

# The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Queensland Branch Inc.



## NEWSLETTER



### Welcome from our President

Good morning, everyone, thank you for taking the time and coming today to attend our first QGM for 2026. Thank you to Caloundra GEMS for hosting the

QGM today and to the Caloundra Power Boat Club, for the use of their facilities.

Also thank you to the groups who made the effort to attend today - Caloundra GEMS, Hervey Bay, Caboolture SAVVIES, Fraser Coast, Nanango and Ipswich. Welcome to all new members and associate members who are attending today's meeting, it is great to see you here.

Thank you to my committee – Ann Stephenson OAM Vice President, Pam Elkington Secretary, Anita Finger Treasurer, Committee members Annette Fry, Ann Cossey, Jo Shorrocks and Michelle Thomas. Apologies from Robyn Sutherland Membership Secretary.

I would also like to acknowledge our group contacts and our volunteers behind the scenes in keeping P.V.A. functioning and supporting the committee.

Annette Fry and I visited Bribie's Opal's group early in February and we were welcomed very warmly. If any groups would like a visit from the State Committee, please let us know so that we can fit it in with our schedule. We had new P.V.A. Booklets printed and any groups who need some please see me at the end of the meeting.

### Fundraising:

- Caloundra GEMS will be selling badges again this year for Anzac Day.
- P.V.A. Calendars - we raised through the sale of the calendars, much needed funds, which went straight into Queensland A/C. Unfortunately, the calendars had some misprint due to printing, we apologise for this but unfortunately, it was out of our hands. National were not happy about the printing and have addressed this with the printer.

Ann Stephenson OAM and I will be travelling to Perth in early May attending the P.V.A. National Board Conference. More on this conference in the next President Report in May.

If any group has done anything interesting, we are always looking for items to go into the magazine with photos included if possible. The next cutoff date for any items to go into the Magazine will be the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, to give us time to prepare the Queensland section to go to National.

The Caloundra GEMS received \$1000 for Health Week from DVA, and 15 members went on a Seafood Cruise at Mooloolaba. A great day was had by all. Thank you to Wayne Mathews for driving our bus.

Our thoughts go out to all members, their partners and families who are experiencing ill health or who have lost a family member.

*Margaret Thomas*  
President

# NATIONAL REPORT

**24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026**

We had a Teams meeting on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026 which was our first meeting of the year. We (the National Board) plan to have more Team Meetings over the next twelve months which helps us to elevate the time away from our own state and cut out on long Conferences.

During the Team meeting we discussed the following: -

- The Institute for Veterans Advocacy - Membership – each state branch to join the website to ensure that the standard across Membership base.
- Honouring the Hidden Service – State Branch Responsibilities:
  - Nominate a State Campaign Lead or committee
  - Deliver at least one local commemorative or community event per quarter
  - Encourage and engage younger members
  - Promote campaign messaging and branding
  - Seek local sponsorship or partnerships
  - Report quarterly progress to National Campaign Lead
- Perth Conference – 4<sup>th</sup> May to 6<sup>th</sup> May – the 4<sup>th</sup> May we (the Directors) have been invited to the Government House in Perth and which also include our Members Day there.
- Calendars – Apologies to all members who bought Calendars this year, there was a mistake with the Calendars and the DVA payments will be sent out on the correct dates.
- P.V.A. Logo – further review of the Commonwealth War Graves Policy is needed and will be discussed at the May Conference.

- P.V.A. National Day – Jo and Ann are working on securing a National Day for P.V.A. but are still working on this as it is not an easy task.

*Margaret Thomas*

President



*The New Queensland State Committee members elected at this year's AGM*

*L-R: Ann Cossey, Anita Finger [Treasurer], Ann Stephenson OAM [Vice President], Robyn Sutherland [Membership Secretary], Pam Elkington [Secretary], Margaret Thomas [President] and Jo Shorrock.*

*Absent: Annette Fry and Michelle Thomas*



*Life Members L-R: Robyn Sutherland, Bronwyn Fullick, P.V.A. National President Bev Benporath, Judy Hayward, Ann Stephenson OAM, Allison Bowman, Qld P.V.A Patron – Carol Caughney and newest Life Member, Anita Finger*

## Our Life Member Achievers

Congratulations and thanks to all. Life Membership is not handed out lightly; you must be dedicated to go the long haul and work hard and be committed to Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc.

