

NEWSLETTER

Honouring The Hidden Service

Behind every member in uniform, there's a partner or family quietly carrying their share of the load — moving from posting to posting, raising families, maintaining stability, and standing strong through deployments and transition.

Families serve too — and 2026 will be the year their service is honoured.



Disclaimer:

This newsletter is produced for the membership of The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc.-Victoria Branch. It is written in good faith from sources believed to be accurate at the time of writing. However, readers should not act, nor refrain from acting, solely based on information contained in this newsletter on any matter.

President's Message

Hi to everyone, and a happy New year. We in Bendigo have been very quiet, due to the very hot weather, 45° some days, and bush fires that occurred on 9th January. Though the fires were 25km away, it affected Bendigo, mainly we lost free to air services for 3 weeks. Driving through the scorched areas, really brings it home how vulnerable the community can be.

We are hoping to get together in March, when the weather is more pleasant.

If anyone is coming this way, we would love to see you.

Cheers

Sherold



P.V.A. – 2026 Theme: Honour the Hidden Service

Written by Lucinda Casey — Para Athlete (Dressage), Veteran and Partner of a Veteran Wellbeing and Compensation Advocate Director (Current Serving/Ex Serving Veterans) – Institute for Veterans Advocacy Director (NSW) Partners of Veterans National Board

From now until November 2026 the PVA theme is Year to Honour the Hidden Service. There's a quiet power in the people who stand behind service. The partners. The carers. The families who hold things together when the uniform is out the door. And in 2026, Partners of Veterans Association (P.V.A.) is turning up the volume on that story. The message is simple: this is our year – and it's time to bring your mates along on the journey. The strength of any veteran community isn't found in buildings or boardrooms - - it's found in people coming together with shared purpose. That spirit filled the room as P.V.A. held its National Annual General Meeting at Queanbeyan RSL, setting the course for what promises to be a landmark year. The AGM brought together members and supporters to reflect on P.V.A.'s legacy and lay out a bold strategic vision for 2026 – a year dedicated to "Honouring the Hidden Service."

Beverley Benporath was re-elected as National President, supported by Vice Presidents Alethea Gilmore and Narelle Bromhead, Treasurer Lesley Minner, and Secretary Rona Lunney. The following members were elected to represent the Partners of Veterans at a National Level: Cleo Field (Victoria) Alethea Gilmore and Debbie Smith (Western Australia) Pauline Cameron (South Australia) Ann Stephenson and Margaret Thomas (Queensland) Lucinda Casey (New South Wales – ACT District) Narelle Bromhead and Rona Lunney (New South Wales)

Lobbying for Change — and Belonging

P.V.A. is the only national, partner-led organisation dedicated to representing partners and families of veterans and serving members. Membership isn't just a name on a list – it's about standing together and lobbying for better conditions for partners, carers, and families who shoulder the weight of service, often in silence. Whether it's pushing for improved support services, recognition in policy, or practical measures that make life fairer – P.V.A. is at the table fighting for real outcomes. This includes stronger recognition of the unique role of partners, improved carer support, mental health pathways, and programs that give families the tools to thrive. And here's the best part: Membership is open to anyone who has ever been the partner of a veteran or serving member. From the first day your partner puts on the uniform to the last day of your life – you belong. Even if your relationship has changed or ended, your service alongside them is still honoured.

2026: A Year to Honour the Hidden Service

As the "Honouring the Hidden Service" campaign takes shape, P.V.A. will ramp up community events, partner forums, advocacy work and national conversations - ensuring the voices of partners and families are heard loud and clear in Canberra and beyond. "This is about more than governance," Beverley said. "It's about the people in this room — and the thousands of partners and families across the country who stand behind Defence members. We're proud of where we've come from, and excited about where we're going." This is the year to step forward, bring your mates, and stand proudly as part of a national movement. Because families serve too – and 2026 is shaping up to be one exciting year.

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If your partner needs an advocate regarding a claim, this institute has been set up to see that you are treated fairly. P.V.A. suggest to look for an advocate that is accredited by the IVA.



Its primary functions include establishing competency and training standards, accrediting and registering advocates, and ensuring a code of conduct is adhered to. The IVA will also manage advocate registration, promote the availability of quality advocacy services, and address complaints about the performance or behaviour of advocates. The IVA will also support advocates in promoting and encouraging self-care practices to ensure their well-being and enhance the effectiveness of their advocacy. Its primary purpose is to promote the world's best practice advocacy for veterans and families.



