

AIR MAIL



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RAAFA

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RAAFA, State and Federal Governments break ground on ARVL Centre



Left to right: **Cannington Mayor Patrick Hall, RAAFA President Clive Robartson, Member of Parliament Zaneta Mascarehas, Minister Matt Keogh, RAAFA CEO Michelle Fyfe, Prof. Kylie Russell, Leisa Russell, Minister Paul Papalia and Member for Cannington Ron Sao**

On 29 August, RAAFA officially broke ground on the Andrew Russell Veteran Living (ARVL) centre in Cannington, signalling the start of construction for Western Australia's first dedicated crisis accommodation facility for veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The sod-turning opened with a traditional smoking ceremony led by Noongar Elder Dr Len Collard and his grandson. Speakers included RAAFA CEO Michelle Fyfe, Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh, WA Veterans Minister Paul Papalia, and RAAFA Board Member Professor Kylie Russell.

Also in attendance were RAAFA President Clive Robartson, Mayor of Cannington Patrick Hall, MP Zaneta Mascarenhas, Member for Cannington Ron Sao and members of the ARVL project team. Media outlets from across the state — including Channel 7, 9, 10, ABC and 6PR — covered the event.

Speakers reflected on the urgent need for targeted veteran accommodation and the wider support services that will sit alongside the build. The ARVL Cannington facility has been funded through a combination of philanthropic support and government contributions, including a \$5 million Lotterywest grant, an ANZAC Day Trust contribution, and federal funding of \$4.95 million. These funds enabled RAAFA to reach the financial milestone necessary to proceed to construction.

The development will deliver 16 single-bed units designed for short-term stays of up to one year under a housing-first model. During their stay, residents will be offered a coordinated suite of wraparound services aimed at addressing the underlying causes of homelessness and supporting transition to stable housing. Planned supports include mental health and physical wellbeing services, employment pathways, and community

engagement programs — ensuring residents receive both immediate shelter and practical assistance to rebuild their lives.

Professor Kylie Russell spoke about the project's personal significance. Launched in close collaboration with Professor Russell, the ARVL program honours the memory of her late husband, Sergeant Andrew Russell, and aims to provide practical support for those who have served. Ministers and local representatives emphasised that the centre represents more than accommodation; it is designed to be a place of connection, care and recovery.

RAAFA projects the Cannington site will deliver approximately 5,000 nights of accommodation in its first year of operation. Construction is under way and the facility is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

This sod-turn marks a major step forward in RAAFA's commitment

to end veteran homelessness in Western Australia. The ARVL Cannington project is the culmination of years of planning and advocacy, made possible through the combined efforts of government, community and donors. It reflects RAAFA's enduring commitment to ensuring veterans in need have access not only to safe housing, but also to the support and opportunities required to rebuild their lives with dignity and hope. Further updates on the build and service planning will be shared as the project progresses.



The future ARVL Centre

Page 3

Stirling
Apartments
opening

Page 4

Sugarbird
Lady soars
in Broome

Page 5

Farewell to
COO Tonia
Zeeman

Page 6

Members
Sundowner
event

Page 7

Speaker
Dr Tony
Bleetman

Page 8

New look
for Merriwa's
Bar

PURPOSE

Pursuing excellence in care
and heritage

VALUES

Respect; Care; Honesty

APPROACH

Creating RAAFA communities
open to all

THE RAAFA WAY

President's View



By Clive Robartson AM

Welcome to another edition of Air Mail. I trust you have all been keeping well (and hopefully warm!).

As always, we have seen a lot of activity at RAAFA over the last quarter. We have paid special attention to our membership base, broken ground on the ARVL crisis accommodation, honoured Robin

Miller in the Kimberley, completed construction on the new Stirling Apartments building at Air Force Memorial Estate, and I've been busy speaking and presenting at a variety of events.

Stirling Apartments opening – It was a great pleasure to officially open the new Stirling Apartments building in a celebration with AFME's own Jean Oliver cutting the ribbon on the plaque for the new building with her family and friends. I look forward to welcoming our new residents to AFME in the coming months.

RAAFA Member events – We have been focusing heavily on our valuable members over the last few months, ensuring that you get tangible benefits for being a RAAFA member. Across multiple RAAFA Estates, we held three fantastic member sundowners, which have been extremely popular, and have held events for our members by enlisting highly engaging local and international speakers.

Keep an eye out for more member events in the very near future.

ARVL Centre – Last month, I was very pleased to join in breaking ground on our new ARVL Veteran Crisis Accommodation building in Cannington. Among a throng of media, Ministers and Members of Parliament, we celebrated this important milestone in commencing another facility to help veterans in need. It will be gratifying to see the development come to life and support our veterans.

Remembering Robin Miller – Robin Miller was an award-winning nurse and pilot who flew her own aircraft to the Kimberley region in the 1960's, administering polio vaccines to remote communities. Recently, RAAFA honoured her memory by creating the Sugarbird Lady Award and presenting it to Notre Dame Broome nurse Graduate Ellen Bermingham at their Graduation Ceremony. In addition, RAAFA Director Charles Page also arranged for the owner

of Robin's original aircraft to land in Broome airport with members of Robin's family and a crowd of reporters and supporters. It's important to remember Robin's achievements and significance, especially since our own Aviation Heritage Museum holds a number of aircraft she piloted.

I'd like to conclude by letting you know that my tenure as your President is coming to an end. As I hand over to new leadership, I do so with deep gratitude for the trust placed in me, the camaraderie of colleagues, and the unwavering dedication of our members, staff, and volunteers. Together, we have strengthened our Association, broadened our reach, and renewed our commitment to those who have served. The skies ahead are bright, and I am confident the Air Force Association will continue to soar – guided by the same values and spirit that have carried us through this remarkable decade.

Thank you.

Clive Robartson AM

Message from the CEO



By Michelle Fyfe APM

I am pleased to share another edition of Air Mail with you.

