

THE APPRENTICE ABOUT

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NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY APPRENTICES ASSOCIATION INC.

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PATRON: MAJOR GENERAL ANDREW FREEMAN AM (RETD)

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From the President

By Keith Lowe, 22nd Intake Fitter and Turner, President AAAA, president@austarmyapprentice.org, 25 October 2025

It is with pleasure I present my report to this our Association's 19th Annual General Meeting which coincides with the 30th Anniversary Reunion for the cessation of the Army Apprentice Scheme.

I thank all attendees for your interest in the business of our Association this morning whether in person or via Zoom and, in particular, I acknowledge the contribution the members of our committee have made during the past year and the conciliatory manner in which all our Association business has been able to be conducted. In an effort to keep our administration costs to a minimum and make efficient use of committee members' time, all meetings were conducted via Zoom.

Shortly we will be standing down some of our committee positions as required by our Constitution, so I take this opportunity to thank those involved for the voluntary service they have given during the past two years of their tenure, some of whom have given several terms of service.

It's pleasing to see the 30th Intake have taken the lead with the number of financial members. What we need now is some involvement with the committee and, as some may have already entered the ranks of retirees, perhaps there may be some free time available to assist your fellow Appys.

Sadly, our ranks have been reduced by a further 39 during the last 12 months. Unfortunately, we are collectively an aging group of people now with less than 7,994 of the original 9,409 Australian Army Apprentice enlistees surviving.

Lest We Forget

At our 2024 Annual General Meeting the decision was taken unanimously, to recognise the widows of former financial members by offering them Associate Membership at no cost, the emphasis being on financial members. To date we have not had any replies to letters we have sent out; in fact one recent letter sent initially to the member's PO Box was returned box closed. When then sent to the recorded residential address, it was returned unopened.

Members it is important we keep all our individual contact information up to date, particularly email addresses and, where possible, it is preferable that these be personal emails rather than places of employment. All that is required is to login with your username and password, go to "Edit Profile" in the Members Only section and then make the necessary changes. Please ensure the "Update User" tab at the bottom of the file is selected.

During the past year our Memorial Gates were removed, refurbished where necessary and given a new protective coating. All work was undertaken by contractors coordinated by our Heritage Officer, Rob Minato.

Also, Rob, through his onsite Bandiana employment, has managed to have the Base Management finally resolve the impasse concerning scattering of deceased ashes in the Memorial Park. In our case we do not scatter ashes



per se but have them interred in the “weapons pit” section of our Memorial, the purpose for which it was included in the Memorial’s design.

I take this opportunity to thank all the committee members involved with our Events Team for their efforts in promoting and organising all aspects of this weekend.

At the risk of being repetitive, your committee continues to seek feedback from members as to what you believe we could be doing to further our organisation but, despite mentioning this from time to time, we seldom, if ever, receive any feedback, so please help us to help you.

As you will learn from our Auditor’s report, our Association is in a sound financial position.

It has been a pleasure to have served as your President for the past year, and I thank all members of your committee for the assistance they have given me, and I offer my services for a further two-year term should that be your wish.

All the very best for the remainder of your weekend and safe travels on your next journey.

Association members in the news

Richard Pike, 21st Intake Vehicle Mechanic, AAAA Member #409 – elevation to Life Member

At the recent AGM, Richard (Spike) Pike was elevated to Life Member of the Association – (left to right) Keith Lowe, 22nd Intake Fitter and Turner, Association President, Jim Hislop OAM, 9th Intake Fitter and Turner, Association Trustee, and Richard Pike.



His citation reads: “in recognition of your outstanding contribution to the Association, specifically as Treasurer since October 2014 and as Merchandising Officer from October 2014 to late 2018 and then from October 2020, and for your role as point of contact for event venues, and negotiations with them.”

Richard’s achievements in support of the Australian Army Apprentices Association go well beyond his 11 years as Treasurer since the AGM in October 2014.

At that AGM, he also took on the role of Merchandise Officer, which he performed until late 2018. He then took on the position again in October 2020 when the appointed Merchandise Officer stood down. He has since been responsible for purchasing, storing, marketing, and distributing merchandise to Apprentices and others. For reunions and other gatherings, he has transported merchandise from his home to the venue. He has manned the merchandise stands at those reunions and gatherings.

Richard has also been a major contributor to recent reunions, and has managed the receipting of event registrations forms, and managed the receipt of moneys for those events.

He has been the point of contact for event venues, negotiating with those venues, and arranging catering and other activities.

Without Richard’s dedicated involvement and his diligent attention to his duties as Treasurer, the Association would not be in such a good state as it is now.

Congratulations Spike!



Also in this edition:

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Morgan CORNELIUS, 45th Intake Vehicle Mechanic, AAAA Member #935 – Bourbon label competition winner

From: RAQ Friday Files, 9 August 2025 and 22 August 2025

“We’re thrilled to announce that Morgan ‘Morgs’ Cornelius has taken out top honours in our recent Bourbon Label Design Competition! Morgs’ eye-catching and creative design (mock up pictured right) stood out from a very strong field of entries and will now proudly feature on all 500 bottles of our limited-edition Bourbon. As part of the prize, Morgs receives Bottle No.1 and of course, bragging rights for life!

A big thank you to everyone who entered the competition. The response was overwhelming, and the quality of submissions made judging incredibly tough, but also a whole lot of fun. It’s clear we’ve got some serious talent in our community. Stay tuned for the official release, we can’t wait to raise a glass with you all and show off Morgs’ winning design!”

And Morgs also recently completed the Great Inland Endurance Trial in his “Little Red Roo” – a classic 92 Subaru Brumby – see [RepcO Reliability Retrial 2029](#).



Ross GRANT AM, 17th Intake Fitter and Turner, AAAA Member #300 – stepping down as RAEME National Network Coordinator

Extracted from RAEME Association Qld Facebook Group, 19 August 2025

“The RAEME National Network (RNN) marks a significant leadership transition with BRIG (Rtd) Ross Grant AM stepping down from his role as RNN Coordinator. Ross has been instrumental in maintaining momentum across the RNN, particularly in relation to the future of the organisation, the sustainability of its IT systems, and the importance of a national charter. His leadership helped guide the RNN through complex discussions about national coordination, association support, and communication platforms, and he leaves the role with plans in place to continue advising and assisting in the transition.

Stepping into the role is COL (Rtd) Steve Evans, former Colonel Commandant Queensland and a long-time contributor to RAEME Corps initiatives. ... Steve expressed his appreciation for BRIG Grant’s contributions and confirmed Ross will remain available in an advisory capacity over the next 12 months. Together, they are committed to ensuring a smooth transition and a vibrant future for the RNN.”

Electronics Tradesmen awarded by ARCIA

From a Facebook post by Dave Cox, 26th Intake Radio Mechanic on 17 October 2025

“Scott Manson (40th Class) [AAAA Member #1606] this week was awarded peak recognition for his leadership and excellence to the radio and critical communications industry in Australia. Scott is an ex radio trades apprentice and achieved much for the industry together with his support of veteran employment. Scott joins Leo Doherty (26th) [AAAA Member #900] and Dave Cox (26th) [AAAA Member #624], who have received this award in previous years. We can say that ex appy's continue to make a mark in delivering critical radio communications to the country. Congratulations Scott and well deserved mate.”



Vietnam Veterans Commemorations, 18 August 2025 – Gold Coast



Vietnam Veterans: (above left) Joe Owens, 19th Intake Electrical Fitter, AAAA Member #1359 and (above right) Dave 'Speedy' Manfield, 17th Intake Fitter and Turner, AAAA Member #1295, who both served on operations with 161 Recce Flight in SVN, with Suzanne Shipp, 46th Intake Electronics Tradesman, RAQ Life Subscriber, Women in RAEME Committee Member and Currumbin/Palm Beach RSL Sub Branch Treasurer – from RAQ Friday Files, 22 August 2025

Non-Association members in the news

Brian SUTHERLAND, 26th Intake Fitter and Turner, Oakdale Rural Fire Brigade Life Membership

From Paul Whitehead, 26th Intake Fitter and Turner

Just had a read of the current very full and informative newsletter and thought this could be added to an upcoming newsletter to show appies are working for the community. In October 2023, 26th Fitter 314464 Brian (dog) Sutherland was honoured with life membership of the Oakdale rural fire brigade and is well respected by his peers and brigade members. He has lived in Oakdale for many years with his wife Lynne and has only recently stopped being an active member of the brigade. He became a member as soon as he lived there showing what a great team member he is, obviously due to his Balcombe training and subsequent many years in the army and as a civilian working and as a public servant. Great to see him being recognised for his dedicated work and loyalty.

