

AIR MAIL



DECEMBER 2025
PRINT POST APPROVED PP100017557

RAAFA

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A night to remember: The Black Box Exhibition takes flight



The Black Box exhibition launch at Aviation Heritage Museum

On 14 November 2025, the Aviation Heritage Museum at Bull Creek came alive in a very special way as RAAFA members, volunteers, and aviation enthusiasts gathered for the launch of The Black Box exhibition. This unforgettable sundowner event marked not just the opening of a new interactive display, but also the unveiling of a beautiful, limited-edition coffee-table book by RAAFA: **The Black Box – Recording the History of Western Australian Aviation**.

Exploring our shared legacy

The new exhibition invites visitors on a self-guided educational journey through some of Western Australia's most iconic aircraft – from the mighty Avro Lancaster to the trusty Dakota C-47 and the beloved “Huey” Iroquois, but more than metal and wings, it brings human stories to the fore: the triumphs, the tragedies, and the fierce determination of those who built, flew, preserved, and restored these machines.

One highlight is the story of Ken Pittman, former RAAF instructor turned long-serving museum volunteer, whose courageous act made national headlines. Ken uncovered classified RAAF orders that planned to use surplus Douglas DC-3s (Dakotas) for target practice – he leaked the orders to the press to save the aircraft, sparking outrage and ultimately ensuring their preservation. His passion and resolve resonate deeply in both the exhibition and the accompanying book.

At the launch event, guest of honour Geoffrey (“Geoff”) Thomas, esteemed author and aviation historian, led live readings and reflections as well as a Q&A with Ken on stage; weaving together archival accounts, personal memories, and technical histories of RAAFA's remarkable collection.

Why The Black Box book matters

This book isn't just a catalogue – The Black Box book is a collector's treasure, produced by RAAFA in collaboration with the museum.

Crafted with care, it features:

- **Aircraft histories:** detailed profiles of the Lancaster, Catalina, Anson, Dakota, Iroquois, and more
- **Restoration stories:** how volunteers came together over years to rescue, restore, and maintain these iconic machines
- **Personal narratives:** veterans, engineers, and volunteers share first-hand memories and reflections
- **Stunning visuals:** exclusive photography, rare archival images, and rich close-ups of cockpits, artefacts, and hangar life

Produced in a limited print run, the book is a truly exclusive keepsake – a legacy piece to treasure on your coffee table or hangar shelf alike.



Ken Pittman, CEO Michelle Fyfe and Author Geoff Thomas



The Black Box Book

Take home a piece of history

Copies of The Black Box are available for **\$119 AUD** via the official RAAFA store.

Every purchase goes directly toward supporting the Aviation Heritage Museum's mission: preserving, restoring, and sharing WA's aviation legacy for future generations.

To order your copy, visit theblackboxbook.com.au. Hurry – with limited stock, these volumes won't last long.

Don't miss the exhibition

The Black Box exhibition remains open to the public (no extra cost) and runs through to 5 February 2026. Whether you're a lifelong RAAFA member or just curious about our state's aviation story, the show is a moving and immersive experience.

Visit the Aviation Heritage Museum at 2 Bull Creek Drive, Bull Creek. Bring friends, family, and fellow history lovers – and let the stories of flight and dedication inspire you.

This exhibition and the book together capture the spirit of RAAFA: honouring our past, valuing our people, and preserving heritage well into the future. By visiting the exhibition and investing in the book, you become part of this story. Help us keep the history of Western Australian aviation alive.

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To Life

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 Norm Waldie

Hello RAAFA Members and friends - welcome to my very first President's view! I graciously take over the position of President and Chairperson from Clive Robartson, whom I think we can all agree has done a sterling job as your president for the last seven years. Having been a board member since 2021, I assume this role with humility, respect, and enthusiasm.

Since our last issue of Air Mail, we've seen some exciting developments and events at RAAFA:

The Black Box Launch

RAAFA has created an amazing Coffee Table book entitled *The Black Box: Recording the History of Western Australian Aviation* which details the stories and aircraft we hold at the RAAFA Aviation Heritage Museum. In November, this book was launched with a grand event at the museum, where we had presentations from our CEO Michelle, the book Author Geoffrey Thomas, and a Q&A with Museum volunteer Ken Pittman. This event also launched an exhibition at the museum which will run until February next year, and was covered recently by 10 News. I encourage you all to visit our museum and experience the exhibit for yourselves.

Remembrance Day

Once again this year, our Estates gathered and remembered our veterans on Remembrance Day, with very moving presentations and ceremonies from our residents.

It's truly heartwarming and meaningful to see RAAFA estates honouring our heroes in this way every year. Please take a look at our pictorial this issue which covers the various Remembrance Day ceremonies around RAAFA. Lest we forget.

Stirling Apartments

Following the official opening of the Stirling Apartments building, I'm happy to report that over half of our new residents have moved into the building at Air Force Memorial Estate, and they're enjoying their new homes! I look forward to seeing new faces around AFME, the Stirling really is a remarkable building. The Public art by Artist Ian Mutch has now been installed on the outside of the towers and looks amazing from the street.

RAAFA Long Service Awards

Something I'm very proud of is our staff here at RAAFA, especially the ones that many of you encounter daily. Recently, we held a lunch to celebrate the commitment of staff

who have been with RAAFA for up to 35 years! That level of devotion is not lost on me, and I think it's an extremely positive sign that our staff is engaged, find meaning in their work, and genuinely enjoy working with RAAFA and serving you, our residents and members. Congratulations to all our long service staff.