On 29 August, RAAFA officially broke ground on the Andrew Russell Veteran Living Centre – Western Australia's first crisis accommodation program for veterans experiencing homelessness. The sod-turn was attended by the Hon Paul

Papalia, Minister for Veterans Issues; the Hon Matt Keough, Minister for Veterans Affairs; Pat Hall, Mayor of Melville; and, most poignantly, Professor Kylie Russell – widow of Sgt Andrew Russell, the program's namesake – and their daughter Leisa.

Sergeant Russell served with the Special Air Service Regiment and was killed in Afghanistan in 2002, becoming Australia's first combat

fatality since the Vietnam War. His service and sacrifice, and the tireless advocacy of his wife Kylie, have been the driving force behind this program. It is a privilege for RAAFA to help carry his legacy forward in such a meaningful way.

This achievement is the result of years of advocacy and thousands of hours contributed by our team, members, donors, and volunteers. After almost one year of operation of Sir Valston Hancock House, it is heartening to see the next chapter of our veteran support initiatives take shape. I look forward to sharing updates on the program with you over the next twelve months.

Closer to home, Stirling Apartments has now reached practical completion, and we look forward to welcoming new residents at the end of October. Please join me in extending them the warm welcome that defines our community.

Our membership program has been growing steadily. Recently, the team has been working to create greater value and support

for you, our members. We want to strengthen the community you have created, support you, and open new opportunities for connection. Last month, we hosted our first annual sundowners across three locations, with more than 430 members attending. Member events and author talks have begun, with guest speakers sharing their expertise, and many more to come.

Finally, I want to thank you for the spirit of openness that has guided our engagement this year. We have listened and learned through conversations, focus groups, interviews, and everyday interactions with more than 250 individuals – residents, members, volunteers, clients, and staff. These insights will continue to shape how we grow together.

As always, thank you for the commitment and generosity you bring to our community. Together, we continue to honour our past and shape our future.

Sincerely,
Michelle Fyfe APM

**Air Force Association
WA Limited (RAAFA)**

18 Bowman Street, South Perth WA 6151

T (08) 9288 8400
E enquiries@raafawa.org.au

W www.raafawa.org.au
f RAAFA WA

Air Mail Enquiries

E airmail@raafawa.org.au

Please email articles to airmail@raafawa.org.au

RAAFA Stirling Apartments official opening celebration



Welcome to Stirling: **RAAFA CEO Michelle Fyfe, President Clive Robartson, Jean Oliver, Chief Operating Officer Tonia Zeeman and Estate Manager Penny John**

When RAAFA Stirling Apartments was conceived and presented to the residents at RAAFA's Air Force Memorial Estate, it was beloved AFME resident Jean Oliver who suggested it be named 'Stirling' after the Short Stirling Mk IV Bomber flown by her husband, George Oliver in WWII. This was met with rousing support by the residents, hailing Jean's suggestion as a 'Stirling idea!'

It could not be more fitting, then, that the new RAAFA Stirling Development be officially opened by Jean Oliver herself.

Jean and her family members were invited to an intimate opening celebration at the new building's Residents' Lounge, joining RAAFA CEO Michelle Fyfe, President Clive Robartson, Chief Operating Officer Tonia Zeeman and Estate Manager Penny John in popping a bottle (or two) in celebration of the new Stirling Apartments.

As part of the celebration, Jean spoke of George's time flying missions during the war and the harrowing operations he carried out in the Short Stirling. Jean then cut the ribbon on the plaque created



Jean gives a moving address on her husband, George and his role in the war

for the building, which signifies the construction of Stirling Apartments, the buildings it replaced, and the story of how the building was named, citing Jean and her Husband's contribution.

Also present were the architects, builders and other suppliers, who commented on how moving and emotional Jean's address was.

Stirling contains 63 apartments ranging from one to three bedrooms, as well as a residents' lounge and public art on its exterior created by celebrated WA Artist Ian Mutch. The first residents will move in towards the end of October 2025.

RAAFA is proud to open Stirling for future residents with such a rich heritage and meaning behind its name for generations to come.



The new Stirling Apartments at Air Force Memorial Estate, Bull Creek

From Gingin to 100: Frank's remarkable journey



100 years of dedication: **Frank and Faye with family and friends**

Karri and Tuart Lodge hosted a very special celebration to mark resident Frank's 100th birthday. Surrounded by his beloved wife Faye, family, and friends, Frank enjoyed the occasion with a beautiful birthday cake made by Therapy Assistant Michelle Ahearn, who also crafted a special card.

Frank is known to all as a true gentleman with a lifelong passion for sport, reading, and gardening.

Over the years he enjoyed playing AFL and lawn bowls, and today he continues to follow his favourite teams, including the Swan Districts.

Frank has always been a busy man, whether working with his hands as a handyman, tending to the garden, or crafting projects. One of his most notable achievements was helping build the water wheel in Gingin, a local landmark that still bears his name on a commemorative plaque.



Faye and Frank's early years

Frank and Faye's love story began in Gingin, where Frank lived while serving in the RAAF. They married on 17 December 1949 at St Catherine's Catholic Church, and this year they will celebrate an incredible 76 years of marriage. Affectionately calling him "Franky Boy," Faye has been by his side through every chapter of their life together.

Together, Frank and Faye raised three children and now enjoy the love of 10 grandchildren and six great-great-grandchildren.

For 30 years, the couple called RAAFA's Merriwa Estate home, embracing the friendships, and activities that enriched their retirement years. In November 2023, they moved into Karri and Tuart Lodge, where they continue to share their life journey side by side.

Frank's 100th birthday was a celebration not just of a remarkable milestone, but of a remarkable life.



Gingin Water Wheel plaque bearing Frank's name

VBL Residents shine at LiveLighter Aged Care games



The RAAFA Red Devils team

In September, eight residents from Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge (VBL) represented RAAFA at the Seniors Recreation Council of

WA LiveLighter Aged Care Games. Known as the RAAFA Red Devils, the team competed in four sports—hockey, bean bag toss, passball, and

skittles—against ten other north-metro residential aged care facilities.