“LIFE MEMBER – BRIAN SUTHERLAND

Tonight, our captain Darren, had the honour of presenting deputy captain, man of many talents & previous positions, Brian Sutherland, with his life member certificate & plaque. A small local rural fire brigade can't be successful and continue *[to]* grow, teach, recruit and turn out continually without the constants that help the brigade keep ticking over. Brian has been a consistent for many years. Brian, from all of us, congratulations and thank you.”



Guitars for Vets Australia – Biscuits from Home

From Facebook, Guitars for Vets Australia, posted 14 August 2025

In another follow up, G4VA have released a music video "Biscuits from Home", written and performed by Lloyd Clarke, a G4VA Ambassador. The video can be viewed on YouTube [here](#).



Lloyd's ballad of Anzac Biscuits was gifted to G4VA's fundraiser album "Where Words Fail, Music Speaks".

The video is by Vanessa Bourne who produces the Butterfly Country Music Magazine
<https://butterflycountrymagazine.com>.

Paul MALONE, 34th Intake Fitter and Turner, Guitars for Veterans Australia (G4VA)

Thanks to Ross Grant AM, 17th Intake Fitter and Turner

We have featured G4VA and Paul Malone, and Dave Cox, 26th Intake Radio Mechanic, before (in May 2018, May 2022 and February 2023), so here's another follow up. [Army veteran and Woodford RSL Sub Branch Treasurer Paul Malone shared his love of guitars with the veteran community](#).

Welfare and Vale notices

Contact: Association Welfare Officer Grant Cotterill, 38th Intake Plumber and Gasfitter, welfare@austarmyapprentice.org

The Welfare Officer:

- supports members in determining welfare and other Commonwealth and State Government entitlements by helping them locate the organisations who may assist
- liaises with similar service bodies (e.g. Returned and Services League, Vietnam Veterans Federation, Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Association) on welfare matters
- on the advice of the death of a member, verifies that the Vale notice is not already on the Association Website, ensures that information received is complete and correct (e.g. spelling, missing regimental number), ensures that the NOK is being cared for and sends condolences, advises the President, Secretary, Membership Secretary, and Newsletter Editor of updates required
- on the advice of a member in hospital, sick or otherwise indisposed, arranges a visit from a member to ensure his/her welfare (through a Regional Representative if applicable).

Vale notices

The untimely passing of a former Army Apprentice is always a sad occasion. It is important when notifying of the passing that we are clear about the details of the notice. Whilst social media posts draw attention to the passing of Apprentices, occasionally there is insufficient information to assist in maintaining the Apprentices nominal roll.

The AAAA Website [Vale Notification Form](#) prompts for the necessary information. If you don't have all requested information, send what you have, and we can follow up. Thank you to all those who have provided details.

This edition's Vale summary below includes two historic entries.

Intake	Reg No	Name (Membership no)	Trade	Passed away
6	242661	Brian James WILKINS	Vehicle Mechanic	3 Oct 1985
23	44645	David Glenn ANFRUNS	Vehicle Mechanic	10 Apr 2024
20	243442	Kenneth Lesley ENNIS	Fitter and Turner	18 Aug 2025
16	342875	John Mansfield DUNN	Electrical Mechanic	13 Aug 2025
17	58774	Richard "Peter" BILLINGTON (#1232)	Carpenter and Joiner	18 Aug 2025
6	58542	Ronald Brian BRIDGMAN	Electrician (RAE)	20 Sep 2025
17	342909	Bruce Leonard BROWN (#1008)	Vehicle Mechanic	23 Sep 2025
9	242840	Stanley Thomas COVE	Fitter and Turner	13 Oct 2025
20	58846	Robert Charles Seymour BANDY	Vehicle Mechanic	16 Oct 2025
14	18663	Geoffrey Francis TREVOR-HUNT	Vehicle Mechanic	19 Oct 2025
18	58787	John Douglas CLARK	Clerk (DNG)	26 Oct 2025

Vale Ronald Brian BRIDGMAN, 6th Intake Electrician (RAE)

From Pat Marley, 12th Intake Electrical Fitter

"Melbourne Herald-Sun today (24 September 2025): Ronald Brian BRIDGMAN, 6th Intake Elec (RAE), passed away aged 90 on 20 Sept 2025. Sgt Elec Instructor AAS Balcombe 1958-59, Victorian TAFE Teacher, Statewide Coordinator, Electrical with TAFE Board, Victoria. My former Head of Dept in major TAFE College – later Academic



Registrar, major TAFE College. I followed him as Head of Elec Dept – major TAFE College. He was a good mate for many years. Rest well, Ron.”

Sick parade, Harry COLE, 7th Intake Vehicle Mechanic, AAAA Member #97, Past Heritage Officer

Harry reports that he has an aggressive prostate cancer, which has spread to other parts of his body, including his lungs, bone marrow, pelvis, hip and spine. Although undertaking a Gaven Institute hormone trial, his health continues to decline. He will turn 90 in November, and his family are putting on a party to celebrate.

He said he is not worried about passing for “*I have had a great life, made many great friends and have had a happy marriage of almost 65 years*”. He wrote, “*The part that I will really miss is the RAEME, Appy and 1/19 Bn Luncheons that I used to attend with Kerry Tunbridge, but I will make an effort before Christmas comes.*”

We wish you all the best Harry and thank you for your service to the Army, RAEME, Apprentices and your country.

Vetaffairs

From Vetaffairs August 2025

A few items of interest for you – with links:

- [Veterans can earn more before pensions affected](#) – from 1 July 2025, veterans can earn more, and the value of their assets can be higher, before their pension payments are affected.
- [Veteran’s guide to living in an aged care home](#) – for many of us who aren’t there yet, the time is fast approaching!
- [New Veterans’ and Families Hubs open in Adelaide and Queanbeyan](#) – there are now two more Hubs available to Veterans.
- Adelaide Logistic Battalion Parade after Formation 88/89 – Bronwyn Rust-Jones (was LT Bronwyn Jones), who carried the Prince Phillip Banner for Adelaide Workshop Company during the parade, is seeking photos from the event – [contact bronrj64@gmail.com](mailto:contact_bronrj64@gmail.com).

The Service Medallion

Extract courtesy of Defence News

“The Joint Transition Authority has been working with commanders and supervisors across Defence on creating opportunities for them to provide transition support that recognises individual experiences and needs.

One of the recognition and support tools is the Service Medallion, which has been available since March to all eligible reserve and permanent personnel transitioning from service.



Photos by Corporal Michael Rogers

The medallion recognises a minimum of four, 10 or 20 years of service with the ADF and the unique experience of service within Navy, Army and Air Force.

The medallion enables commanders and supervisors to recognise and thank personnel for their service, contributing to their ability to provide comprehensive and cohesive wellbeing support to personnel as they transition to civilian life.

Presentation of the medallion is just one tool to help commanders recognise the value of service as ADF personnel transition from service.”



Membership matters

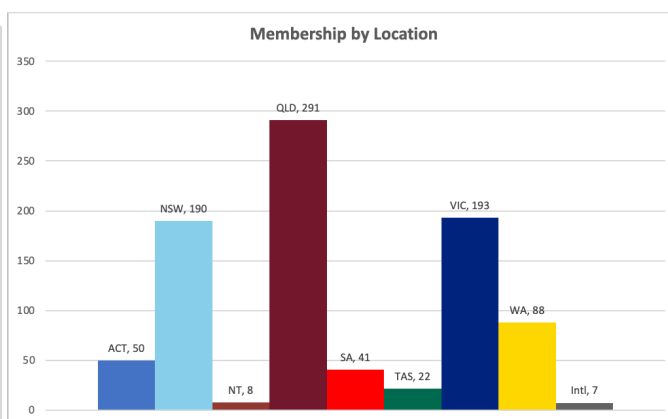
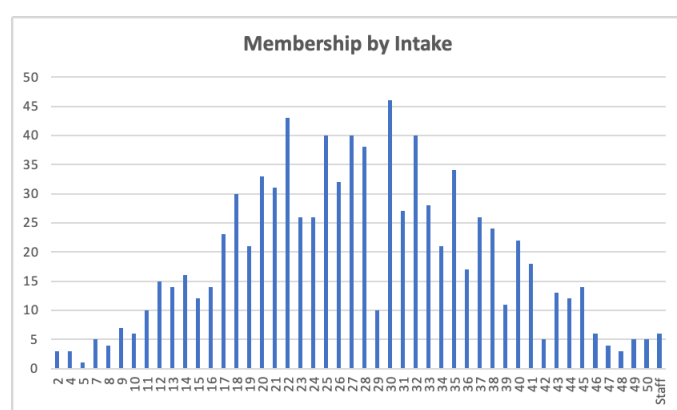
By Graeme Smail, 35th Intake Electronics Tradesman – Membership Secretary, membership@austarmyapprentice.org

Membership Status

The current state of membership (as at 17 October 2025) is 890 financial members, consisting of (right): These figures show a fairly static position since the last AGM with a small decrease of 5. There have also been 40 new members join since the last AGM and 48 members' memberships have lapsed and have not been renewed.

