystanes
Dulcie Menzie, Carlton TAS
Jenny Michelson, Bilgola
Elizabeth Millar, New Town TAS
Joan Murphy, Geilston Bay TAS
Mary Murphy, Howrah TAS
Phyllis Nicholls, Marrawah TAS
Eunice Oliver, Blakehurst
Cleo Pashen, Middleton TAS
Nola Patten, Montague TAS
Marj Phillips, Howrah TAS
Karleen Reilly, Leeton
Janice Roberts, Devonport TAS
Barbara Robinson, Wagga Wagga
Margaret Robinson, Bateau Bay
Lynne Salom, Valla
Nell Sharpe, Northmead
Joan Staples, Tranmere TAS
Wendy Straskye, Bella Vista
Margaret Summers, Burnie TAS
Anne Tiffin, Devonport TAS
Margaret Veitch, Warilla
Betty Walton, Gymea Bay
Gwen Watson, St Helens TAS
Gwen Webb, West Hobart TAS
Judith Willmette, San Remo
Hello dear friends,

Time for another chat by way of our quarterly magazine the Guild Digest. I know all of you love receiving it and enjoy reading all the interesting articles, looking at the photos of current events and particularly from the last digest all the information contained in the Reference Guide which keeps us up to date with all of our current entitlements.

At the time of writing this article we are still experiencing a very dry period, hopefully by the time you all receive the Digest the drought will have broken. I know our country members feel the effects of lack of rain much more than city folk so our thoughts are very much with our country members and their families.

Many changes are occurring in the Friendship Line office in the way we keep records and files. In short we are changing from paper to digital. This system will be far less time consuming and more competent. However the process has to be implemented with all of our Friendship Line volunteers.

Most of our volunteers have some IT expertise but there are others who are starting from scratch so it is an ongoing challenging experience but one which I am sure will result in a successful transition.

Following on from our recent survey many members expressed the desire to receive calls. It has been very pleasing for our volunteers over recent months making contact with new ladies and hearing their appreciation of this service. Many of the ladies who are now receiving calls had in the past been Friendship Line volunteers themselves.

At the Guild’s recent Annual General Meeting I was delighted to catch up with many of our country friends, some of whom had travelled long distances to attend the function and hear the Guild’s plans for the future. It is also a time for them to catch up with other members and enjoy a social get together the night before the meeting.

This togetherness and the Friendship Line chats are an integral part of our organisation and one all of us cherish.

I hope winter has been kind to you and we can all look forward now to some spring weather when we can see and enjoy the beauty of nature in our parks and gardens.

Until we chat again please take care,

WENDY

---

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

*We urgently need more Friendship Line volunteers to ensure we meet the needs of our members.*

Please contact us if you are available to help out for approx. one day per month - training provided.
Hot summer colours in the garden

The summer garden looks at its best when it’s filled with bright flowers that reflect the warmth of the season. And, fortunately, there are plenty of richly-coloured plants to choose from for this time of year.

Possibly the most synonymous with summer is the sunflower. This American native has spread all over the world and has become an important source of edible oil. But after Vincent Van Gogh immortalised their beauty in his paintings, we have celebrated them as a summer flower. Sunflowers grow easily from seed in warm soil and can develop super-fast at this time of year. There are dwarf versions that do well in pots but some of the taller growing can reach up to two metres or more. Plant these towering, top heavy varieties into sunny spots that are protected from strong winds – against a sun-facing fence is ideal. Pick them in full bloom to bring indoors or leave the flowers to develop bird-attracting seed heads in late summer and autumn.

Marigolds, celosias, nasturtiums and zinnias are warm-weather lovers that are ideal for pots as well as random spots in garden beds. All bring cheer to the summer garden.

Roses are on show right through the summer, especially if their dead flowers are regularly clipped off, and there are lots of golden-yellow roses to choose from. ‘Friesia’ is an old favourite that doesn’t grow too big. David Austin’s ‘Golden Celebration’ can be used as a shrub or small climber and is sometimes available as a standard on a tree-like trunk. And, whereas once roses could only be purchase in mid-winter, potted roses are now available throughout the year. This makes it so much easier to see exactly what you’re buying!

Cannas have made a comeback to fashion because the newer types have shorter stems, contrasting coloured leaves and masses of sunny blooms. These plants can easily look untidy so make sure you trim them back whenever they need it and cut them right down to the ground in winter.

Some of the longest-blooming plants for bright summer colour are the New Guinea impatiens. They’ll handle sun if they’re kept well watered but they hate the cold so look on them as annuals in frosty areas. In warmer climates they’ll come back year after year.

Judy Horton OAM is the editor of Our Gardens, the Garden Clubs of Australia quarterly magazine, and a radio gardener on the ABC. She also travels as a guide with Botanica World Discoveries.