The Red Devils had been preparing for the games since June, training twice a week under the guidance of the home's dedicated therapy staff. Their preparation and commitment paid off: the team improved on their previous performances, particularly in hockey and skittles, ultimately finishing fourth overall. In addition, they earned the best presented team award, a testament to their teamwork and dedication.

Following the competitions, team members enjoyed a shared lunch, reflecting on their performance and discussing strategies to improve for next year. For several new participants, it was their first time competing, making the achievement even more meaningful.

The success of the Red Devils would not have been possible without the support of VBL's staff and families, who cheered the team on and assisted behind the scenes. Special recognition goes to the therapy team, whose dedication in training and mentoring the residents was integral to their performance.

This year marked VBL's 15th year competing in the Aged Care Games, and the results underscore not only the residents' determination and skill but also the positive impact of hard work and community support.

Congratulations to the RAAFA Red Devils on a remarkable achievement at the 2025 LiveLighter Aged Care Games.

The Sugarbird Lady soars again in Broome



Robin Miller's Aircraft, The Mooney, touches down in Broome Airport

RAAFA Director Charles Page and RAAFA Partnerships Manager Trisha Soni made their way up to Broome recently to celebrate a series of events to commemorate Robin Miller, the 'Sugarbird Lady.'

Robin Miller was an award-winning nurse, pilot, and mechanic who grew up in Broome and Perth, and was nicknamed the Sugarbird Lady because she flew her own aircraft to the Kimberley region in the 1960's, administering polio vaccines on sugar cubes to remote communities. Tragically, Robin Miller died from melanoma at the age of 35 in 1975.

Charles organised for the current owner of Robin Miller's aircraft, the Mooney VH-REM, to fly into Broome and land among a throng of media and supporters to celebrate Robin Miller's life and contribution to WA. The restored 62-year-old plane bears her nickname, and was flown by

current owner, Fred Clej and his co-pilot, John Newby. Charles and Trisha were on the tarmac at Broome airport to greet the pilots ahead of ceremonies honouring Robin Miller's legacy.

But it wasn't all clear skies - on the way to Broome, the Mooney found itself stranded in Derby, suffering a dead battery. All seemed lost, until RAAFA Director Denise Bowen, who happened to be in Derby at the time, came to the rescue with a simple pair of cables to give the Mooney a jump start, allowing it to take flight again and continue to Broome. Mooney Pilot Fred said "We couldn't have done it without her!"

In addition to the Broome celebration, RAAFA also created and presented the 'Sugarbird Award' to Notre Dame nursing student Ellen Bermingham at her graduation ceremony, and hosted a commemoration at Robin's grave



The remarkable Robin Miller, 1941 - 1975

at Broome Cemetery, which was presided over by the Bishop of Broome, Tim Norton.

Robin Miller's brother, John Miller, and her sister, Marie Megaw also flew into Broome for the ceremonies. Marie said "Robin

would be thrilled to know that the Mooney has touched down onto the Broome tarmac, and that it's still flying, and in very good hands. It's just amazing, I can't tell you how emotional I am about it."

RAAFA's Aviation Heritage Museum currently holds various aircraft once flown by Robin Miller, including her Beechcraft Baron which is being restored by museum volunteers Brian Jones and Clive Green.

The event was covered by GWN7, with a televised story, interviewing RAAFA CEO Michelle Fyfe and RAAFA Director Charles Page at the Aviation Heritage Museum. ABC Radio interviewed Charles about the event and articles about the initiative appeared across all state and local newspapers.

RAAFA is proud to bring attention to the memory of Robin Miller and her important role in WA aviation and health.



From left: **Marie Megaw (Robin Miller's Sister), Sugarbird Award Winner Ellen Bermingham, RAAFA Directors Charles Page, and Denise Bowen**

Georgiou group donates \$4,500 worth of tools to AFME hobby shop



Christmas came early for members of the hobby shop at Air Force Memorial Estate, thanks to a generous donation from Georgiou Group, the builders behind the Stirling Apartments development.

At a special gathering organised by estate manager Penny John, Georgiou representative Luke Marrell presented the hobby shop team with a donation valued at \$4,500, comprising brand-new Makita cordless power tools and accessories. The gift was met with great excitement, with members describing the moment as feeling like “Christmas morning.”

The donation is a thoughtful gesture that reflects Georgiou’s ongoing commitment to not just building RAAFA’s future facilities,

but also supporting the community who call the estate home.

The hobby shop plays a big role in estate life, with residents regularly repairing furniture, crafting items for the community, and even building toys for overseas children. Projects have included restoring cupboards and coffee tables, fixing dozens of chairs, creating a post box, making easels for museum displays, and building a special “roller board” to help people recovering from knee surgery.

With Georgiou’s support, the hobby shop is now better equipped than ever to continue its valuable work. This donation not only enhances the workshop’s capacity but also leaves a lasting mark on one of AFME’s most vibrant community spaces.

Farewell to RAAFA Chief Operating Officer, Tonia Zeeman



Left: **Tonia Zeeman, retiring RAAFA Chief Operating Officer**
Right: **Incoming RAAFA COO, Lauren Meredith**

We warmly thank and farewell our retiring Chief Operating Officer, Tonia Zeeman, for her outstanding service and dedication to RAAFA WA.

During her time with us, Tonia has championed several redevelopments, notably Cirrus, RAAFA Club and Stirling Apartments at AFME, multiple smaller upgrades, systems and services design and redesign. These projects have strengthened our commitment to meaningful, compassionate care for our residents, veterans, and members. Tonia’s leadership and legacy will continue to benefit our community for years to come.

At the same time, we’re delighted to welcome Lauren Meredith as our new COO.

Lauren brings a wealth of expertise from her leadership in aged care and community services, most recently at MercyCare, and we are excited for the vision and energy she will bring to RAAFA WA as we look to the future.

Thank you, Tonia, for your remarkable contribution, and welcome Lauren to the RAAFA team!