Christmas will be upon us very soon, so enjoy the chance to catch up with family and friends - take care on the roads and I look forward to a very prosperous New Year.

I'll sign off my first President's View by saying that I'm truly looking forward to being your President, and I'm happy to welcome Andrew Dowse to the office of Vice President alongside me, as well as Eternity Hausen and Hugh Zimmerman to the Board. We're all committed to continuing to provide veterans with the help they need, to preserving our heritage and to serving you, our members at RAAFA.

Betty Hall: A century of kindness and generosity

There's something about Betty Hall that makes everyone feel welcome. Whether it's her warm smile, generous nature, or love of a good adventure, Betty has always had a way of making life brighter for those around her. This year, residents and staff at Karri & Tuart Lodge had the pleasure of celebrating Betty's 100th birthday—a milestone that perfectly reflects a life well lived.

Betty's story begins in wartime in the United Kingdom, where she worked in a cigarette factory, helping provide for the soldiers overseas. After marrying, she became a dedicated housewife, raising her family and giving back to her community through volunteering in her local village. Those years instilled in her a lifelong spirit of generosity and care, qualities that continue to shine through today.

Now a beloved resident of Acacia House at Karri & Tuart Lodge, where she has lived for just over six years, Betty enjoys a rich and active

community life. She has a particular fondness for bingo, knitting, and a glass of white wine, and relishes the daily companionship and support of staff and fellow residents.

"The wonderful staff here really look after me and make sure I have things to do," she says, "and I love the community feel at Karri & Tuart."

Family has always been close to Betty's heart. She is the proud mother of two children, grandmother to two, and great-grandmother to four. Her granddaughter Caroline fondly recalls cooking and baking with her Nan, and the countless adventures and outings she shared with her brother during their childhood.

Betty's 100th birthday was a joyous occasion, celebrated with a morning tea and live entertainment by Mr Accordion, surrounded by family, friends, and the Karri & Tuart community. Laughter, music, and heartfelt congratulations filled the day, honouring not just a remarkable life, but a century of kindness and generosity.



Beautiful Betty Hall celebrating her 100th

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Message from the CEO



By Michelle Fyfe

As we present the final edition of Airmail for the year, I would like to pause and reflect on what we have achieved together across RAAFA. Our work begins and ends with people, and I want to acknowledge the members, residents, clients, volunteers and staff who shape our community every day.

This year has involved active listening and meaningful engagement. Through conversations, events and informal interactions, we gained valuable insight into what matters to the people who call RAAFA home.

These conversations highlighted the importance of clear communication, supportive community life and strong relationships across our sites.

We also continued preparing for significant aged care reform. The new rights based Aged Care Act, effective from 1 November, places the rights of older Australians at the centre of service delivery. RAAFA supports this direction and remains focused on cultural strength, capability and readiness.

During the year we reached several important milestones. RAAFA became a Prescribed Commonwealth List Group, construction began on the Andrew Russell Veteran Living expansion, we commenced a new program of member events that introduced new experiences and connections for our members, new residents moved into Stirling, Memorial House was refurbished, and Alexandra Village joined our retirement living community.

All progress is made possible through the dedication and professionalism of our people.

The figures on the right represent real support, safety and connection for individuals and families. To our staff and volunteers, thank you. Your work makes a tangible

difference and sustains this organisation well beyond its physical structures and programs.

We were pleased to welcome three new Directors to the Board: Eternity Hausen, Hugh Zimmerman and Dr Andrew Dowse AO. We also recognised and thanked outgoing Chairperson Clive Robartson, and Directors Charles Page and Pat Hall, for their contribution to RAAFA. Our new Chairperson, Norm Waldie, has begun in the role and we look forward to working with him as we continue to plan for the future.

Looking ahead, we begin a strategic refresh that will help us clarify who we are, how we describe our purpose and how we continue to strengthen belonging as we approach our centenary in 2029. This includes reviewing our brand to ensure that what we say publicly reflects our purpose, our communities and our future direction.

As we move forward, we do so with clarity of purpose, confidence in our people and pride in our history.

Thank you for your support and belief in RAAFA. I am optimistic about what lies ahead.

Over the past year:

- **41,035 property requests** were completed and **103 homes** were refurbished
- **143,885 financial transactions** were processed
- **137 residents** entered our aged care homes and **157 residents** joined retirement living
- **28,254 hours** of home care were delivered
- More than **2,000 nights** of accommodation were provided through Sir Valston Hancock House, with several residents reconnecting with family and others supported into work
- More than **400,000 meals** were served across residential aged care and the AFME Club served more than **20,000 meals**
- Traditional media reached more than **34 million people** and our social media platforms generated more than **35,000 engagements**

Recognising the next generation of Aviators

This year, RAAFA launched a new initiative to support young people pursuing their passion for aviation — the RAAFA Higher Flyer Award. Introduced by former Board Member Charles Page and supported by Chief Customer and Community Officer Aaron Crowther, the award acknowledges high school students who have shown exceptional dedication in their aviation studies.

Five WA schools with specialist aviation programs were invited to take part: Greenwood College, Kent Street Senior High School, Melville Senior High School, Morley Senior High School and Trinity College. Each school nominated one standout student, with all recipients receiving a \$500 contribution toward flying lessons or further education.

