

## Speech by Rhondda Vanzella AGM 2020

I'm sure COVID-19 remains top-of-mind for all of us. Responding to the pandemic has featured prominently in everything I have done as your President this last 10 months.

As a result of COVID19 many activities that I would have normally attended on your behalf have been cancelled. In fact, for the last 9 months every meeting and service that I would have normally attend has been cancelled so my report for this year will be short.

As a new convert to the use of Zoom, as no doubt many of you are, I appreciate the extra time that has been invested behind the scenes by Madeline to allowed members to attend this meeting today by Zoom who would not otherwise be here today without this support. A special welcome to our first time Zoom ladies

I want to honour and thank all our members who have volunteered to “woman” the Friendship line, **If the friendship ladies are in the meeting Wave your Hands so we can Thank you.** I am personally very pleased that Madeline, with the willing support of our wonderful volunteers have been able to keep in contact with our members through the friendship line.

I think it is important to mention here that most of our willing band of member volunteers have on average phoned between 25/30 members each month. This is a huge commitment by our members, for our members. Not to forget that all our 90- and 100-year members receive a birthday card from this wonderful band of women.

My thanks go to all our members who have maintained this link this has been a life line for our members during COVID

A special thanks to Di Vogt for the amazing job she has done in setting up zoom meetings to ensure members who wish to, can connect to each other by Zoom. Di also trained the co-ordinators of these groups some of who had never used zoom before. A wonderful voluntary job done by Jenny Ware, Janet Duncan Wendy McKean, Gwen Chene and Di Vogt. **wave to us ladies so we can all say** Thank you.

Should any members wish to join these meetings please call Di via the office and they will put you in touch with Di and I know she will make you feel very welcome.

One of my biggest concerns still remains that only 800 of our members are on email. Because of this, at the start of COVID I asked Madeline to include the next of kin in my weekly e-Newsletters. This has resulted in some lovely and positive emails from the next of kin. Also,

it has allowed 'real time' information to be sent to members and next of kin.

After the AGM I would like to hold a zoom meeting with the next of kin to see what they feel the Guild may be able to do to further enhance what is already in place for their mothers.

I would like on behalf of the board and members to thank Madeline for the huge contribution she has made during this challenging period particularly over the last 9 months as our members and staff come to terms with Covid 19

Madeline thank you again and would you please pass on our thanks to the staff also.

Thank you to all members for your ongoing support of the Guild during this past Covid 19 year. My thanks and appreciation also go to the Presidents and office bearers of our Clubs. These wonderful women are the linchpin between head office, myself and our members. Although this last 9 months this has not been possible because of COVID 19. They give their time voluntarily - some of whom are not even members of the guild. To these ladies, my very special thank you.

It is great to celebrate the achievements of our members; one such occasion was the appointment of our board member Gwen Cherne.

Gwen was appointed as A Commissioner in DVA as an Advocate for Veterans and Families. On behalf of the board and all our members I would like to congratulate Gwen on your appointment as the Veteran Family Advocate. We are so proud of you and all your achievements including this appointment.

This is a new role created by the Minister of Veterans Affairs -and I believe in no small way, a very positive consequence of the “Honouring Woman Dinner” in Canberra last year - I can’t help noting that the War Widows Guild was the leading organisation for this function and Gwen played a huge role in this dinner so we are doubly pleased. Well done Gwen

From my limited knowledge and following Facebook at the weekend, if the support for your appointment is anything to go by, I know you will do an outstanding job as the New Advocate.

As you are not here in person with us today because you started your new job yesterday, I will have the flowers that I would have presented to you today sent to your home.

As Gwen’s appointment causes a casual vacancy on the board, I would welcome any member who may be interested in this role to please contact me ASAP via the office.

The last Thank you is to thank my board members and deputy chair Jennifer Collins.

Commitment, enthusiasm and community are three words that come to mind when I think about their participation in board matters... they even seem to make the daunting matters enjoyable. Added to this thank you is one to John Keen who is Chair of our Finance, audit and risk committee, John is very passionate about financial reports and budgeting and has worked hard to secure our investments.

Given that we are living in a COVID 19 world where no one knows what the next day, next week, month or next year will hold for us, based on the fact that we are a member-based organisation your board is very keen to hear from its members as to what they believe they require in this COVID 19 world and after COVID 19.

In the words of Jesse Vasey

*We all belong to each other. We all need each other. It is in serving each other and in sacrificing for our common good that we are finding our true life.*

*Thank you*