Remembering the Battle of Britain – 85 years on



85th Anniversary: Left: **Volunteer Brian Farr presents at the Battle of Britain event**
Right: **The 4.5m high Lace Panel**

During September, residents at Air Force Memorial Estate joined Aviation Heritage Museum volunteers to mark the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

The morning began with museum volunteer Brian Farr, who shared the story of the Battle of Britain

Commemorative Lace Panel and the way it records significant bombings that shaped the conflict. Fellow volunteer Paul Falconer-West then reflected on the battle itself — the first major defeat of the German forces during the Second World War. Paul highlighted Australia’s involvement, noting that

35 members of the Royal Australian Air Force served in this pivotal battle, and honoured several of the men whose bravery and sacrifice will always be remembered.

RAAFA Board Member Charles Page also offered words of remembrance, reading aloud the names of those who served in the Battle of Britain. A plaque was put up to remember their legacy, listing all who took part in the historic battle.

Following the proceedings, residents and volunteers enjoyed morning tea together, sharing personal memories and reflections. Many attendees recalled their own fathers’ service during the war, making the commemoration especially meaningful.

The event was warmly received, with attendees expressing appreciation for both the opportunity to learn more about this defining moment in history, and to reflect on the sacrifices made by those who came before.



Raising funds and spirits at Australia's Biggest Morning Tea



AFME's Australia's Biggest Morning Tea organising committee

RAAFA communities came together in their own unique ways to support the Cancer Council's Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, raising vital funds for cancer research, prevention, and support services.

At RAAFA Air Force Memorial Estate, the community gathered with volunteers to host a vibrant morning filled with raffles, games, and tea-themed trivia. With the support of generous residents and staff, the event raised over \$1,490, all of which went directly to the Cancer Council. The atmosphere

was warm and welcoming, with club staff providing a delicious morning tea for guests to enjoy.

At RAAFA Cambrai Village, residents continued their proud tradition of supporting the fundraiser, which dates back to 2004. This year, Cambrai raised an impressive \$7,500, bringing their total fundraising since 2011 to over \$37,000. The 2025 event was hosted by the sewing and quilting group, The Busy Bodies, who took on the role after long-time organiser Maureen Farrell retired earlier this year.

The Cambrai fundraiser featured book and cake stalls, a Music Bingo evening, raffles, and the much-anticipated morning tea catering for 150 people. The day included performances from the Perth Harmony Chorus, poetry readings, and music from residents, creating a truly memorable occasion. Residents Neil Munt and Therese Waller also shared personal reflections and projects linked to cancer support, reminding everyone of the real-life impact of their fundraising efforts.

Both events highlight the generosity and dedication of RAAFA residents and volunteers. Whether through baking, donating prizes, performing, or helping behind the scenes, the efforts of these communities made a tangible impact.

Together, AFME and Cambrai raised close to \$9,000 this year – a testament to the strength of our RAAFA family and its commitment to supporting causes that matter.



Cambrai's Cancer Fundraiser hosts and hostesses

Members' Sundowners bring RAAFA communities together



Over July and August, RAAFA hosted a series of Members' Sundowners across our estates to kick off the membership year, bringing together hundreds of members for evenings filled with music, drinks and connection.

Each event ran from 4.30 to 6.30pm and featured a complimentary welcome drink and canapés. With live music from talented local performer Bronte, members enjoyed familiar favourites that had many singing along and even getting up on the dance floor.

What made these sundowners truly special was the opportunity for members from across different

estates—and even outside the estates—to meet and connect. New friendships were formed, old ones were rekindled, and the atmosphere was full of camaraderie and community spirit.

Members of the RAAFA Board also joined in the celebrations, mingling with guests and sharing in the festive spirit. The warm turnout and enthusiastic participation demonstrated just how valued these events are.

With great food, live music, and plenty of smiles all around, the Members' Sundowners were a resounding success and a wonderful reminder of the strength of our RAAFA community.



Soaring high after nostalgic flight



RAAFA Museum volunteers Roy Jackson and Paul Falconer-West.

Two of the Aviation Heritage Museum's beloved volunteers took flight together in mid-September, during a flight that was also a trip down memory lane.

Paul Falconer-West, SQNLDR RAAF Ret'd and Vice President of AAFC Branch RAAFA WA, took to the skies in the Pearce Flying Club's Piper PA28-161 Cherokee Warrior II, VH-FES, accompanied by fellow Aviation Heritage Museum volunteer Roy Jackson RAF Ret'd, for a flight that lasted for 66 minutes in total.

Despite Paul being a regular recreational flyer from Jandakot Airport, the flight was particularly meaningful as both he and 94 year old Roy are De Havilland DH82A Tiger Moth veterans, having both flown the iconic aircraft during their aviation careers in the UK.

"The flight was very smooth," says Paul, who is also the Vice President of Pearce Flying Club.

"Whilst I did the take-off and landing, Roy flew the plane for the duration of the flight, as we tracked over Fremantle, Ridgewood Estate, RAAFA's Cambrai Village and Merriwa Estate, and towards



Before takeoff

the coast at Eglinton, flying past the Ocean Reef Marina and back towards Fremantle and Jandakot.

"Sitting next to Roy, I could see the huge smile on his face as he was flying and, I must say, despite being a nonagenarian, he is still a very skilled pilot.

"Roy was absolutely stoked to be back up in the air again, we both enjoyed the experience enormously."

Both Paul and Roy are experienced tour guides at RAAFA's Aviation Heritage Museum. Paul gives tours on the museum's much-loved Lancaster, and visitors can engage Roy for further information on the museum's many exhibits, as he volunteers regularly as a guide.