Education Specialist Remie Paulik coordinated the program and attended two of the schools' graduation ceremonies to present the awards. At Greenwood College's ceremony at UWA, the award was presented to Ayden Hackshaw, a top aviation student hoping to pursue a career in the Air Force. At Kent Street Senior High School's ceremony at Curtin University, Eva McAllister accepted the award — one of five honours she received that evening.

"We are proud to celebrate these remarkable students and their achievements," says Remie. "It was a privilege to meet these future aviators, their passion for aviation and determination to succeed are truly inspiring."

Teachers described all five nominees as dedicated, motivated and consistently striving for excellence in their aviation studies:

- **Eva Mcallister**, Kent Street Senior High School (Year 12)
- **Edward Ryan**, Trinity College (Year 11)
- **Cameron J. Stolk**, Morley Senior High School (Year 11)
- **Ayden Hackshaw**, Greenwood College (Year 12)
- **Rafael Bouzada**, Melville Senior High School (Year 10)

RAAFA congratulates all five Higher Flyer Award recipients. Their commitment and passion reflect a bright future for aviation, and we look forward to seeing where their journeys take them.



Education Specialist Remie Paulik and Higher Flyer Award Recipient Eva McAllister

Please email articles to airmail@raafawa.org.au (preferred) or post to **Marketing, 18 Bowman Street, South Perth WA 6151.**

The Barrel Boys at AFME



AFME Resident Ted McEvoy

■ If you happen to be strolling around the outside of the RAAFA Club at Air Force Memorial Estate on any given day around 5pm, you may well encounter a group of mates gathered around a table made from a barrel, enjoying a beer or three. Congratulations - you've discovered the Barrel Boys.

The Barrel Boys is an unofficial, casual gathering of friends at AFME who meet nightly for a quick beer and to check in with each other on life and anything else, among an atmosphere of friendly banter.

This was something that developed naturally.

AFME Resident Ted McEvoy is one of the regular Barrel Boys which has now become a staple of life at AFME.

"There's about a dozen of us who sit down there around 5 o'clock every afternoon and have a couple of beers and talk men's business" Ted says with a smile.

"The example I like to give is that about five years ago, there were two gentlemen here who had just put their wives into high care. They were pretty well down in the dumps, miserable and not feeling good, so we asked them to come and have a beer with us, which they did. After two or three months you could see the change in their personality. Their outlook on life changed, just because they could sit around this barrel, and have a beer with the boys."

Ted continues "Ladies do it much better than us blokes. They are more open to talk to their girlfriends than us blokes to each other".

Everyone's welcome - if you're feeling at all down for any reason or even if you're not, come by and have a beer with us. It's great, it really is."

At a stage in life where checking in with each other is perhaps more important than ever, it's inspiring and fun to see an inclusive group like the Barrel Boys having an easy and fun way to connect with each other.

"One thing I like about this place is that it's not just a retirement village, it's a community." Ted says. "I've had friends come in from interstate and other places and they say one thing they like about this place is that everyone's smiling at each other. It's a real happy place to live."



The infamous barrel

Three new voices strengthen RAAFA's future

■ Financial sustainability, strategic military leadership and pioneering clinical expertise in veterans' mental health are valuable attributes which RAAFA's three new board members bring to the organisation. It's a skillset offered by the trio, who also add a combined 80 years of military service between them, to ensure veteran services are shaped by leaders who truly understand their journey.

Through bringing a Perth accountant with two decades of Army Reserve service, an Air Vice Marshal who's navigated defence strategy across three continents, and a provisional psychologist pioneering veteran mental health treatments, the breadth of lived experience set to join the organisation is substantial.

Hugh Zimmerman's path to the board began serendipitously in 2012 at a regimental function, leading to over a decade serving RAAFA's finance and audit committee. As a partner at Galluccio Griggs, specialising in estate planning, Hugh's professional expertise aligns strategically with RAAFA's mission.

"My priority is to support RAAFA's executives in ensuring the

organisation remains sustainable and continues as an industry leader," he says.

While Hugh brings financial sustainability to the table, Air Vice Marshal Andrew Dowse AO RAAF (Ret'd) brings four decades of military experience, progressing from electronic engineering roles to leading Air Force strategy and heading ICT operations. His appointment as Vice President and chair of the veterans and heritage subcommittee reflects his deep commitment to his service career.

"My focus is on the veterans' community," Andrew says. "Honouring their service to Australia and supporting them into the future is where my passion lies."

Complementing Andrew's strategic focus on heritage, Eternity Hausen brings 20 years of military service as an intelligence analyst and as a result of her groundbreaking work establishing Australia's first psychedelic integration therapy practice for veterans. In addition, as a member of the clinical governance subcommittee, she brings both lived military experience and cutting-edge clinical expertise.

"Veterans often find it difficult to ask for help because there's a sense of pride that comes with service," Eternity explains. "I know firsthand how important it is to have options when conventional treatments don't work."

Together, these three directors bring the strategic vision, financial oversight and clinical innovation RAAFA requires to support veterans across every stage of their post-service journey.

"It's leadership grounded in experience and focused firmly on the future," says RAAFA President Norm Waldie, who welcomes the appointments and the expertise which the three professionals bring to the organisation.

"Hugh's financial expertise, Andrew's four decades of strategic military leadership and Eternity's groundbreaking work in veteran mental health represent precisely the capabilities RAAFA needs right now," he says.