Type	17 Oct 25	16 Oct 2024	Change
Life	3	3	-
Perpetual	2	-	+2
Ordinary	571	591	-20
Retired	308	297	+11
Associate	6	4	+2
TOTAL	890	895	-5

Membership Analysis



Introduction of Perpetual Membership

Perpetual membership is now available allowing members, renewing or new, to make a one-off membership payment to cover them for future years. New members make a flat rate payment whereas renewing members pay an amount based on the number of years that they have held continuous financial membership.

More information is contained in the August Newsletter. Renewing members must apply using the manual (paper) based member renewal form, whereas new members can elect perpetual membership online at the time of signing up. They can also use the manual (paper) based membership application form available on the Website.

Events reports

ACT Region Quarterly Lunch, Ainslie FC, Wednesday, 10 September 2025

By Jeff Heron, 21st Intake Radio Mechanic, ACT Regional Rep

A pleasant lunch was held with 18 attending, which included 4 partners. Again, the electronics trades outnumbered the rest with 9 Radio Mechanics/Electronics Tradesmen vs 2 Musicians, a Vehicle Mechanic, a Carpenter & Joiner and a Fitter and Turner. Thanks to donations by Al Black, 23rd Intake Radio Mechanic and Wal and Kay Brewer, 18th Intake Fitter and Turner, we now have ample door prizes for December's lunch on the 10th. Looking forward to a huge roll up.

Apprentices at the 35th Anniversary of Graduation, RMC, 1990

From Murray Heron, 37th Intake Electronics Tradesman, the last Balcombe enlistee to graduate from Bonegilla

[Next page] "Six of the ex-Army apprentices celebrating their 35th anniversary since graduating from Royal Military College, Duntroon in June 1990. From left to right: Murray Heron – 37th ET, Dean Reyniers – 34th ET, Daron White – 39th C&J, Geoff Purtill – 36th ET, Steve Patà – 39th VM, and Mick Conlon – 37th ET. All except Daron



(RAE) were RAEME soldiers before entering RMC in January 1989. Dean and Mick continued to serve in RAEME as officers, Murray and Steve graduated to RACT and RACMP, Geoff went to AustInt, and Daron back to RAE.”



30th Anniversary Reunion to commemorate cessation of the Army Apprentice Scheme and AGM, Albury Commercial Club, Friday 24 to Sunday 26 October 2025

What a great weekend! Nearly 170 Apprentices and partners enjoyed three days of catching up with friends and “brothers from other mothers”. The Meet and Greet on Friday was the beginning with all but about 8 registration envelopes being collected. From about 3pm until 8.30 (when we were asked to leave) there were plenty of catch-ups, never-ending finger food, drinks to keep the voices working, and many purchases of memorabilia.

On Saturday morning, the AGM was well attended by about 60 members, who were witness to a presentation of Life Membership to Richard (Spike) Pike, 21st Intake Vehicle Mechanic, Association Treasurer, Merchandise Officer and NSW Regional Representative. Jim Hislop OAM, 9th Intake Fitter and Turner, Association Trustee, and Keith Lowe, 22nd Intake Fitter and Turner, Association President presented Richard with his Life Membership certificate and plaque.



The entrée is served



LTCOL Hans Hamilton



Simon Brooks (40th), Richard Pike (21st) & Brian Daley (14th)



On Saturday evening, a hearty dinner of three ample courses was enjoyed by all. The guest speaker was the Commanding Officer/Chief Instructor Army School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (ASEME). LTCOL Hans Hamilton, himself a 1/97 ATET trainee, was accompanied by his 2IC, MAJ Nigel Bellette CSM, 42nd Intake Motor Mechanic, and Operations Officer, MAJ Jason McLinden, 44th Intake Fitter and Turner.

LTCOL Hamilton spoke of the continuing need for tradesmen in the Defence Force for the ever-increasing fleets of increasingly complex equipment. A full transcript of his speech is at the end of this Newsletter.

The last event on Sunday was a short memorial service followed by a sausage sizzle lunch at the Bandiana Memorial Park. Fortunately, the poorest weather kindly held off for the service itself, and there was sufficient cover for those who stayed for lunch to enjoy a sausage or two without getting too wet. Our Chaplain, Reverend Canon Alan Kelb OAM, 25th Intake Fitter and Turner conducted the service. Wreaths were laid on behalf of the Association, of ASEME, and of the 21st Intake for Noel (George) Haynes, 21st Intake Vehicle Mechanic, for whom a plaque has been fixed to the Memorial wall. Refreshments were supplied by Kristian Kemper, Everyman's Welfare Service, Latchford Barracks.



Rev Canon Alan Kelb



Keith Lowe, AAAA



MAJ Jason McLinden, ASEME



Richard Pike, 21st Intake

Those attending the events represented the 7th to the 50th Intakes. There were four Apprentices from single digit intakes: the 7th, 8th and 9th. The 50th Intake attendees included James (Jim) Ellis, 50th Intake Fitter and Turner (right). He was the youngest of the 50th and hence the last person to hold the rank of Apprentice, until he turned 17 in January 1996.



ALTC News – Bathurst





Previous page image and this text courtesy of Defence, via RAQ Friday Files, 17 October 2025

“Team Army (brought to you by the Army School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering) has finished another fantastic weekend at Mount Panorama. Their high-performance machines Project Digger, Armygeddon, and our robot dog turned heads across both on-track demonstrations and static displays.”

Upcoming events

AAAA and Apprentices functions

- * **All Apprentice Get-together, Bundaberg RSL, Sunday, 7 December 2025, 1200.** RSVP by 28 November via Facebook (either Army Apprentices Association [official] or Army Apprentices “cream” group) to Ian Laycock, 27th Fitter Maintenance, posts on 22 October 2025.
 - * **ACT Region Quarterly Lunch, Ainslie FC, Wed, 10 December 2025.** Please let me know if you will be there.
 - * **36th Intake and all staff from Balcombe and Bonegilla from 1981-1983, 45th Anniversary Reunion at Mornington, 9 to 11 January 2026,** *contact Tom Esze, 36th Motor Mechanic via Facebook, RAEME Mates.*
 - * **26th Intake 55th Year Reunion, Wodonga, 20-22 March 2026,** send your interest to *Michael Thompson, 26th Intake Vehicle Mechanic, via Facebook, Australian Army Apprentices Association [official], 18 March 2025 post.*
 - * **31st Intake, 50th Anniversary Reunion at Maroochy RSL, 23 to 28 April 2026,** contact TBA.
 - * **AAAA AGM 2026, Melbourne Metro, 24 October 2026, 1030,** and dinner, location and venues TBC.
-

Other associations, etc

- * **RAE Association Victoria Inc.,** *contact [RAE Future Events](#)*
 - * **RAE Association WA Inc.,** *contact <https://wasappers.com.au/events/>*
 - * **RASigs Association,** *contact <http://www.rasigs.com>.*
 - * **RASigs Certa Cito 100th Anniversary, 2025**
Visit <https://rasigs.org/certa-cito-100/> for more details or contact Mr Bruce Long prontobrl@gmail.com or Gavin Lee gavin.lee18@hotmail.com.
Commemorating 100 years of the Corps, reflecting on the past, present, and future, by ARA/ARES Signals units across Australia, concluding in November 2025, major events planned for Victoria and the ACT, include:
Victoria: Freedom of Entry parade, City of Banyule, and RA Sigs Units combined, RSL activity, Museum modernisation event:
 - * **10-14 November** – Corps Week:
 - 11-18 November** – National Reunion of Veteran Community at Healesville (Veteran led)
 - 11 November** – DFSS rehearsal for VVIP visit and Open Day for RA Sigs Community (current serving, associations, Ex-serving and their families) with a centralised morning tea, sanitised demonstration of capability and Corps Museum visit (Regional and unit focussed event).
 - * **12 November** – VVIP visit, welcome guard & demonstration of virtual training – IET & ROBC engagement, 138 & 108 Sig Sqn demonstrations, lunch, Veteran engagement, Corps Museum visit, Corps Dinner @ Government House (TBC), National Event
 - 14 November** – Gold afternoon, RACV Club Healesville and then BBQ run by Lions club
 - 15 November** – National RASigs Reunion Dining In Night, Rochford Winery, Yarra Valley, \$70, only 300 seats, *contact Bruce Long – prontobrl@gmail.com*
 - * **2 December** – DFSS 23rd birthday celebrations (Unit led)
- ACT:**
- * **9 December** – RA Sigs Association ACT Centenary Dinner, in conjunction with 143 Sig Sqn End of Year Dinner – Hellenic Club, Woden.
 - * **10 November** – Canberra, National Corps Day Commemorative Parade
 - * **10 November** – AWM Last Post Ceremony, featuring Signelman Patrick McGill who served with 9 Div Signals and was killed in action on 1 September 1942 in Egypt (El Alamein). His name will next be projected onto the exterior of the Hall of Memory on Wednesday, 4 March 2026 at 1.18 am.