Air Ambulance Doctor shares stories from the skies

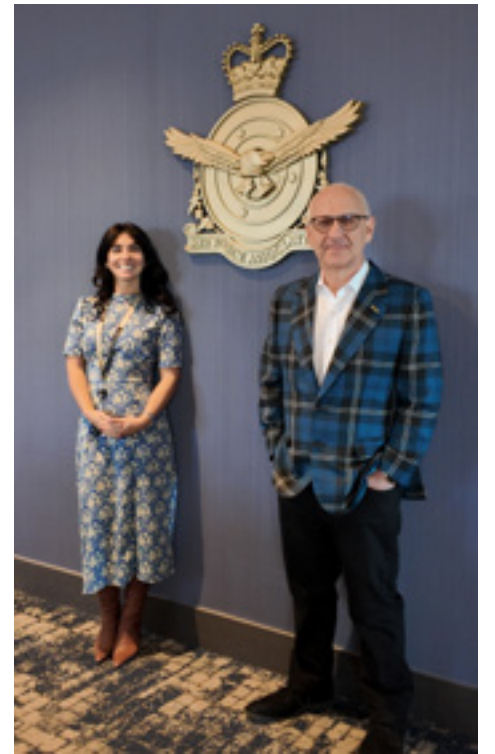
At the end of May, more than 60 RAAFA members gathered in the Melaleuca Room at the Air Force Memorial Estate Club for an engaging afternoon with guest speaker, Dr Tony Bleetman.

Dr Bleetman, a former Army medic, one of the UK's pioneering Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) doctors and the author of *What Could Possibly Go Wrong? The Highs and Lows of an Air Ambulance Doctor*, captivated the audience with warmth, humour and fascinating stories.

Drawing on his years of experience flying with three different HEMS units, he shared insights into the challenges of delivering critical care in high-pressure environments, where every decision counted and often had life-or-death consequences. His talk also explored the broader history of medical aviation — tracing its roots back to wartime evacuations and showing how these early efforts evolved into today's sophisticated air ambulance services.

Members described the talk as both inspiring and eye-opening, offering a rare glimpse into the world of emergency medicine from the skies. Dr Bleetman also spoke about his book, which reflects on the unpredictable and rewarding nature of his career, weaving together stories of courage, innovation, and the human spirit.

The afternoon was warmly received, with plenty of lively conversation continuing well after the formal presentation.



Membership Specialist Mim with Dr Tony Bleetman

"The Membership Team were delighted to host Dr Bleetman for this event," they said. "We're looking forward to building on this momentum and introducing more opportunities for members to come together."

With such a positive response, this event marks the beginning of an exciting calendar of member-exclusive gatherings — bringing people together to connect, learn and share in unique experiences.

Members hear first-hand reflections from Veteran

More than 50 RAAFA members gathered at AFME's Rivergum Room on Wednesday, 25 June, for a special members-only event featuring decorated RAAF pilot Jack Fanderlinden, who flew the final RAAF flight out of Vietnam.

Hosted in partnership with the Aviation Heritage Museum, the event offered members a rare opportunity to hear Jack's first-hand reflections on Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. His presentation, *First In, Last Out*, explored both the first and final RAAF flights in Vietnam, weaving together personal experiences with historical context from the final weeks of the war.

Delivered across two engaging sessions, Jack's talk covered the threats faced by RAAF aircrew, key missions during the closing month of the conflict, and his personal observations. He also shared sobering statistics about Australia's involvement, bringing the realities of the war to life in a way that deeply resonated with the audience.

Members described the presentation as both insightful and moving, with many noting how valuable it was to hear such a significant chapter of history through Jack's lived experience. At Jack's request, attendees were invited to make a voluntary \$20 donation to the Aviation Heritage Museum, showing their support for its ongoing preservation work.



Following this success, the Membership team is preparing more engaging events that

honour our past, foster stronger connections, and create meaningful moments for members.

A fresh new look for Merriwa's Bar



More than 150 residents, staff, and project partners gathered to celebrate the reopening of the Merriwa bar at the end of June following a major refurbishment — the first upgrade since the amenity was originally built.

The project, which began in early May after months of planning and consultation, has completely transformed the bar into a modern, inviting venue that is already proving popular with the community. To mark the occasion, residents, RAAFA staff, and Core Refurb — the builders behind the project — enjoyed a cocktail party in the revitalised space.

The renovation was extensive, involving a full strip-out of the existing bar, the installation of new draught beer lines and taps, and an upgraded cool room with glass

doors. The space also received a fresh coat of paint, a new bar top, banquette seating, updated furniture, improved lighting, and new carpet. A bespoke timber wall divider now adds both versatility and privacy, creating a warm and functional atmosphere.

The upgrade extended beyond the bar itself, with the Blue Gum Café and adjacent hall also receiving a facelift. Fresh paint and new carpet were installed, while the hall's old couches were removed to make way for modern furniture that will soon complement the refreshed interior.

This project represents more than just a physical transformation. The bar and adjoining spaces are a welcoming, contemporary venue that will serve the Merriwa community for many years to come.



Women of the Air Force WA Branch host high tea fundraiser



Left to right: **RAAFA Veteran Services Case Manager Sherry Baxter, Women of the Air Force WA Branch President Sue McKinnon, and Secretary Judy Bland**

At the start of August, the Women of the Air Force WA Branch hosted their second annual high tea fundraiser at the RAAFA Club in Bull Creek, raising an impressive \$2,501 in support of the Andrew Russell Veterans Living Centre.

The event was a full house, with over 80 women from across the services and associated groups, including members from RSLWA Service Women's Group, the Poppy Ladies, and the WRAAC Association. Guests enjoyed an elegant high

tea, complete with themed menus, beautifully set tables, and mini gift bags. Raffles and door prizes added to the fun and helped boost the fundraising total.

Led by Sue McKinnon, President of the Women of the Air Force Association WA Branch, and Judy Bland, Secretary and 2023 ANZAC of the Year Award recipient, the organising team worked tirelessly to create a warm, welcoming and memorable afternoon.

Funds raised will go towards providing comfort items and soft furnishings for future ARVL residents, ensuring the new crisis accommodation not only provides shelter but also a homely and supportive environment.

Sherry Baxter, RAAFA Veteran Services Case Manager, who attended the event, praised the effort and outcome.

"The dedication and hard work that went into this event is truly commendable, and the funds raised will make a meaningful difference for veterans in need," she said.