"Together, they bring the vision and depth required to honour our proud heritage, while ensuring we deliver exceptional support for every veteran who needs us"



New RAAFA Directors: Mrs. Eternity Hausen, Mr Hugh Zimmerman, Air Vice Marshal Andrew Dowse

The 1978 adventure that became a calling

There's a saying about spontaneous escapades becoming lifelong adventures, and for one Royal Australian Air Force instrument fitter who arrived in Perth with a mate in January 1978, that proved prophetically true.

Norm Waldie ventured west for a look around after leaving the RAAF, never imagining that he would make Perth his permanent home, let alone serve as RAAFA's newly appointed president.

"A friend of mine was keen to come back home and we both wanted to explore WA," explains Norm, who has been married to wife Jill for over four decades and has a son living in Perth. "I had never been here so we decided to come over for a bit of an adventure."

Life for Norm began in Newcastle, New South Wales, in 1950 where he joined the RAAF as an apprentice in 1967, setting him on a path across Australia and into Southeast Asia.

Posted first to Laverton in Victoria where he studied at the renowned Institute of Technology RMIT, Norm

graduated as an instrument fitter in 1969. His postings included Williamstown, Richmond and Butterworth in Malaysia, amongst other destinations, before deciding to leave the RAAF in 1977.

His post-service career proved equally adventurous, working on offshore oil exploration around the Northwest Shelf, collecting marine seismic data from offshore China, the Gulf of Thailand and Australia's Timor Sea.

"Working in the oil and gas industry was exciting and interesting," recalls Norm. "I also attended training programs in Dallas, so it gave me the opportunity to have a diverse career and travel within different parts of the world."

But although he has travelled extensively across the globe, Norm is adamant that there is still no place like home and, having settled in Duncraig in the mid-nineteen eighties, he's happy to report that he and Jill are still living in the same house that they built over 40 years ago.



New RAAFA President Norm Waldie

"We just love living here," says Norm, who, when he's not immersed in RAAFA responsibilities, can be found at the North Beach Bowling Club, where he's been a member for a few years.

"It's convenient to the city and so close to the stunning local beaches that Perth is renowned for."

Winding back a few years, it was in 2013 that Norm first joined the RAAFA board, subsequently being elected as secretary in 2021, before recently stepping into the President role, succeeding Clive Robartson AM.

And as president, Norm's vision is clear.

"I'm concentrating on expanding our engagement with veterans," he says emphatically. "Those veterans being people who have recently

left the services, and are settling into civilian life, as well as those who've been out for a long time and still need support.

"It's a focus that reflects my own transition experience and my understanding that the path from military to civilian life requires ongoing connection.

"I'm certainly looking forward to offering my decades of experience, spanning both defence and corporate sectors, including expertise in governance and organisational management.

"At the end of the day, the focus for the team here at RAAFA is on supporting and serving the veteran community across Western Australia, with both compassion and practical support."

Honouring the heart of Merriwa Estate: our volunteers

From serving meals to driving residents to appointments, Merriwa's volunteers do it all — and at this year's Volunteer Day lunch, it was their turn to be looked after and celebrated. Around 80 volunteers enjoyed a delicious three-course meal, lovingly prepared by the Merriwa Kitchen team, while the Estate's maintenance staff added "waiter" to their repertoire for the afternoon.

The event was organised by the Merriwa Estate Team, who ensured every detail highlighted the remarkable work the volunteers do to keep Merriwa thriving. From delivering meals to driving the buggy, leading craft clubs or indoor bowls, assisting in the library, handling mail and administration, or helping on committees and events, volunteers are at the heart of life at Merriwa.

"The volunteers are the reason Merriwa is such a special place to live," said Estate Manager Ash McGlashan during her speech. "They look after their neighbours and ensure everyone stays connected to the heart of our estate."

Ash also acknowledged the breadth of volunteer roles across the estate:

- **Meal Delivery Drivers**, who brave all weather to ensure residents receive meals and welfare checks.
- **Mustang and Bus Drivers**, providing access to appointments, shopping, and social events.
- **Grounds and Pool Volunteers**, keeping the estate's outdoor spaces beautiful.
- **Newsletter Editor Bill Wallace**, who patiently coordinates each edition of The Messenger.
- **Postal Workers, Meter Readers, Admin Volunteers**, ensuring the estate runs smoothly.
- **Committee Members and Event Organisers**, filling the social calendar with connection and activity.



The volunteers' turn to be served at the Volunteer Day lunch

Special recognition was given to RAAFA Aviation Heritage Museum volunteer Bill Wallace, who has been serving for an incredible 47 years, making him Merriwa's longest-standing volunteer.

Certificates of appreciation were presented to all volunteers during the lunch, and guests enjoyed the chance to relax, be served, and celebrate each other's efforts. Sarah Littauer, RAAFA's Volunteer

Engagement Coordinator, also joined the celebration to meet our volunteers and personally thank them for their dedication.

The lunch was more than just a meal; it was a heartfelt acknowledgment of the generosity that volunteers bring to Merriwa every day. Merriwa Estate's volunteers continue to make Merriwa a vibrant, welcoming community — and this special day was all about celebrating them.

Welcome to our new Stirling residents

Keeping it all in the same postcode

After 35 years in the Leeming family home, Ken Elson has made the move to RAAFA's brand-new Stirling Apartments at Air Force Memorial Estate, settling into his second-floor home just five minutes from where he used to live.