- * **17 Const Sqn Wksp UNTAG Namibia Reunion**, 29 Nov 2025, Brisbane, [contact dbuckland52@gmail.com](mailto:dbuckland52@gmail.com), or <https://www.trybooking.com/1440521>
- * **RAEME National Network**, [contact https://raeme.org.au](https://raeme.org.au).
- * **Women in RAEME (WIR3) Cocktails**, Friday 28 November 2025, 1800-2000, Gaythorne RSL, Tickets \$25, [contact https://raeme.org.au](https://raeme.org.au). From Suzanne Shipp, 46th Intake Electronics Tradesman on 24 October 2025, "We've got a sensational line up of guest speakers for our Women in RAEME event coming up on 28 Nov. Not only do we have Maj Hampton and Lt Hutton speaking, we've got a very special guest flying in from Victoria - Joanne Cornelius will also be there to share her amazing career story. I can't wait to meet Jo in person and have a chat. Be sure to grab your tickets, everyone's welcome and join us at the Gaythorne RSL for a special hand crafted RAEME cocktail."
- * **Central Victorian Veterans Group**, monthly get-together, Bendigo RSL Club Terrace, 1st Thursday of the month, 1830 hrs, [contact Jonathan Crust, 48th Intake Carpenter and Joiner via Facebook, Army Apprentices we; were the Cream of Australian Youth](#), posted 26 July 2022.
- * **Greensborough RSL Friday Veterans Coffee Club 2025**, 1000-1200hrs, Members' Bar **Dates: →→→→**

November - 14th & 28th
December - 12th
- * **101 Fd Wksp & Friends Reunion**, Saturday 15 August 2026, Currumbin RSL, save the date.

Letters to the Editor

British Army Apprentices School, Colin Blackburn (continued from the August edition)

From Steve Muir 25th Intake Fitter and Turner; by apprentice tradesman Colin Blackburn (A/T)

I was the only tradesman to be granted a posting to Kenya with the influence of a certain major who was time served in Kenya during the Mau Mau Uprising. He understood my motivation as I had grown up in the bush during that same period. I joined the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as a Craftsman 23834201. Sent to Aldershot awaiting drafting to Kenya. This came three months later, and I spent this time instructing basic firefighting to conscripts who for obvious reasons were not interested.

I arrived in Kenya and was employed at our base workshop in Kahawa camp overhauling anything from guns, small arms, rocket launchers, bicycles, cookers or anything else a vehicle mechanic would not touch. I bought an old motorbike and used to visit my older brother who was managing a massive cattle ranch 70 miles from Nairobi. Needless to say, a farmer gets only one weekend off when he gets paid so we would meet in Nairobi for very wild times. No details for this story.

My original posting was for 3yrs, so it was a sad day when I was told to pack my kit, "We need you in Aden." So, with a sore heart I arrived by RAF flight at [Khormaksar] and joined an infantry workshop servicing and up-arming Centurion tanks and anything else. I was then told to sign for a Bedford truck and workshop trailer to join a convoy into the Yemen to be responsible for servicing all small arms and guns from our tented base in a place called [Thumeir]. This was active service as we used to get mortars coming in and vehicles forever encountering land mines. We also ran a Forward Repair Group from an armed Land Rover or flight in a Beaver or helicopter to rectify misfires or other issues with the 76 mm Saladin armoured cars. The Royal Engineers had built a sand airstrip for the big Beverly aircraft to bring in supplies and they laid concrete bases for our tents. I did two three-month stints here with a 4-day R&R leave in between. The very private SAS boys also used to visit me mostly at night for a little help. Wonderful quiet chaps. I ended up back in Little Aden at our workshop and worked in daytime and did patrols and manned roadblocks at night in Aden itself. We lost quite a lot of men there as I used to prepare the gun carriage for funerals held in the military cemetery in Little Aden. The comradeship and support for each other is difficult to define but can never be forgotten. I was very lucky and the happiest gun fitter you have ever seen when I was driven under escort to go back to UK in an RAF flight.

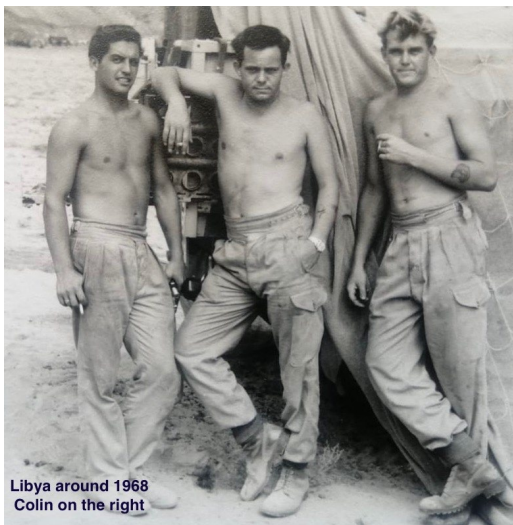
After 6 weeks wild leave, I got posted to the 14th/20th King's Hussars Cavalry Regiment in Germany to join the LAD. We had in our squadron 12 battle tanks with 105mm guns, one ARV and a bridge layer. It was the time of the Cold War, so we were virtually on permanent manoeuvres. Many hours also on the firing ranges at [Hohne



Ranges]. We eventually up gunned to Chieftain tanks having prepared our tanks for shipment to a country in the middle east.

After 2 yrs in Germany, I got married in UK and she returned with me, and we had a daughter born in a military hospital in Germany. During the last year of our German tour, our squadron was sent on an exercise to [\[Libya\]](#) to drive a squadron of Centurion tanks from El Adam to [\[Tripoli\]](#), in a closed-down condition. After seeing how these young guys coped for 6 weeks under this type of punishment, my faith in their ability as a fighting force was truly reinforced.

Our squadron was sent to Singapore, and I was able to take my family, but I spent most of my time in then Malaya looking after the Saladin armoured cars patrolling the east and west coasts during the Vietnam War. Then came the [\[Five Power Defence Arrangements\]](#) for Singapore and we were to hand over to an Australian regiment.



Libya around 1968
Colin on the right



My Work



Yemen



Yemen Workshop

We were very quickly flown back to UK and our squadron was informed that we were to do the first of several 6 months tours of Northern Ireland at the peak of the IRA's crap in Northern Ireland. We billeted in an old castle and were on permanent patrol on the Irish border with Saladins and Saracen armoured cars.

My job was to keep all armaments working and armouring Land Rovers. Also to modify the Saracens to push barricades aside in the towns. This of course was an unaccompanied posting. But I got home after 3 months to see my family for a week. I served another 3 months in Ireland and was getting close to de mob. Another squadron from our Regiment was sent to Ireland and I got posted to an Artillery regiment to join the LAD.

A joke, but I already had my eye on my future in South Africa.



Balcombe huts and generals

From Ross Grant, 17th Intake Fitter and Turner

"Hi Jeff,

Another good edition and content rich as usual. I'd like to use the story of the folks involved in the Malayan Emergency, do you have it in a Word format?

By the way, I think in the Table of Hut names the first one may be wrong – Phil Bennett was a more recent general whom I served under several times". I think the hut would have been named after: Henry Gordon Bennett; Born 15 April 1887 Balwyn, Melbourne; Died 1 August 1962 (aged 75) Dural, Sydney; Years of service 1908–1944; Rank Lieutenant General.

Regards, Ross"

[Thanks for the update Ross]

From Garry Swan, 11th Intake Vehicle Mechanic

"Dear Editor.

Thank you for the subject newsletter. I write to correct the hut number of hut Woodward. It is listed as P25 when it was in fact P2. I was an 11th Intake VM and spent all of 1956 in hut Woodward. As well, the top hut next to the parade ground was hut Vasey and it was P1. I hope this is helpful information.

Best regards, Garry Swan."

[Thanks for your letter Garry. For the hut names, in fact my list shows P2S (south) against Woodward. As far as I have been able to determine, P2N (north) was Rowell, P1N was Vasey and P1S was Secombe – see image extract below. There is some confusion however, as "Robertson" was purportedly the name of one of the P1 hut names.]