The high tea has quickly become a highlight on the Branch's calendar, with plans to continue the event

annually. Their next fundraising effort is already underway, with a hamburger and sausage sizzle outside the Aviation Heritage Museum to raise donations for the RAAFA Care Fund — another initiative expected to draw strong support from the community.

Congratulations to the Women of the Air Force WA Branch on a successful event that combined camaraderie, generosity and purpose — all in support of veterans in need.



Beautiful place setting arranged by the Women of the Air Force WA Branch

On course for title of longest serving volunteer



Allen with his first restoration at the Museum, the De Havilland 94 Moth Minor

It's fair to say that aviation and aeronautics runs through Allen Buzza's blood.

Indeed, the born and bred West Australian is quick to admit that from the moment he could walk and talk he was fascinated by flight, even building model planes as a child which he flew at the weekend with his friends down at the causeway near Victoria Park where he grew up.

With such passion for planes, it's no surprise that Allen has been involved with RAAFA's Aviation Heritage Museum since its inception. In fact, he first got involved as part of a group of enthusiasts who came up with the idea to launch an aviation museum in Perth, back in 1971. As a result, Allen and those involved were able to make the dream into a reality - watching the south wing of the museum first open its doors just a few years later, in 1979.

And because of his more than five decades of voluntary work, 82-year-old Allen proudly now holds the title of the longest serving volunteer in the museum's history, having volunteered for an impressive 54 years.

"I've watched the museum grow from just an idea into what it is today, during which time there has been so much work put into it; so many of the volunteers have left a real legacy for future visitors to learn from and enjoy," says Allen, who has been married to wife Dorn for over 58 years, and who is dad to three children and also granddad to three grandchildren.

"I love volunteering and over the years I've made a lot of friends. The mateship and camaraderie at the museum is incredibly strong and I have no plans to retire any time soon, in fact I think they'll have to take me away in a box," he chuckles.

As a member of the restoration team, Allen has helped to restore a number of aircraft at the museum, and the Moth Minor, Heath Parasol and CAC Wackett Trainer were all restored under his leadership.

With the years rolling on, the aircraft enthusiast also assembled two homebuilt planes from just the formative plans at his home workshop. The first aircraft - a Rand KR2 - took 14 years to complete, and Allen subsequently had the pleasure of flying it for the next 20 years.

His second aircraft was an updated version of his first - a Rand KR2S - which took him a much speedier 11 years to finish.

But after entering his eighties, the octogenarian decided to hang up his goggles, and made the decision to sell both aircraft, satisfying himself with continuing to help friends with their own aviation projects.

"When I wrapped up my working life, I didn't just want to sit around," says Allen, who has also worked on the periphery of aviation during his working life, owning and running an aviation signage business for over 25 years.

"I wanted to continue to contribute and do something meaningful, and volunteering at the museum allows me to do just that."

Bill Barnes honoured with Life Membership at Members Sundowner



RAAFA Board Secretary Norm Waldie and Life Membership recipient Bill Barnes

The Merriwa Members Sundowner was a night to remember, with more than 150 members gathering to enjoy drinks, canapés, great company, and even a little dancing. The event brought together members not only from Merriwa, but also many from outside our estates, creating a wonderful opportunity for everyone to connect and enjoy the evening together.

A highlight of the night was the very special presentation to long-time member Bill Barnes, who was

awarded Life Membership of the Air Force Association (AFA) - one of the highest honours available, and one that can only be approved by AFA National.

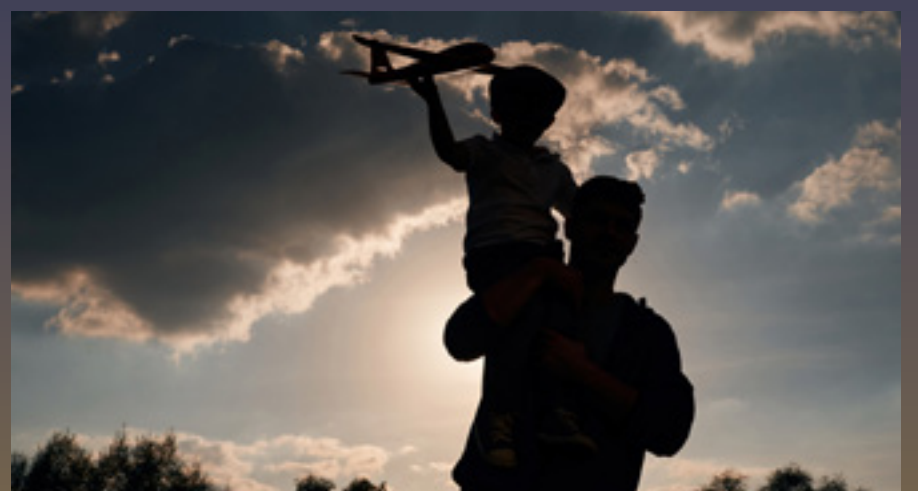
In addition to this prestigious recognition, Bill was also presented with a Certificate of Appreciation and a RAAFA challenge coin, to acknowledge his 50 years of membership with RAAFA, as well as his many contributions to both the Association and the Australian Defence Force.

The awards were presented by RAAFA Board Member Norm Waldie, who shared a long list of Bill's remarkable achievements and tireless service. In his acceptance speech, Bill expressed his deep appreciation for RAAFA and his community at Merriwa, reflecting on the friendships and support that have been so important throughout his journey.

The presentation was met with warm applause, setting the tone for a celebratory evening that truly embodied the spirit of camaraderie and community. Members left with full hearts, smiles on their faces, and fond memories of a special night.

RAAFA

Leave a lasting legacy for the support of future veterans



By leaving a gift in your Will to RAAFA, your lasting legacy will be to ensure our veterans are supported and honoured, our future leaders are empowered, and Australia's proud aviation history is preserved.

It is a powerful way to honour the past and support the future.

To learn more about leaving a gift in your Will to RAAFA, please email us at bequests@raafawa.org.au or phone 08 9288 8400.