"I'm still in the same postcode," laughs Ken, one of the very first residents to move into the new apartment complex, which opened just a few weeks ago.

The father of two and grandfather of four is quick to point out that he didn't feel the need to look anywhere other than AFME.

"I'd seen first-hand the lifestyle on offer and already knew people on the estate, particularly friends who volunteer at the Aviation Heritage Museum," Ken explains.

"And as an army aviation veteran who served in Vietnam, I'd say I know a fair bit about what's in there too."

A born and bred West Australian, who completed 15 years with the army aviation regiment, Ken

admits the transition from house to apartment has been significant, particularly after giving away 90 per cent of his possessions to make the downsize work.

"I think I still have too much," he admits. "But I'm just about settled in now and everything feels lovely."

For Ken, who was born in Capel and joined the army straight out of school, the move marks an important transition. His wife recently moved into care, and after dedicating five years as her primary support at home, Ken recognised it was time for him to downsize and move into a retirement estate and begin connecting with old friends.

"There are a lot of people I haven't been able to catch up with, and I'm really looking forward to seeing them more," he says. "My first social outing since moving in, a coffee with a friend, is already booked."

Ken reckons one of the best things about apartment living is leaving the maintenance behind.



New AFME Resident Ken Elson

"I'm certainly past pulling weeds and mowing lawns. It's far better to stop and smell the roses than it was having to prune them."

And it's fair to say that Ken is looking forward to having more time and freedom to spend with family, while also exploring what the estate has to offer.

"There's the museum, the men's shed and plenty of other activities,

and I'm really looking forward to exploring it all when I'm ready," he says.

"I'm just delighted to have a lovely, brand-new apartment with no maintenance, to be so close to family and friends, and to have the freedom to focus on the things I enjoy. It's a new chapter for me, and I couldn't be happier about where it's beginning."

Three years well worth the wait

After 40 years in her previous home, Sylvia Goh has made the move to RAAFA's brand-new Stirling Apartments at Air Force Memorial Estate, and she couldn't be happier.

"I waited patiently for three years for this building to be completed," shares Sylvia, one of the very first residents to move into the new apartment complex, which opened recently.

"And it was absolutely worth the wait."

Having researched her options carefully, Sylvia knew Stirling was the right choice for her.

"I'd had my eye on this place for a long time because I used to visit a very dear friend at Gordon Lodge," Sylvia explains. "I looked at other villages, but when it came down to it, Stirling is a modern apartment complex with the space and parking I wanted. The decision was easy."

The 71-year-old retired nurse and midwife admits downsizing meant parting with furniture that

had been with her for over four decades.

"My daughter insisted that I buy all new furniture to make the apartment comfortable, and now my place looks like an IKEA display home," she laughs.

"My girls both told me it's time to enjoy life and stop worrying about things, and they thought it would be really nice for me to have some new furniture in my lovely new apartment."

For Sylvia, the move represents a well-deserved new chapter. With two grown-up daughters and a grandson living locally, the retiree was ready to leave the demands of maintaining a large property behind.

"When people asked if I'd miss the house, I said no. I was relieved to leave," she says.

"It was really too big for me for a long time when I look back, the gardening was taking a toll, and I'd already prepared my heart to move."

Now she's made the move, Sylvia says apartment living has exceeded all of her expectations.

"I feel like I'm living in a hotel," she chuckles.

"Everything is brand new, there's no maintenance, no painting. I'm so happy and so content."

And with one of her daughters living in Kardinya, just 10 minutes away, Sylvia is already busy helping with school drop-offs and pick-ups for her grandson.

In addition to being very involved with her church, including volunteering at meetings and playgroups, Sylvia's faith has been central to her journey.

"I prayed to God that He would grant me the desire of my heart to move into RAAFA, and I give Him all the glory for making it happen," she says.

"I really couldn't be any happier to be here, and once I settle in properly, I'll start doing my evening walks around the estate and join the walking group."



New AFME Resident Sylvia Goh

"Right now, I'm just thrilled to finally be here after waiting so long. The apartment is perfect, I'm close to my family and friends, and I can enjoy a simple life without all the work of maintaining a big house. I couldn't ask for anything more."

Cambrai outplays the wind—and Peel—in a lively challenge match

On a perfect 26-degree spring day, the Cambrai Social Bowling Club welcomed the Peel Bowling Club for their bi-annual challenge match.

The Peel Bowling Club—whose members play at the Mandurah Bowling Club and support people with mental or physical disabilities to enjoy lawn bowls—made the trip up from Mandurah by train. They were warmly met at the station by volunteer driver Kevin Hill, who transported them to the village on the community bus.

Before the friendly rivalry began, players from both clubs enjoyed a light lunch of sandwiches and snacks at the Community Centre, followed by team photos to mark the occasion.

The competition saw each side field four teams of four players, battling it out over 15 ends for a newly introduced perpetual shield. It was a closely contested match early on, with scores sitting level at the halfway mark. With determination—and in spite of the strong winds that challenged both sides—Cambrai managed to pull ahead, ultimately



The Cambrai and Peel Bowling Club Teams

winning on all four rinks.

The Peel players took the result in good humour, noting they weren't accustomed to the gusty conditions of Cambrai's open green and promising a different outcome when the return challenge takes place in Mandurah.