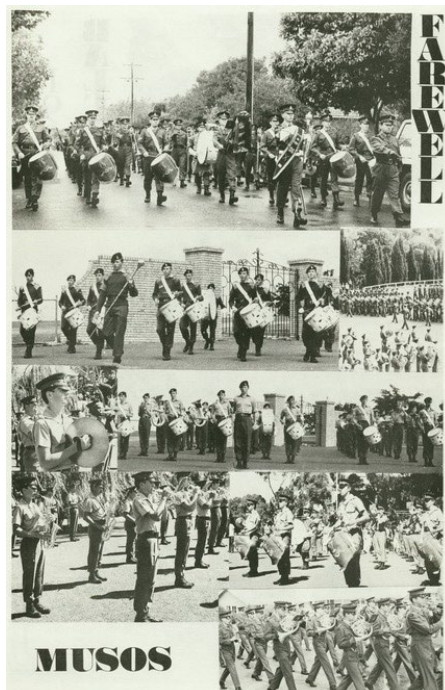


SPAASSM Collection

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/tcmowfh3ulz8rr7/SPAASSM%20Index%20and%20Cover.pdf?dl=0>

The SPAASSM material, in about 20 boxes, was wasting away in a warehouse, not available for viewing. Items included 7,300 photos, 750 x 35mm slides, negatives, 30 video tapes, a movie film and 10,000 pages of various journals, graduation booklets, standing orders, handbooks and histories.

The items were rescued by LTCOL Jim Hislop OAM, 9th Intake Fitter and Turner, from almost certain destruction, at the closing of the Army Apprentices School and given to the Army Museum at Bandiana.



August 2025 solution (left)

Q: What year was this? What Intake was the last for Apprentice Musicians?

A: SPAASSM Ph I Image 05544 & Ph II Binder 01 Item 06 Image 00014, both extracted from the 1982 AAS Journal (the last one from Balcombe) show Musicians through 1982. The last Intake of Apprentice Musicians was the 37th in 1982 and they completed their training at the School of Music at Watsonia.

No surprise, but the first correct answer was from a Musician who's likely to be in these photos, Ian Watson, 37th Intake. Congratulations Ian, your USB has been forwarded to you.



November 2025 competition (above)

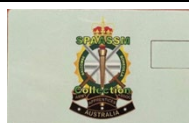
Q: What is on the other end of the rope? The first person to send the correct answer to the Editor at news@austarmyapprentice.org will win a copy of the SPAASSM Collection on USB wafer.

Merchandise

AAAA Shop: <https://austarmyapprentice.org/shop/>

For enquiries, contact the Treasurer: treasurer@austarmyapprentice.org

MERCHANDISE ITEMS		PRICES	POSTAGE
DVDs	1998 50 th Anniversary Albury Wodonga <u>OR</u> 2008 60 th Anniversary <u>OR</u> 2013 Balcombe Commemoration	\$10.00	\$10.00
70th REUNION ITEMS	Stubby holder	\$5.00	\$5.00
	Photo card (USB wafer)	\$16.50	\$3.50
	Cap	\$15.00	\$15.00
AAAA BADGED ITEMS	Baseball cap	\$20.00	\$10.00
	Car sticker	\$5.00	\$1.50
	Lapel badge	\$10.00	\$3.50
	Tie <u>OR</u> SPAASSM Collection USB wafer	\$25.00	\$10.00
	Name badge – <u>to order, include preferred 1st name, and Intake/Class</u>	\$16.50	\$3.50
	Key ring – <u>when ordering, ask if a number you would like is available</u>	\$20.00	\$3.50
	AAAA Name badge (with 70 th Reunion USB photo card <u>OR</u> AAAA Key ring)	\$30.00	\$3.50
AAS BADGED ITEMS	Cloth badge large (260 mm x 210 mm) – Balcombe <u>OR</u> Bonegilla	\$25.00	\$3.50
	Cloth badge small (100mm x 70mm)	\$20.00	\$3.50
	Flag (1800 mm x 900 mm)	\$175.00	\$14.00
	Baseball cap	\$15.00	\$14.00
	Polo shirt (M, L, XL, 2XL,3XL, 4XL)	\$35.00	\$14.00
	Stubby holder	\$5.00	\$5.00
AAAA/AAS BADGED ITEMS	Plaque (with AAAA badge <u>OR</u> AAS badge)	\$85.00	\$14.00
	Face mask (with both AAAA and AAS badges)	\$15.00	\$5.00





History

Book giveaway – The Green Flag : Just a Bloke's Story

Thanks to the generosity of Barry Green, 23rd Intake Vehicle Mechanic, who made available 10 copies of his autobiography to give away at the October reunion, four books were handed to those who submitted short stories as to why they should get a copy: **1.** Don Gray, 22nd Intake Radio Mechanic; **2.** Richard Pike, 21st Intake Vehicle Mechanic, AAAA Treasurer and Merchandise Officer; **3.** Jeff Heron, 21st Intake Radio Mechanic, as ACT Regional Representative for fund raising for the Army Apprentices Memorial; and **4.** Dick Kearnan, 28th Intake Fitter and Turner. This meant there were six books left over for anyone who wanted one at the Reunion Meet and Greet in Albury. These went very quickly!



Creation of the AAAA – 20 years ago

On 14 December this year, it will be 20 years since the inaugural AAAA President, Frank Poole (dec) wrote to more than 150 interested Apprentices requesting volunteers to form an interim advisory committee of about five people to get the Association up and running.

Frank wrote, *“In the six days since I sent my first email I have had almost 150 responses, all favourable, and they are now coming in thick and fast. I have taken up Glenn Jones’ and Andrew Bishop’s offer of assistance to start on a web page to make it easier to register interest, organize responses and keep in contact.”*

He continued, *“With the support to date I intend to start on the articles of association as a first step. I will send the draft out for any comment when done. My ideas for objectives are to:*

- [1] maintain social contacts with ex-Apprentices by encouraging intake and School reunions and social events*
- [2] provide welfare support to ex-Army Apprentices and their spouses as feasible and deemed necessary*
- [3] ensure the long term existence and maintenance of the Marine Gates*
- [3 & 5] support the Ordnance Museum at Bandiana to display memorabilia from the Army Apprentices Schools*
- [4] encourage the writing and publishing of the history of the Army Apprentices School*
- [6] ensure recognition of the work and sacrifices of ex-Apprentices by means of memorials, plaques and public awareness*
- * encourage the Army to train its own tradespersons*
- * maintain links with organizations of similar aims*
- * provide a web page to disseminate information, both to membership and the wider audience.”*

The AAAA was incorporated in the ACT on 12 April 2006, with the above draft objectives modified to become the current Objectives as listed on the Website [here](#) (the six underlined and rearranged to match above).

The Road to Habilayn

From Simon Brooks, 40th Intake Motor Mechanic, AAAA Secretary via LinkedIn July 2025

“Thought I'd share a link to a film I've been working on (for longer than I care to remember) about my Dad's deployment to Aden in Yemen with the Royal Engineers in 1966/67.

The film is part memoir/part doco and the 8mm film footage had been sitting around at my Dad's house for the past 50 odd years, so it had to be rescanned and heavily processed due to degradation that had happened over the years to the film emulsion.

The interview footage with my Dad was done on the spur of the moment, 8 years ago in his loungeroom, when I was getting him to tell some of his life highlights on his 80th birthday. Turns out that it was also the 50th anniversary of the year his tour of duty ended, and he was able to come home to my Mum and older brother Steven.

One poignant part of the film is where Dad talks about surviving a mortar attack. If that had gone the other way, I would not be here writing this post.



Roy Brooks took an 8mm film camera with him when he deployed in 1966 on active service with the Royal Engineers to the former British colony of Aden. This is his story. This never-before-seen footage documents candid day-to-day life experiences of the British Engineers sent to Aden on a "hearts and minds" mission to build a road through a war-torn mountain pass in Southern Yemen. Despite obvious film flaws and degradation over time, and Roy's novice camera technique, the scenes he captured show the true, rugged reality of the harsh conditions he and his fellow soldiers faced. Coupled with Roy's engaging and often humorous storytelling, from memoirs filmed during an impromptu interview on his 80th birthday, *The Road to Hailayn* makes for must see viewing."

[The film can be viewed on YouTube [here](#).]

Donald McKenna, 15th Intake Carpenter & Joiner (deceased), South African domestic cricketer

Following a discussion with another 16th Intake Carpenter & Joiner, Fred Abbott, 16th Intake Carpenter & Joiner searched for further information regarding Don's cricket achievements and discovered in [Wikipedia](#) some interesting history. Don McKenna graduated as a 16th Intake Carpenter & Joiner in 1963. He was an accomplished footballer (Ausie Rules) and cricketer.

"Donald Charles McKenna (7 July 1944 – 4 September 1995) was an Australian cricketer who played South African domestic matches for Border from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s.

Born in Perth, Western Australia, McKenna moved to South Africa in 1971 and made his first-class debut for Border in the 1973–74 season of the Currie Cup. Usually playing as a wicket-keeper, he instead began for Border as a middle-order batsman, with the wicket-keeping position held by Charles Pope. However, for the 1974–75 season McKenna took over the keeping role for the full season. During the season, he also scored his first (and only) first-class century, against Orange Free State. In the match, Border had been dismissed for 104 in its first innings and were 27/4 in the second innings when McKenna entered. He proceeded to score 129 not out from his team's total of 237 runs, putting on partnerships of 70 runs with Christopher Davies for the eighth wicket and 108 runs with Gregory Haynes for the ninth wicket. However, Border still lost the match by eight wickets.