■ We are pleased to introduce RAAFA HomeCare, our personalised home support service designed to help clients live well, stay independent, and remain connected to the people and places that matter most. By merging RAAFA's recently acquired Perth Care + Companion Company and RAAFA Connect, with their shared values and commitment to quality, RAAFA Homecare offers personalised, high quality care.

Whether it's a helping hand around the house, a trusted companion for outings, or transport to a medical appointment or special event, RAAFA HomeCare is here to make life easier – both for those living independently and for those in Residential Aged Care.

Supporting independence at home

RAAFA HomeCare offers a range of support services including:

- Personal care and housekeeping
- Nursing care and medication management
- Help with meal preparation
- Transport and assistance to appointments, shopping, social outings, and family gatherings
- Social support & respite care including overnight & 24-hour live-in care
- A concierge service to pick up items, pay bills or run errands
- Tailored support to complement existing care and help residents stay connected to their community

We also work directly with Public Trustees and families to make access to services as simple and stress-free as possible.

Support for you or your loved ones

If you or someone you know could benefit from our services, we are here to help. As part of the RAAFA family, you can trust our team to provide respectful, reliable and compassionate care.

Get in touch

To learn more about RAAFA HomeCare or to make a referral for yourself or a loved one, please contact:

Phone: **08 9276 1520**

Email: info@perthccc.com.au

Web: www.raafawa.org.au/raafa-homecare

Enhancing life in Residential Aged Care

RAAFA HomeCare aims to enhance the quality support you, or your loved one receives in Residential Aged Care by offering additional choices and community connections.

We offer:

- One-on-one companionship
- Transport and support for family events, church services, or special outings

A new reading of history

■ For more than 10 years, RAAFA's AFME resident, Daryl Binning OAM ACS, has been researching and writing what started as a newspaper article on a controversial aspect of Australia's military history relating to the recording of Kokoda battle records.

Entitled War of Words: Waiting for the Prick, the book explores the history of the Kokoda campaign and the historic battles on the Kokoda Track, as they were officially recorded and archived and then adopted by the Australian War Memorial.

"Writing the book - which is really more like a short essay on steroids - was both a challenge and also an enjoyable pastime; it certainly kept the grey matter engaged and gave me great purpose," says Daryl, who worked as a professional cinematographer and film producer, a career path that took him and his late wife, Wilma, to Papua New Guinea for five years between 1962 and 1967.

"I was born three days after World War II started, and I think that is perhaps one of the reasons why I've always harboured an interest in military history.

"Kokoda was always in the headlines, as well as on the wireless and newsreels and, years later, I had

reason to question the term 'trail', as it was never used by the Diggers at the front line, who instead used the word 'track'.

"I've found it rewarding to accrue the evidence to support the book, both during and after my time in PNG, but particularly over the last decade."

Throughout his career, Daryl was involved in filming major events over five decades, including the US Navy's search for a site for their NW Cape VLF radio station, and the first gas strike at North Rankin Reef before it was publicly announced.

A qualified pilot, he also covered stories throughout WA and PNG for Australian and overseas TV stations, as well as for the United Nations and Disney, even covering the story of a young prince, destined to be King Charles, when he visited Port Moresby in 1966.

"I loved what I did and never really considered that I was going to work, I was just fortunate to be able to make a living out of my hobby," says the 87-year-old who has two daughters, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Back in Perth after his time in PNG, Daryl continued to shoot cinema newsreels and film advertisements during the day,

while in the evenings he worked as a projectionist at the Lakeway drive-in.

In addition to producing numerous documentary films, he worked on many early telemovies and feature films produced in WA, including the ABBA Movie, which he cites as one of his most enjoyable career highlights.

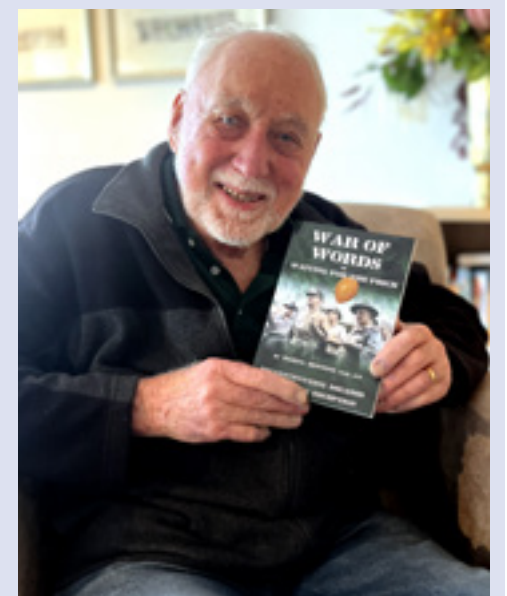
His family was also responsible for screening children's films at the Fremantle Town Hall during school holidays in the 1970s and 80's.

A volunteer for many years at the Aviation Heritage Museum, Daryl has also been responsible for going through the film archive to safeguard any footage of historical significance, to ensure it became digitised.

"I would rather wear out than rust out," laughs Daryl, referring to his philosophy in life around having a purpose, particularly in retirement.

"Writing this book has given me that on many levels, from the research, to gaining feedback and even recently giving a talk to members of the Military History Association at the AFME village hall."

Daryl's book has been included in the Australian War Memorial's Reference Library. His earlier book,



Nitrate Nomads, was also selected by the National Film and Sound Archives to be added to its library.

"I'm proud of it, and I'm already starting to work on my next project," he says.

Copies of War of Words: Waiting for the Prick are now available for loan at all RAAFA village libraries and can be purchased at a discounted price to raise money for fundraising initiatives. Daryl can be contacted at: kokodawow@outlook.com.

Healthy steps and happy hearts at Merriwa



Each Wednesday morning, Merriwa Estate residents lace up their walking shoes and join the Wednesday Walkers, a group dedicated to keeping active and connected within the village.

Led by Wellbeing Officer Grace, the weekly walks provide residents with an enjoyable way to boost both their physical and social wellbeing. The strolls are open to everyone, regardless of fitness level, with a relaxed pace that makes it easy for all to join in.

The group often explores hidden corners of the estate, including the much-loved Secret Garden.