Throughout the day, the rinks were filled with good-natured banter, plenty of laughter and wonderful sportsmanship. Both clubs agreed it was an enjoyable and memorable event, and they are already looking forward to organising the next challenge.



Helen Dodson and Merle Ferguson with RAAFA Hospitality Manager Brad Hatfield

Merriwa celebrates the end of the year with a sundowner

With Christmas decorations twinkling and platters at the ready, Merriwa residents gathered for their last Sundowner of the year, celebrating both the festive season and two dedicated organisers.

For the past three years, Helen Dodson and Merle Ferguson have been the driving force behind Merriwa's much-loved Sundowners, planning each event with a genuine passion for bringing people together. This year's end-of-year sundowner, held from 4.00pm to 7.00pm, was not only a final celebration for 2025—it was a warm farewell to the pair as they retire from their organising roles.

Around 80 residents attended the afternoon event, enjoying generously prepared charcuterie platters and drinks as they settled in for an evening of entertainment. A comedian had the crowd in stitches, and raffles kept the excitement going throughout the night.

As always, the Sundowner was a wonderful reflection of Merriwa's strong community spirit. Residents shared their thanks with Helen and Merle, whose efforts over the past three years have turned these gatherings into a cherished Merriwa tradition.

Halloween fun at Alice Ross-King Care Centre

Alice Ross-King Care Centre (ARKCC) was transformed into a playful "haunted house" this Halloween, as the ARKCC team went all out with spooky costumes and themed decorations for residents to enjoy.

Staff made their rounds dressed as everything from classic ghosts to mischievous monsters, handing out Halloween treats along the way.

While they tried their best to give residents a lighthearted scare, the reactions were far from frightened—residents were quick to laugh, join in the fun, and enjoy the surprise visits.

The day was filled with plenty of good humour — with costumes, treats, and a wonderful sense of fun from the whole team.



'Frightened' residents of Alice Ross-King Care Centre

Remembrance Day across RAAFA

Once again this year, our RAAFA Estates held a Remembrance Day ceremony on November 11th to honour our war heroes. In each location, residents and friends attended a heartfelt and moving commemoration of speakers including poem readings, addresses from clergy and residents with family members who served.

A minute of silence fell upon each estate at 11am, with attendees wearing poppies and taking the time to connect with each other and remember the sacrifices made by those who served.

Lest we forget.



RAAFA Merriwa Estate



Air Force Memorial Estate, Bull Creek



RAAFA Erskine Grove



RAAFA Cambrai Village



Alice Ross-King Care Centre



McNamara Lodge



RAAFA Meadow Springs

Gordon Lodge marks 45 years of care



The dedicated team at Gordon Lodge

■ Gordon Lodge first opened its doors on 4 October 1980 and was named in honour of Les Gordon, then State President of the Air Force Association WA Division, whose vision and leadership helped establish a place built on care and community. Forty-five years later, those foundations remain just as strong.

To celebrate their 45th Anniversary, the Gordon Lodge team transformed the dining room with decorations and displays of treasured photos featuring residents, their loved ones and the dedicated staff who support them. The celebration brought everyone together, including those rostered off, highlighting the close-knit culture that has become the Home's hallmark.

Speeches from residents and staff captured the heart of the celebration. Ken Webster, Resident's Representative, described the Gordon Lodge

team as "the greatest carers and nurses," noting that while each staff member brings something unique, they all share one value — respect for one another.

Resident Kate Quan, who enlisted in Western Australia during WWII and served as Secretary of the WAF, shared her reflections on what makes Gordon Lodge so special: Gordon Lodge, she said, "showed warmth, happiness and welcome," praising staff as well-trained, patient and dedicated. She recalled the team's swift and tireless response during a past virus outbreak — deep cleaning the entire Lodge, delivering medication to each room, and taking on extra shifts without a single complaint. "In ten days the virus was stopped," she said, commending Gordon Lodge for "leading the long way forward."

Long-serving team member Sherley Moyo, who celebrated 20 years of service this year, offered a heartfelt

speech about her connection to the Lodge.

"I can write a book about this place because it is my home. Gordon Lodge is not just a facility; it's my home."

The event was also attended by Chief People Officer Lisa Hawkins and Residential Aged Care General Manager Carol Dickson, who began her RAAFA career as a Facility Manager at Gordon Lodge. Both leaders shared words of appreciation, acknowledging the dedication of staff and the warmth of the community they continue to nurture.

Residents and staff enjoyed cupcakes, a beautifully decorated anniversary cake, and a grape-juice toast to mark the occasion.

A highlight of the celebration was the unveiling of a special book capturing resident stories and memories, Conversations with Residents. This year-long project

was led by the Gordon Lodge team in collaboration with All Saints College and the Serving Seniors Service Group.

The book showcases the meaningful history and heart that make Gordon Lodge such a special place to live and work. It reflects the deep care staff have for those who call the Lodge home and highlights the strong, lasting relationships at the heart of the community. Many staff members have been part of Gordon Lodge for five to ten years or more—a testament to their loyalty, pride, and commitment to the work they do.

After 45 years, Gordon Lodge continues to stand not only as a place of care, but as a true community — one built on dedication, respect, and a shared sense of home.

Cambrai Club kitchen reopens after major upgrade

■ The Cambrai Club is officially back in full swing, following the completion of a major 10-week kitchen refurbishment that marks a significant improvement for both the Cambrai Village and Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge (VBL) community.