McKenna remained Border's first-choice wicket-keeper for the following few seasons, including in matches in the limited-overs competition. From the 1977–78 season onwards, Border played in the newly created Castle Bowl, effectively the second division of the main Currie Cup. The following season, McKenna only played two matches, with the position of wicket-keeper again occupied by Charles Pope. He did go on to play as keeper in each of Border's matches in the 1979–80 season, which were to be his last at first-class level. Having been a steady middle-order batsman for most of his career, McKenna finished his 35-match first-class career with 1,754 runs at an average of 29.72, also taking 80 catches and three stumpings. McKenna returned to Australia in August 1980, dying in Port Augusta, South Australia, in September 1995, aged 51."

30 years ago

According to "The Party Times", not only was 1995 the year in which the Army Apprentice Scheme ceased, but these events made some of the news in Australia and around the world at the time:

- **Paul Keating** was Prime Minister – he foreshadowed the 1999 referendum on Australia becoming a republic. Like the 2023 "Voice" referendum, the result was a clear "no", with the ACT being the only state or territory that voted "yes".
- The new Glebe Island Bridge finally opened in Sydney (renamed **Anzac Bridge** in 1998).
- The **Aboriginal flags** gained official recognition.
- **Amazon and eBay** were founded, Java and Windows 95 were released [[who's still using it?](#)], and the DVD optical disc storage was announced.
- **Carlton beat Geelong** in the AFL Grand Final, Canterbury-Bankstown beat Manly-Warringah in the ARL, and Australia beat England in the Rugby League World Cup.
- In **cricket**, **Australia** wrapped up the Ashes Test Series in Australia and then won the Frank Worrell Trophy in the West Indies.



- **Schengen** rules simplified travel across Europe (which didn't include UK, who didn't sign the agreement), and in 2025 entry requirements for UK have changed, and will change for EU as well.
- **OJ Simpson** was found not guilty of murder.
- The **Dow Jones** exceeded 5,000 for the first time (September 2025 – over 46,000).
- **Facts and figures:**

	1995	2025
World population	5.7 billion	> 8.25 billion
Australian population	≈ 18 million	> 27.2 million
Inflation in Australia	≈ 4.67%	≈ 3%
Average Sydney house price	> \$203,000	> \$1,551,000
Average Australian weekly wage	≈ A\$650	≈ A\$2047

Bulimba Barracks Memorial relocated for safekeeping

Courtesy RAEME Association Qld Facebook Group, 24 September 2025

"Courtesy of RAQ Member Brian Daley (14th Intake Vehicle Mechanic, AAAA Life Member), and under his watchful eyes, we are able to provide an important update on the Bulimba Barracks RAEME Memorial.

As redevelopment of the Bulimba Barracks site progresses, the memorial stone has been carefully relocated. With the assistance of site contractors, the large stone was lifted and moved to a safe position just inside the front door of the old workshop buildings.

The relocation ensures the memorial remains secure and respected during the construction period. While the stone shows signs of mildew and surface dirt from its years in the elements, it is structurally in very good condition. It will stay in its current position until works are complete and it's ready to be moved to its permanent home.

The RAEME Memorial at Bulimba has long been a significant marker for Corps members since the ceremony on 28 November 2009, when it was dedicated to the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Memorial, the units and their craftsmen who served in the Bulimba Barracks since 1945. The Memorial is a permanent reminder of the dedication and service to the Australian Army shown by the many thousands of soldier-tradesmen and women who served in those units.

On behalf of RAQ, we extend our thanks to Brian Daley and those involved in safeguarding the memorial, ensuring it continues to stand as a proud reminder of our Corps heritage."



Recognition for those who served in Darwin following Cyclone Tracy in 1974

From an email on 23 September 2025 by Ed Zielinski, 23rd Intake Vehicle Mechanic

In the November 2024 edition of TAA, we mentioned that there may be later articles providing updates on any results of the efforts by many veterans seeking recognition for their deployment to support Darwin's residents in 1974. Ed has provided an update, which readers might find useful.

Replying to an email from Ed on behalf of Joanne Ryan MP, Federal Member for Lalor, John Martin, Electorate Officer wrote that "*We are also aware of the community-led Cyclone Tracy Award campaign, which is advocating for recognition of ADF personnel and others who served in Darwin between December 1974 and June 1975. You may wish to register your details with that campaign so your voice is included in their representations to Government: <https://www.adfcyclonetracyaward.com.au/register>.*"

The ADF Cyclone Tracy Award team have now advised that they have set up with the House of Representatives an e-petition effective 8 October 2025 and they need everyone to sign this e-petition number EN 8433 at <https://www.aph.gov.au/e-petitions/petition/EN8433>.



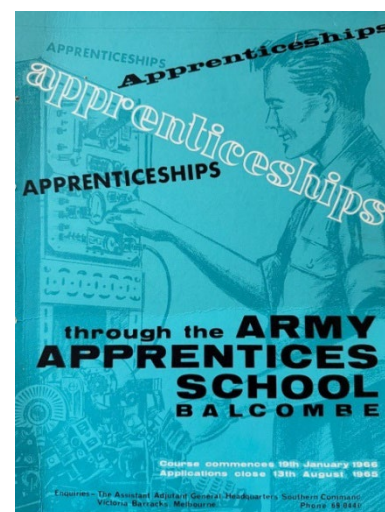
You can locate the petition by searching for MR Ronald Lowe or the petition number in the search bar: EN8433.

NOTE: The petition closes on 5 November 2025.

AAS apprenticeships recruiting poster, 1965 for 1966 intake (21st)

Thanks to Ed Draper, 22nd Intake Electrical Fitter, at the right is a copy of another recruiting poster, this time from August 1965, for the course commencing 19 January 1966. Applications closed on 13 August 1965.

"Enquiries - The Assistant Adjutant General Headquarters Southern Command, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. Phone 69 0440."



Defence updates

Defence emblems wear new crown

Images and original information courtesy of Defence via RAQ Friday Files, 9 August 2025 – extract

"Defence has begun updating digital images, brand marks and logos bearing Queen Elizabeth II's St Edward's Crown after service chiefs approved new versions featuring King Charles III's Tudor Crown.

The new pattern comes into effect from August 1. Digital uses, including website, intranet pages, social media platforms, Microsoft Office templates, Outlook signatures and brand guidelines, will be among the first to be updated. ...



Uniform updates will occur gradually, as stock runs out and opportunities arise, and will be aligned with the evolving design for each uniform type. ...

The last change to Defence's royal symbol occurred in 1952, following Queen Elizabeth II's accession, with the St Edward's Crown incorporated into Navy's Ceremonial Badge on December 3, 1957. ...

Chief of Army Lieutenant General Simon Stuart approved the new Rising Sun emblem (8th pattern) and the updated Army brand mark featuring the Tudor Crown.

Both designs have been modernised to enhance accessibility, readability and usability across applications. Updated corps and brigade badges will be available in colour, white and black formats.

The previous version of the Rising Sun emblem (7th pattern) was introduced in 1991. With modern brand identities increasingly viewed on mobile devices and at small scale, this refresh reflects the need for designs that are contemporary and digitally adaptable.

For the first time, a full suite of Adobe InDesign templates is available to graphic designers and multimedia technicians. ...

Badges for inactive units will continue to reflect the pattern in use at the time of disbanding."

Defence recruitment boost

Information courtesy of Defence, via RAQ Friday Files, 22 August 2025

"Defence's efforts to rebuild the ADF are delivering record results, with recruitment at its highest level in 15 years, separation rates falling, and a full-time force now exceeding 61,000 personnel. Over the past three years, new targeted initiatives have reversed the declining recruitment and retention trends, setting Defence on a trajectory for long-term growth.

In 2024–25, the ADF enlisted 7,059 permanent full-time personnel – a 17 per cent increase on the previous year and the highest intake since 2009–10 – while attracting more than 75,000 applications, the largest number in five



years. Retention has also strengthened, with the separation rate dropping to 7.9 per cent, well below the ten-year average.

As of 1 July 2025, the permanent full-time ADF workforce stood at 61,189, ahead of its targeted growth path and well on track to reach the Government's goal of 69,000 permanent personnel by the early 2030s, as outlined in the 2024 National Defence Strategy and Defence Workforce Plan."

AWM updates

G for George returns

The nose section and part of the fuselage of G for George made its way back to the Memorial on Thursday, 31 July. The public was able to watch as it made the final stage of its journey from Mitchell, where it had been since 2021, on a lap of Anzac Parade to the Australian War Memorial. [Click here](#) to see a full gallery of photos.