With its seasonal blooms and peaceful atmosphere, the garden has become a favourite stop along the route, offering the perfect place to pause, chat, and enjoy nature's beauty.

Beyond exercise, the Wednesday Walkers are about friendship and community. New residents find it a welcoming way to meet others, while long-time locals value the chance to reconnect each week.

The Wednesday Walkers continue to grow, proving that sometimes the best activities are the simplest ones.

A model of great friendship



Noel and his recently built Boeing-Stearman Model 75 PT-17 Model



Merriwa Estate residents Peter White and Noel Cahill were friends and long-time enthusiasts of radio-controlled model planes for years at Merriwa Estate, spending time together flying and building model aircraft.

When Peter could no longer build a beautiful model 1938 Boeing-Stearman PT-17, he gave it to Noel to complete the very complex and detailed assembly. It took over a year, but Noel has now completed construction of the aircraft, and it looks amazing.

Peter, who had a long history with the Air Force cadets, sadly passed away a year ago, but his model

is now prominently hung for all Merriwa residents to enjoy.

The Boeing-Stearman PT-17 aircraft was originally used as a crop duster, and in WW2 was used as a training aircraft in the Army, Navy and AirForce. Peter and Noel's model of this aircraft is a working replica and can be flown via remote control.

Noel is understandably proud of the model, and was extremely happy to complete it for Peter, in his honour and memory. It looks fantastic at Merriwa's newly refurbished main hall, still in the air as a reminder of Peter and Noel's great friendship.



Annual General Meeting 2025

Air Force Association WA Limited (RAAFA)



By Suresh Rajendra,
Company Secretary

Friday, 31 October 2025

Registration commences at 9.30am with the meeting commencing at 10.30am at the RAAFA Club, Bull Creek. Morning Tea will be provided.

Nominations for the Board positions and Notices of Motion have now closed.

A blooming great day out at Araluen Tulip Festival



As spring approaches, residents from Alice Ross-King Care Centre enjoyed a delightful bus trip to the Araluen Tulip Festival. The sunny weather set the scene for a perfect day, with residents strolling through the vibrant gardens and taking in the stunning floral displays. Many brought along sandwiches, tea, coffee, and biscuits to enjoy a relaxing snack during the visit.

Even residents using walkers embraced the opportunity to explore, with everyone commenting on the beauty of the gardens and how much they enjoyed the day out. A scenic train ride around the garden



provided a leisurely way to see all the sights.

It was heartwarming to see residents smiling, chatting, and fully engaged throughout the trip, making it a truly memorable outing for all.

RAAFA Mythbusters

We sometimes hear stories (and myths) around RAAFA estates that require clarification. From time to time, we'll 'bust' these myths for our residents and members, here in Air Mail.

✗ Myth:

Resident funds are used for external meetings and functions that are held at RAAFA estates.

✓ The Truth:

All monthly fees contributed by residents are contained in each individual estate's operating budget and are utilised for each estate's operations exclusively. At the end of the financial year, the itemised finances are presented to the residents at the Estate Annual General Meeting, and if there's a surplus, a special resolution meeting is held to determine what to do with it. This might be to either hold over the funds for future deficits, purchase something for the residents, or have funds credited back to the residents, depending on the vote.

At no time will these funds be used for any external purposes, including meetings or events that do not directly involve the estate operations or residents.

Attention RAAFA Members

Don't miss our upcoming Member events!



Annual General Meeting



Branches Forum



**Member Presentations:
Dr Bleetman Returns!**



Junior Memberships

Please make sure you're registered to receive our membership email invitations. Call **(08) 9288 8479** or email us at membership@raafawa.org.au, and we'll keep you up to date!

Club Bites

Proof of membership may be required when using facilities available to you, please have your card available. Non-members are required to be signed in by a member. Want to join? Applications and details available on our website raafawa.org.au/membership

CAMBRAI CLUB 9304 5400

Weekly specials

Tuesday, darts, happy hour and Bar snacks available 4.00pm
2nd Tuesday, parmi night, \$17.00. Bookings essential
Wednesday, morning tea, \$6 coffee and cake from 10.00am
Wednesday, carvery roast dinner \$25. Happy hour from 4.00pm. Bookings essential
Thursday, Bar open 3.30pm - 6.30pm Bar snacks available
Friday, Lunch from 11.30am, no booking necessary
1st and 3rd Friday, sundowner and Happy hour from 5.00pm

MEADOW SPRINGS CLUB 9582 5375

All bookings for lunch and dinner can be made at the bar.

Weekly specials

Monday, roast corner - 2 courses, choice of 2 roasts \$19.50
Tuesday, A la carte - main meal with glass of house wine or midday \$20.50
Wednesday, club night buffet - meals from \$17.00, chase the ace, bingo and horse racing
Thursday, happy hour, 4.30pm to 6.30pm (Summer hours)
Friday, A la carte - main meal with glass of house wine or midday \$20.50

BULL CREEK CLUB 9311 4460

Weekly specials

Monday, roast of the day special \$23.00
Monday to Friday, light breakfast 9.00am to 10.00am
Monday to Friday, lunch 11.00am to 2.00pm
Monday and Wednesday, Happy Hour 4.00pm to 5.00pm
Tuesday, fish and chips day \$23.00
3rd Wednesday, a la carte night
Friday, dinner and raffles 5.00pm to 7.00pm
Saturday, new opening time 12.30pm to 6.00pm

MERRIWA CLUB 9400 3640

Blue Gum Café

Pop down for one of our daily specials or sample something off the menu. Now open Wednesday 11.00am to 2.00pm and Thursday 10.00am to 2.00pm.

Weekly specials

1st and 3rd Tuesday, club night \$19.00 parmi or pasta. Includes beverage (bookings essential)
Wednesday, roast lunch \$17.00
Wednesday, happy hour 4.00pm
Thursday, morning tea from 10.00am
Thursday, lunch specials \$17.00
2nd and 4th Friday, bistro night (bookings essential)
3rd Saturday, sundowner bar opens 4.00pm