**Robyn Sutherland** - Member since 2006, State Committee member for 13 years, State Secretary for 11 years. Membership Secretary for the past two years, and continuing on as Membership Secretary.

**Bronwyn Fullick** a founding member since 2002, past Qld State President for 9 years who helped set up P.V. A. for where it is today. Bronwyn was a National Board Director for 9 years. Also, on the National Advisory Committee for 6 years.

**Judy Hayward** a founding member since 2002, Bronwyn's Vice President for 9 years who was there all the way helping Bronwyn achieve many goals. Also, a National Board Director for 7 years.

**Patsy Moore** a longtime member who helped Bronwyn and Judy grow Queensland branch in the early years.

**Ann Stephenson OAM** a member since 2007, State Committee member for 18 years, Membership Secretary for six years, President of Qld for 8 years, Vice President for 4 years, National Director for 12 years; 6 years on the Qld Veterans Advisory Council.

**Alison Bowman** a member since 2003 and remains contact for The Fraser Coast. Alison was also Health Officer for Qld for many years. Alison was Qld. Vice President of P.V.A. Qld, for 8 years. National Director for 6 years. National Representative on the National Aged and Community Forum for 8 years.

**Anita Finger** our newest member to be presented with Life Membership. Anita first joined P.V.A. Melton Branch in 2005 and was the

Secretary/Membership Secretary for 12 years; a National Board member for 8 years. Anita moved to Qld, and we were fortunate to have her join our committee as membership secretary, then she took on the treasurer's position where she has been in this role for two years, taking it on again this year. After 20 years of service to P.V.A. it's a pleasure to present Anita with this prestigious Life Member award



### "Reflection Day" 21st August 2025

*(For Those Past, Those Recently Passed & Those who STILL stand beside them)* PVA memorial plaque at Freedom Park, Hervey Bay Qld.

#### ~ MEMBERSHIP Renewal ~

#### DUE 1st July Annually - \$25

To Pay by Internet Banking or Direct Deposit -  
A/c Name : P.V.A. QLD Branch Inc.

**BSB:** 034-272 **A/C No.:**145188

Please QUOTE:

SURNAME and MEMBERSHIP No. as a Reference

**If** you are paying online OR if any of your contact details have changed, please advise this information by email to: - [pvaqld@gmail.com](mailto:pvaqld@gmail.com)

To renew by mail, send the full form with payment  
to: 22 William Rd., Burpengary 4505

#### **NEW Membership Applications (\$35)**

forms can be completed on-line or downloaded  
from [www.pva.org.au/membership](http://www.pva.org.au/membership)

# “Friends, fellow servicemen, and fellow citizens”

## *‘Friends, fellow servicemen and fellow citizens’*

*An address by Cr. Dolly Jensen. Gympie Regional Council  
Deputy Mayor,  
for Veterans Day, at Rainbow Beach Qld 18<sup>th</sup> August 2025*

Today, I want to talk about a different kind of veteran. Not the ones who fought in the jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam, but the ones who waged their own war on the home front. ***The wives of Vietnam veterans.***

We often hear about the soldiers' struggles: the PTSD, the physical wounds, the emotional scars. But what about the women who waited? The women who received telegrams, who saw their husbands' faces on the nightly news, who prayed every night that their loved one would return. And then, when they did, they were not the same men who had left.

The war didn't end for these families on a distant battlefield; it came home with their men, a silent and invisible enemy. Wives became caregivers and counsellors, navigating the minefields of their husbands' trauma, nightmares, and emotional distance. They battled the social stigma and the lack of understanding from a nation that didn't know how to welcome its soldier's home.

These women fought their own war—a war of resilience and love. They learned to live with the echoes of a conflict they never saw. They sacrificed their own dreams to help their husbands heal, all while holding onto the fragile hope of finding the man they once knew. This is their story, a testament to the strength and enduring spirit of the wives who served silently on the home front.

These women were thrust into a new reality. Their husbands, once full of life and laughter, were now withdrawn, haunted by nightmares, and quick to anger. The easy camaraderie they once shared was replaced by a chasm of unspoken trauma.

Imagine the young bride who married her high school sweetheart, only to have him return a stranger. The plans they made for a white picket fence, a family, and a long, happy life were shattered. She became a caregiver, a therapist, and a silent observer of a pain

she could never truly understand. She had to grieve the man she lost, even as he stood right in front of her.