Image supplied

G for George will return to public display in 2026 as the centrepiece of the new Australians in Bomber Command gallery in Anzac Hall.

CH-47D Chinook A15-202

Overnight from Wednesday, 3 September, CH-47D Chinook A15-202 was transferred from the Treloar Technology Centre into the Memorial's new Anzac Hall. The aircraft was one of the first two Australian Chinooks deployed to Afghanistan in 2006. It was damaged during a Special Forces operation in 2009 and completed three further rotations to Afghanistan. From Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AWMemorial/videos/1994223931119772>.

Symposium – Interpreting Australia's Second World War and Previewing Anzac Hall

On 15 August 2025, the 80th anniversary of VP Day, the AWM conducted a two-hour Symposium on Interpreting Australia's Second World War and Previewing Anzac Hall and the approaches being taken in the development of the new Anzac Hall to enhance the WWII story and Australia's involvement. Of particular interest was the Women at War segment presented by Ms Emily Hyles, Curator from the Military History Section, and Gallery Development Team (starting at about 1:05hr in the YouTube recording of the Symposium). [Click here](#) to view the 2hr recording.

After almost 80 years in Australia, the V2 rocket will shortly be on display

[This video](#) captures relocation of the V2 rocket and its Meillerwagen from Mitchell to Anzac Hall, over two days finishing on 23 September 2025.

"Developed by Nazi Germany during the Second World War, the V2 rocket was the first long-range guided ballistic missile, marking a groundbreaking chapter in military history. Going on display for the first time, visitors will have the rare opportunity to see the V2 up close and explore the complex story behind its creation and use."



ASLAV ARN 16310

From AWM Friends email, 14 October 2025

The longest-serving ADF vehicle in the Middle East arrived at the AWM in early October. ASLAV ARN 16310 supported Australian operations in Iraq and Afghanistan for nearly a decade, before returning home to serve with 'B' Squadron, 2/14 Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry). In 2009 at Tarin Kot, it carried the call sign V33A, and the name "To Yuma". Watch the video [here](#).

Black Hawk A25-112

From AWM Friends email, 14 October 2025 and the AWM Website

After more than 30 years of service, Black Hawk A25-112 also arrived at the AWM in early October. Named 'Saracen', the helicopter is the first Black Hawk to be added to the Memorial's collection. Black Hawk A25-112 has a significant operational history, having served on peacekeeping operations and humanitarian aid missions in Australia and overseas. Watch the video [here](#).

Our committee

<http://austarmyapprentice.org/about/committee/>

New Committee Members

At the AGM on 25 October 2025, no new committee members were elected. Fortunately, those standing down renominated and were re-elected unopposed. Additionally, all Appointments remain the same. Note that we are still looking for volunteers to represent the Regions in North Qld, Vic Central, and Vic South. These regions aren't necessarily fixed, so anyone who thinks they might be able to represent a particular region not listed, please raise your hand and the committee will consider your appointment:

Current members

Patron Major General Andrew Freeman AM (Retd), 40th Intake Electrical Fitter

Office-bearers

President Keith Lowe, 22nd F&T

Vice-president Greg Haggett, 40th P&G

Secretary Simon Brooks, 40th MM

Treasurer Richard Pike, 21st VM
..... Life Member

Committee Members

Heritage Officer Rob Minato, 31st ET

Membership Secretary .. Graeme Smail, 35th ET

Welfare Officer Grant Cotterill, 38th P&G

Public Officer Jeff Heron, 21st RM,
..... Life Member

Ordinary Committee Members

Member 1 Liz Fitzgibbon, 40th ET

Member 2 Bob Clarke, 22nd VM

Member 3 Mick O'Donnell,
..... 22nd Bricklayer

Member 4 Bill Amor, 20th F&T

Member 5 Steve Doudle, 25th VM

Member 6 Wayne Davis, 50th Elec Fitter

Appointees

Hon Trustee Jim Hislop OAM, 9th F&T

Legal Adviser Rod Perkins, 24th F&T

Auditor Gary Lancaster, 22nd F&T

Chaplain Rev Canon Alan Kelb OAM,
..... 25th F&T

Assistant Secretary Graeme Smail, 35th ET

Merchandise Officer Richard Pike, 21st VM
..... Life Member

Newsletter Editor Jeff Heron, 21st RM,
..... Life Member

Social Media Admin Simon Brooks, 40th MM

Regional Representatives

NT Charles (Bill) Allom, 25th VM

South Qld Brian Daley OAM, 14th VM,
..... Life Member

North Qld vacant

NSW Richard Pike, 21st VM
..... Life Member

ACT Jeff Heron, 21st RM,
..... Life Member

Vic North Rob Minato, 31st ET

Vic Metro Ted Buchan, 46th ET

Vic Central and South both vacant

SA Michael Thompson, 26th VM

WA Bob Coventry, 22nd RM

Tas Steve Bramich, 23rd C&J



Contributions to The Apprentice About

The Apprentice About (TAA) is published quarterly (in February, May, August and November). Contributions are greatly appreciated – please email them to the Editor at news@austarmyapprentice.org or mail them to the address on the first page. Submissions close on the 15th of the month preceding each edition.

Disclaimer

Information, views and opinions expressed in “The Apprentice About” originate from many different sources and contributors throughout our membership. Please note that content does not necessarily represent or reflect the views and opinions of the AAAA.

Final words

NASA’s spider experiment

From a post in LinkedIn, 28 July 2025, and confirmed on the [Internet](#)

“In one of NASA’s most peculiar studies [in 1995 following up on a study from 1948], researchers gave spiders substances like caffeine, marijuana, and amphetamines—and studied how they spun their webs.

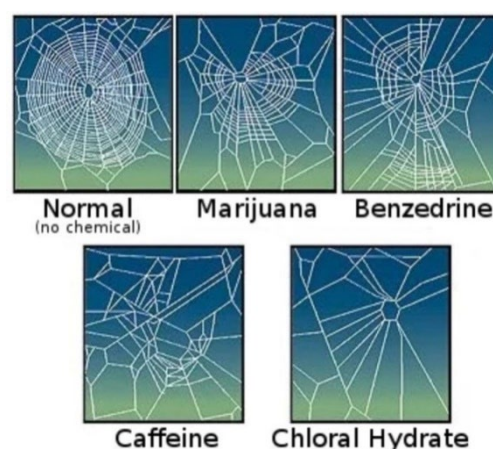
The result?

- *Caffeinated spiders spun erratic, almost unusable webs*
- *Marijuana slowed them down, with sparse threads*
- *Amphetamines sped things up—but at the cost of structure.*

This quirky experiment wasn’t just for laughs. It gave scientists insight into how chemicals affect motor coordination and could even help in toxicity testing and bio-monitoring.”

Image by Noever, R., J. Cronise, and R. A. Relwani. 1995. Using spider-web patterns to determine toxicity. NASA Tech Briefs 19(4):82. Published in New Scientist magazine, 29 April 1995. NASA

“Chloral hydrate, a sedative, led to incomplete webs, as the spiders fell asleep before finishing their work!”



Bands of the Australian Army Collection official opening

Extracted from RAQ Friday Files, 19 September 2025

“The Bands of the Australian Army Collection was officially opened on Saturday 2 August 2025 at Gallipoli Barracks by the Collection’s Patron, Lieutenant General Greg Bilton, AO, CSC.

Around 60 people attended the event, including senior members of Army, current and former serving members of Army Bands, along with family and supporters.

Music and logistic support were provided by the Australian Army Band Brisbane. The Association extends its thanks to the Officer Commanding, Major Cam Earl, and Band Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Class Two Steve Turner, for their outstanding assistance.



A highlight of the day was the band’s performance of Not Real Soldiers, a poem by John Seagg. Musician Dave Andrews delivered a passionate and moving recital that resonated strongly with the audience.



The celebration also included a traditional cake cutting to mark the birthdays of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery (1 August) and the Australian Army Band Corps (2 August).

The occasion was a fitting tribute to the proud history and continuing service of Army musicians. Sincere thanks are extended to all who contributed to the success of the day."

Owen Guns Trust Museum

From <https://owenguns.com/pages/museum>

Some will be surprised to learn that near Gympie, Qld is a gun store and museum which houses a collection of over 3,000 firearms, from significant historical periods such as: the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), Waterloo (1815), the Victorian Era (1837-1901), the American Civil War (1861-1865), the Wild West (1865-1895), the Zulu Wars (from 1879), the Boer War (1899-1902), 55 days at Peking (1900), WWI (1914-1918), WWII (1939-1945) and beyond. The Museum is located just off the Bruce Highway and is the largest gun museum in the southern hemisphere.