The upgrade required a complete strip-out of the old kitchen, which had served the community well for many years but was due for a full renewal. Everything from the suspended ceiling to wall and floor tiling, cool room, freezer, range hood canopy, and even the kitchen office and storage areas was removed and replaced. The refurbishment also included highly technical upgrades such as a new power supply, new engineered floor screed with epoxy coating, insulated concrete slabs

and waterproofing for the cool room and freezer, and a larger canopy rangehood engineered to meet updated regulations.

To keep meals running smoothly during construction, a temporary kitchen was installed — a complex task in itself. The team had to close the road, reverse a 20-metre flatbed truck alongside VBL, and crane the temporary kitchen eight metres up and over the workshop and maintenance offices into a parking area behind the building. The same process was repeated in reverse once the project was complete. Despite the extensive works, meal services for VBL residents continued without disruption, and the Cambrai Club maintained service with an adapted menu.



Cambrai Chef Manish Arya cooks up a storm

The project came together thanks to a collaborative effort between RAAFA's Property, Hospitality, and Estate teams and the builder AWB, all of whom worked closely to ensure handover was achieved on schedule.

With construction now complete, residents and staff can now enjoy the benefits of a modernised kitchen built to meet current and future needs—another important investment ensuring residents receive high-quality services for years to come.

Bringing history to life at Meadow Springs



Inside the Meadow Springs heritage display cabinet

Leather flying helmets worn on bombing raids over Germany; a pilot's logbook tracing a career from Tiger Moth training to a Distinguished Flying Cross; a cap badge and wings once pinned to the uniform of a young RAAF officer - for more than 20 years these wartime treasures lay hidden in storage at Meadow Springs, but not anymore.

80 years after the end of World War II, a rare collection of historic artifacts have been collated for a new heritage display that honours the airmen and women of the RAAF, thanks to an enthusiastic voluntary team at RAAFA's popular Meadow Springs estate. And at its heart is a cabinet built 25 years ago, as a tribute to one particularly outstanding Perth pilot.

"The centrepiece was built to honour Danny Reese, a Lancaster pilot who twice brought his crippled bomber home to save his crew," explains Ted King, a member of the Meadow Springs grounds maintenance team and self-confessed enthusiastic war historian who took part in the restoration project.

And so, what began as a passing conversation soon became a

dedicated project, thanks to estate manager, Jade Lund, maintenance supervisor Craig Hunter, and residents Douglas Whitfield and Ted's father, Roger King, all of whom joined forces to form a new heritage group.

Over the following months, the team researched each relic and carefully prepared and mounted every artifact, with painstaking precision.

"Decades of hidden history has been brought into full view for everyone at the estate to see," says Ted.

"Every piece of history inside the heritage display was donated by former residents of the estate, and we think that's what makes this project really special and personal."

The historic collection includes a Mercator navigator's calculator, the logbook of pilot Daniel Conway and the cap badge and wing patch of Bob Maynard, another former resident and RAAF officer.

"A pilot's logbook is his flying career," says Ted. "Conway's takes you from his Tiger Moth training to bombing raids over Germany, where he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.



The Meadow Springs heritage display cabinet

"To find something like that tucked away in storage is just incredible, the entire heritage group felt it should be on show so that everyone at the estate could share this history."

And to say this project was a team effort is quite the understatement.

While Douglas Whitfield spent hours researching the aircraft instruments and creating the display plaques, fellow resident Peter Sacuik, utilised the estate's hobbyshop to craft the timber stand and carefully mount each instrument.

"One altimeter is more than 100 years old, dating back to the First World War," explains Ted. "These are just incredible pieces of aviation history."

Significantly, the group took time to ensure that the display honoured both the men and women who served in the RAAF. As a result, wartime recruitment posters calling for volunteers sit alongside panels telling the story of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force.

"The WAAAF panel honours the thousands of women who volunteered in the war effort," explains Ted. "They paved the way for women to serve in the RAAF today, including frontline pilots, and we didn't want that to be forgotten."

And from the feedback received so far, the group's efforts are already being celebrated for the meticulous attention to detail that has gone into the project.

"We took particular care in the photographs included in the display," adds Ted.

"Every image used in the display was originally taken 80 years ago during WWII and I worked with AI technology to colour the photos, restoring vibrancy to faded uniforms and bringing young faces back to life."

"We wanted to show these young men in the prime of their youth, in full colour, the way their families would have seen and remembered them."

Fast-forward to today, and the finished display has already become a centrepiece of the estate, captivating residents with its mix of nostalgia and history.

"The feedback has been wonderful," admits estate manager Jade Lund.

"The display has become a real talking point, it looks incredibly professional and our whole community can now appreciate each item and it's fascinating history."

And for Ted, working alongside his father Roger on the project has held special meaning.

"To work beside my dad on this project, the man who taught me what service really means, as well as everyone else, well that has been very special," he says.

The project has also given the heritage group an opportunity to acknowledge those at the estate who came before.

"We would be remiss not to recognise David Oxley, who looked after that cabinet for more than 20 years," adds Jade. "What the group has done has built tremendously on his dedication."

"At the end of the day, the heritage display is a reminder of the legacy that connects everyone at Meadow Springs.

"Every name and each piece of the collection represents someone who served, or someone who never came home. If it makes just one person pause and consider what that generation sacrificed for the life we have today, we've done right by them. Not just on Anzac Day or Remembrance Day, but every single day."