COMMUNICATION

P.V.A. website, pva.org.au, has been updated. It is designed not so much for our members but to explain who and what we are.

The states are still represented. Their pages give information on the current state boards; contact information; how to obtain the state

constitutions/financials; and two state newsletters a year.

PRINT MEDIA – Our members receive quarterly print media - two state newsletters (March and October) and the national magazine, PVA NEWS (July and December).

You may also receive a newsletter from your local subbranch/group.

SOCIAL MEDIA - P.V.A. now will be using social media to communicate with our members. Don't let that scare you if you don't have social media. You will still receive information.

In Victoria, we have a public Facebook page, Partners of Veterans Australia – Victoria. As its public it will be used to promote ourselves to the public and encourage people to become a P.V.A. member or follow our page to find out more about us.

We also have a private group, Partners of Veterans Australia – Victoria Engage. You need to be accepted into this private group by the 2 administrators. There are rules to follow. It is used to talk with one another, exchange information, and this forum is totally private. Only members in the group can see or communicate through this forum.

So, as you can see, P.V.A. is actively informing members how they are working for you. As a national director, I am on the Communication Subcommittee. Any member in Victoria can contact me, cleofield@bigpond.com, with any feedback regarding how you would like us to improve communications with members.

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Renewals are due as of 1st July 2026



You can now fill in your membership renewal online through the pva.org.au website. It will be submitted to the membership secretary. The bank details are supplied on the online form.

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Victoria is looking for Wellbeing Support Officers and Wellbeing Advocates (accredited). Any member wishing to volunteer their time is very welcome so that we can continue giving qualified support that partners deserve. If you have experience in this field, your services will be greatly appreciated. The advocate is more involved and requires accreditation but the Wellbeing Support Officer is giving support, encouragement, and direction. Something most already do on a daily basis.

Please think about this. Contact the state board if you are interested.

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ANZAC DAY

Volunteer to help if you can. Wear your P.V.A. badge to show you are a proud partner of a veteran.

Post your day on our Facebook page or on the private group with your comments.

ANZAC Day can be joyful and stressful. Reach out if you need support. A simple text message to ask RUOK means so much. Look after yourself.



As most of you know, legislation reforms begin on 1st July 2026. Look at the DVA website to find out correct information. If you are in a rural area:

Our mobile service centres (MSCs) travel around Australia, stopping to provide services in rural and regional communities.

To locate the Blue Gum schedule, serviceaustralia.gov.au/mobileoffice



Benefits for Veterans and Families

- **Clarity and Consistency:** Veterans and their families will have a clearer understanding of entitlements and benefits.
- **Faster and Fairer Outcomes:** By consolidating claims under a single Act, the system aims to reduce delays and ensure more consistent compensation decisions.
- **Protection of Existing Entitlements:** No current benefits will be lost, and veterans can continue to receive ongoing payments without disruption.
- **Improved Support:** The reform addresses mental health and wellbeing concerns by simplifying access to compensation and rehabilitation services.

From DVA New Legislation Reform



JOIN US NOW

FRANKSTON SUB-BRANCH
 Meet second Monday monthly @ 11 am
 Frankston R.S.L.
 183 Cranbourne Road, Frankston

Support,
 friendship, information,
 understanding

JOIN US NOW

KILMORE
 Meet the third Thursday of the month at the
 Kilmore Gaol, 12 Sutherland Street, Kilmore
 Contact:
 Sue Meldrum 0407 739 706 or
 Gwenda Parker 0402 096 227
 Email: johnstue@tpg.com.au

Support,
 friendship, information,
 understanding

JOIN US NOW

MELTON SOCIAL GROUP
 Meet every other month
 Contact: noela_rose@hotmail.com
 for more information

Support,
 friendship, information,
 understanding

JOIN US NOW

GEELONG/LARA SUB-BRANCH
 Meet the third Monday monthly @ 11:30 am
 Geelong R.S.L., 50 Barwon Heads Rd, Belmont
 P.V.A. morning coffee group, first Monday monthly @ 10:30 am
 The Edge Geelong, 6-8 Eastern Beach Rd, Geelong

Support,
 friendship, information,
 understanding

JOIN US NOW

BENDIGO
 Contact:
 Sherold Keller
 Mobile: 0417 571 656
 Email: dasher_03@optusnet.com.au

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