Speech by LTCOL Hamilton, 25 October 2025

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"Transcript, LTCOL Hans Hamilton, Commanding Officer, ASEME

Speech to the Australian Army Apprentices Association, Reunion Dinner to mark the 30th Anniversary of the Cessation of the Army Apprentice Scheme, Saturday, 25 Oct 2025. Albury Commercial Club

Good evening team. So, you're probably wondering why I've got some really scratchy notes here on field message notebook pages. I have just returned from the field this morning at about 5am. I pretty much turned over in my hide, grabbed my weapon and said, "Come on, we're going to go back to Albury Wodonga so I can do a speech tonight". Hence out of the field message notebook, written in dot points on the drive back from Pucka today.

Right, thanks Keith for the great introduction. It is great to be here tonight, so I guess I'll start with, where have we come from?

I acknowledge your time at Balcombe. I acknowledge your time in Bonegilla, from 1948 through to 1995. The school itself, and I did have to do a bit of research because, you know, I'm not an apprentice from back in those days, but I've got a little bit about it here. The school itself was designed for the "increasing need of trades in the Army, and for the maintenance of the materiel that came into the ADF." That requirement has not changed.

We are actually in a very interesting period right now where we've got the largest capitalisation of materiel in the Australian Defence Force. It's only getting more complex, and it's only getting harder to teach our tradesmen these days those tasks they will need to do to repair the new equipment that we have and what is coming.

The simple is now complex. The trades will have to work together to complete those new and more challenging tasks. Some of the things that we may have seen in the past are in magnitudes far different than what is coming through, like the medium and heavy landing craft, the HIMARS, and self-propelled guns. Well, I will not say the Oshkosh, because it looks to be just an upmarket Unimog, but there is some really interesting equipment coming that has maintenance complexities. So this need, that was defined to you, has not changed over time to us.

You're probably asking, and I heard it today, so it's okay, you can call me a Rupert, I mean I've heard it already tonight, but where did I come from? I am actually a product of this school being ASEME. In 1997, I was one of the first Adult Technical Tradesman to come through the school after the 50th Class. So, I came in as an ECN 421, so I'm an electronics technician. I made my way through 10 years as a soldier, and at the 10-year mark, I was frustrated with the system presented to me. I did want it to change, I did not feel job satisfaction. I saw my trade going in a different direction than I thought it should be going.

Someone approached me one fine day and stated; "Well, if you've got a problem with it, cross the fence and fix it." All of a sudden, I had purpose to make that difference and at the start of this year, I'm now sitting at ASEME as the Commanding Officer. I won't lie, one of the first conversations with my RSM was; "When I actually sit in this



chair longer than I've stood on the other side of this table, I'll tell you", because that was a fact, I had been standing on the other side of that desk numerous times.

I'd also like to acknowledge my team here tonight, Nigel Bellette, Jason McLinden, thanks for coming this evening. They are the 2IC and OPSO respectively, and it's good to have them here representing you as well. So, tonight's very relevant. When I graduated, your classmates were my coaches, mentors, managers and leaders. Why we look like we do today is because of you. All of our lessons are in the past, we just need to look there, because some things become relevant again over time, we just need to know where to look, and we need to know who to listen to.

So, for those, not here this evening, but a lot of, probably 46th to 48th class, were my mentors and my coaches through my early career, and I remember them implicitly. One in particular, her name's Gayle Walkom, I still call her mum, so if anyone knows Gail, Or Gabs? Yep, I still call her mum.

I just want to pause for a second and check the vibe of the room. Can I have a show of hands where all the odds are? I'm going to do it first and see how all the hands are. I see how they're all at the front. Now all the evens? See how those odd are all up the front, and all the trouble makers are at the back. It is good to actually see you are all joined together and mingling a little bit so we do not have to worry about odds and even crab fighting.

So, what do the apprentices look like today? (From the audience: 'Old!!') I'll pay that. This is what ASEME does to you, by the way. I'll let you know by the end of next year, it'll probably all be white (reference to my salt and pepper hair colour). You can hold me to it.

I thought about just going through the nomenclature because I follow a lot of Facebook pages and I see things labelled differently. I see people talking about our trades. But our trades have changed names over time, and they've actually evolved, and, we have new trades. So just for your awareness, some things never change. The most brutal of them all, the ECN 229s, the Vehicle Technician. Yes, that is where my problem children are, all those (inaudible laughter). It's not changed. It has not changed at all I see, thanks for confirming.

The ECN 235's, our Metalsmiths, they are our Material Technicians. We've just gone back to the full metalsmith course. We used to bring the boilermakers in pre-qualified, do special metal alloys and other techniques, and let them go, but now we've actually gone through a full circle. We actually teach the metalsmiths start to finish. The Electronic Systems Technicians, the ECN 421, that was a bit of an amalgamation, myself included. I started as an ECN 422, and we had the ECN 420s. Right before I went to RMC we amalgamated and made them the "Super Boffin". The ECN 418, Energy Technicians, and ECN 146, the Weapon Technician. Now we have ECN 222. This is our Marine Technician. (Audience were excited)

So, we've actually gone back to some of our roots. I know we had embedded our trades in Army watercraft LCM8 and LARCs. The workshops in 10 FSB, kind of drew down over the years and absorbed as crew. So, we've actually reinvested those Marine qualified personnel and new ECN 222 trainees are now training in Cerberus in a fixed and mobile plant course, and we'll graduate the first block next year in February, to which I'll be seeing their graduation.

There's a lot more we're doing now with Navy. When we are teaching the trades the same in multiple locations, I never understood why we are not getting together with our other Service mates and actually training them in one location. We would still maintain our Corps identity, but we are actually trying to rationalise in this austere environment and seek to share that burden. In the future, we might see some of our ECN 421s, our boffins, actually train in Cerberus, because it is delivered virtually the same in two locations. Or perhaps the Navy welders might come to ASEME. We are actually working quite hard to see what we can do for the other services and vice versa. Just taking it that next logical step.

And then, yes, sorry for the RAE persons in the room. Yes, we still have our plumbers and carpenters, down in ACW. (The smartest blokes!) And our recovery technicians, ECN 226.

So, where are we going? Well, you would be interested to know, we're always in the state of flux and we're always adapting. I have tried not to change too much when I arrived to the unit, but I did sit down with the previous COs, the last two, and ask them, "Hey, where are we going? I don't need to go 90 degrees with my time,



where were you going so I can take this place forward?" It's not about where we can take it as individuals, it's where can I take the corps, where can I take trades. We just need to move forward and not do it at our benefit as opposed to creating longitudinal change.

So, I hope that my time in school is just a custodianship of this moving forward. And we're going to do the same for the next CO. We're all going to sit down with that individual and try and help him forward, as opposed to just manoeuvring in multiple directions every two years. The thing that kills us in the corps is every two years we rotate, a new person comes in and a new direction. That is hard to deal with. We need to have an enterprise-level agreement in our cohorts to try and just move forward in one direction, and that's really hard. So I'm looking forward to seeing who the next custodian will be, and hopefully being invited to a dinner such as this.

So, one thing that I noticed at the school when I came through is we get, you might well be aware that Wodonga Institute of TAFE is our client, they deliver our accredited training. So, we're still doing that. We still have non-accredited training, so some capability-specific training. But something we lost over the years was instructors being instructors again. It was being watered down over a number of years. And it's the one thing that I brought forward from my experience and something that I saw. I mean, Bob Minato, you're in the room. Mick Hopper, Eric Crutchfield, some of these guys were our instructors at the school and we learnt the most from them. Now that Wodonga Institute of TAFE is contractually delivering trade, some of them were instructors over the years and now not. We've lost that, we've lost our way with that.

Some of the restructuring of the school is to bring that back or bring back that pinnacle job which is instructing as our core business. So, I'm hopeful by the end of next year we should go back to having instructors doing much more instruction and we're looking at all corps coming back to manage the trainees that are inside the units of competency training.

So, as I said before, looking back at the past, some of those things that became irrelevant over time, we've just got to keep going back and having a look at it because one day those things become relevant again. It is no use reinventing the wheel when you can just shine that wheel and put it back on the cart and move forward. So that's what I hope to achieve by the end of next year.

I suppose in closing I have three things; I'd like to thank you for your service, past or present.

The second one is, history teaches us many things, we need to listen. Moreover, that is the in-service people need to listen. In addition, I'll go even further, and the Chief of Army said this in the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, it's we have to care for those members before, during, and after service. We just do not have that after service bit down right I think. I've invested some time this year spending it with DVA, and probably, if you are aware, they're trying to make a new corporate body to manage DVA, so I've tried to invest myself in some time with that as a CO, because we are the last faces they see, or the last person that signs their discharge paperwork before they finalise their Service.

The third point, we are, and we always will be, the custodians of our corps and trades, and I thank you for my successes, because it is your experience that was passed on over time through to my mentors, and hopefully I continue to do the same with others.

In closing, I thank you for defining our path forward. Thank you all.