But love, even the strongest kind, has its limits. Some wives, after years of living with the constant tension, had to make an impossible choice. They chose to leave. It wasn't a lack of love, but a need for self-preservation. It was an acknowledgment that they too, had been casualties of a war they never fought.

And for those whose husbands didn't come home, the pain was even more profound. The wives were left to raise their children alone, to carry the weight of a life that was supposed to be shared. They became widows in their 20's and 30's, their futures stolen by a war that felt a world away.

These women, the unsung heroes of the Vietnam War, faced their own battles. They fought against a society that didn't understand, a government that didn't offer the support they needed, and the crushing weight of their own grief and isolation. They lived in the shadows of their husbands' trauma, their own sacrifices often overlooked.

But they persevered. They built new lives, raised their children, and found a strength they never knew they had. They became a support system for each other, sharing their stories and their pain, and in doing so, they created a community of resilience and hope.

Let us honour the wives of Vietnam veterans. Their silent struggles and their unwavering love. Let us recognize that their service was just as real, just as difficult, and just as deserving of our respect and gratitude. They are a testament to the power of the human spirit, a reminder that even in the darkest of times, love and courage can still find a way to shine. Today, I'd like to dedicate this speech to a great friend that I lost this year. Her name is Bern Johnson. She was a teacher. She taught my children. She taught me patchwork. She was also the proud wife of a Vietnam Vet. There's no school or uni that can teach you how to deal with a returned veteran, but she did it well and she did it with honour.

Here's to our  
women,  
Lest we forget



## A trip to Maleny Gardens and the Bird Avery

Thanks to the \$1000 Veterans Health Week grant 11 Nanango partners of Veterans were thrilled to make the two hour bus trip to visit the peaceful Maleny Botanic Gardens and walk among the 700 native and exotic birds through the Bird Avery on the Sunshine Coast. Topping off the day with a delicious light lunch on the balcony overlooking the gardens.

The ladies were excited to spend a day in such a peaceful atmosphere where they could just take the time for themselves and meet likeminded partners who understand where they are coming from – sometimes without even saying anything. The most important outcome was for them to realize they are not on their own.

After the trip they mentioned how satisfied they felt and the ladies who couldn't make it, were envious as they saw the photos and heard of their experience. For a while they were able to forget their responsibilities at home.

The smiles on the ladies faces, said it all, plus it's weeks later and they are still talking about the gardens and the birds. It has proven to be a very serene, relaxing activity for our ladies. Some have endured their partners PTSD symptoms for many years and it is just nice to have that break.

It brought together a group of PVA ladies who made some positive friendships and who vow to want to get together on a regular basis.



Jan English with one of the beautiful Macaws at the Bird Avery

## PVA Hervey Bay Christmas Sunset Cruise

The Hervey Bay "girls" chose a Sunset Cruise for their end of year function. Our theme was "Nautical".



It was a beautiful evening and our host, Peter, from Blue Dolphin Marine Tours, was a joy and very caring and considerate to us "mature" ladies.

The drinks, & nibbles (included in the price), flowed freely and we were even more friendly and chatty at the end of the cruise than we were at the beginning. (hard to believe I know)

We had dinner at the Truly Asia restaurant at the Urangan pier at the conclusion of the cruise, (although most of us were not hungry) and were thrilled when Santa paid us a visit.

## Caloundra Gems on Seafood Cruise

15 ladies from the GEMS Group went on a seafood lunch cruise on Mooloolaba River. We had an amazing morning cruising the river and a great very fresh seafood lunch. The driver of the boat did a great commentary of the local area and million \$ houses. Would recommend this cruise and a big thank you to DVA for the \$1000 Veterans Health Week grant.





# AGM

All members and guests are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of The P.V.A. Qld Branch Inc. to be held

~ 10.00am ~

**Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026**

Venue TBA

Guest speaker ~ Raffles ~  
Lucky  
Door ~  
Lunch



Entertainment

RSVP: Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2026  
to Ann –

[ann299@bigpond.com](mailto:ann299@bigpond.com)

*Please mention any dietary requirements ~ All Welcome*

## Members enjoying lunch by the Ocean



Our QGM is always a wonderful time to get together and meet old friends and make new friends



The Caloundra Power Boat Club makes for a relaxing and picturesque spot to hold our meetings



**Next Qld P.V.A QGM**

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Enquiries: 0431 304 707