Diamond anniversary couple would do it all over again

For Ray and Linda Hinds, who celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary recently at RAAFA’s Merriwa estate, keeping a long marriage happy comes down to one simple philosophy: be satisfied with what you’ve got and never take each other for granted.

The couple, who are both now 82, met back in 1962 when they were just 19, at a rock and roll night at their local Working Man’s Club on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent, UK.

“Ray followed me home after the dance,” Linda recalls with a laugh.

“I was driving my dad’s car because I’d recently passed my test, so when Ray asked to drive me home, I told him he couldn’t. So, he followed me in his own car and met me outside at the front gate.

“From then on we just started dating and that was it.”

Three years later, on 16 October 1965, Linda and Ray married at Trinity Church, near their hometown.

The pair went on to have two children, and their family now stands at seven grandchildren and

three great-grandchildren, all of whom live in Perth.

“We see them all the time, which is just wonderful,” says Linda. “I know some people whose grandchildren are interstate or overseas, so we feel very fortunate that ours are all here locally. They’re all so lovely.”

It was actually family that brought Ray and Linda to Australia in 2003, when their daughter, Amanda, emigrated after meeting her Perth partner while backpacking.

“When we all came over to visit her and met our first grandchild, our son Kevin said we should move out here because it’s such a lovely place,” explains Linda. “So, we applied for visas and moved to be here with our family. We’ve just loved it ever since. No regrets, it’s been a wonderful life.”

On the subject of no regrets, Ray, who ran his own plumbing and heating business in the UK while Linda managed the books, has always been clear about his feelings for his wife of 60 years.

“I tell Linda every anniversary that I’d do it all over again - every bit



Diamond anniversary couple Ray and Linda Hinds

of it,” says Ray. “Marrying her was the best decision I ever made.”

And, to celebrate their diamond anniversary, the couple were joined by their family, and their grandchildren, for a party at their daughter’s house in the hills. They also received a beautiful bouquet flower arrangement and a commemorative plaque from the Mayor of Wanneroo.

For Linda, 60 years hasn’t felt like a long time at all.

“The time has just flown. We’ve been very busy with grandchildren and work, and I never get bored, plus we’ve got lots of friends, especially since coming to the village because it’s very sociable here,” adds Linda, who along with Ray, has been a Merriwa resident for almost a decade.

“To be honest, a lot of it seems like yesterday, I’m not sure where the time has gone but we have been very lucky and very happy.”

McNamara residents celebrate Diwali

McNamara Lodge welcomed the Festival of Lights with a vibrant Diwali celebration. Residents and staff were treated to a lively performance by Mary from the Kereshmeh Persian Dance Group, who not only performed but encouraged everyone to join in.

Residents quickly embraced the opportunity to dance and experience another culture. The McNamara staff members joined in, showing off their moves alongside residents and even family members. Care team member Sammy Sidhu and her cousin attended in traditional dress, adding to the festive atmosphere.

Comments from the day captured the joy of the event: “Oh, it is so wonderfully colourful,” and “I just want to watch the dancing all day,” reflected the delight felt by everyone involved. Traditional dress, light refreshments, and group dances added to the festive atmosphere, making it a memorable afternoon for all.

A special thank you to the McNamara Lifestyle team for organising the event and ensuring residents could fully participate in dancing and learning about a new culture.



The McNamara Team dancing with the residents

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.

CAMBRAI CLUB 9304 5400

Weekly specials

Tuesday, darts, happy hour and Bar snacks available 4.00pm

2nd Tuesday, parmi night, \$20.00. Bookings essential

Wednesday, morning tea, \$6.00 coffee and cake from 10.00am

Wednesday, carvery roast dinner \$25.00. 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 - 1 course, choice of 2 roasts \$16.50

Tuesday, a la carte - main meal with glass of house wine or middy \$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 middy \$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 \$23.00

3rd Wednesday, a la carte night

Friday, dinner and raffles 5.00pm to 7.00pm

Saturday, new opening time 2.30pm to 6.30pm

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

RAAFA wins AIM WA Pinnacle Award for Marketing Excellence

RAAFA is chuffed to announce that our Marketing team has been awarded the 2025 AIM WA Pinnacle Award for Marketing Excellence, recognising our national impact in reshaping how Australians understand and value our veteran community.

The award acknowledges RAAFA's whitepaper, *Misunderstood: A Pulse Check on Australian Public Perception of Veterans*, which uncovered widespread misconceptions and outdated assumptions about veterans across the country. Using independent YouGov research as its foundation, the campaign delivered a bold, data-led narrative that challenged stereotypes and sparked a more informed public conversation.

Veterans are a highly valued part of the community, and

our whitepaper revealed the majority of Australians believe the government should be doing more to support them.

Through an integrated national campaign the team reached more than 8 million Australians, driving awareness, empathy and greater understanding. With 124 earned media placements, including features on Sunrise, The West Australian, and The Daily Telegraph, the campaign elevated the voice of veterans and highlighted the importance of supporting their wellbeing, service, and ongoing contribution to community.

RAAFA extends its sincere thanks to AIM WA for this honour — and to the veteran community, whose stories and experiences remain at the heart of everything we do.



RAAFA CEO Michelle Fyfe receives the AIM WA Pinnacle Marketing Excellence Award



Download the award-winning report by scanning this code