



Defence Reserves Association  
Victoria Branch

President: Brigadier Peter D. Alkemade RFD

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# NEWSLETTER of the Victorian Branch DRA: May 2022

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## President's Update

The DRA Annual Conference (3 Sep 2022) will focus on the recent Reserve support for National Emergencies and the challenge of maintaining a trained force to support National Defence. Presenters will include the both the Head of Joint Support and the Commander 2<sup>nd</sup> Division and senior members of the ADF. The recent election and new appointments of the ADF and Service Senior Commanders will provide an opportunity to hear from Chiefs of Service and Ministers on the changes ahead for the ADF and the ADF Reserve.

The Conference will be a hotel-based conference here in Victoria at Essendon Airport together with streamed presentations available online for remote members and interested parties. This year many of the presenters are expected to present in person. The conference is intended to focus on the challenge of Reserve personnel meeting the increasing demands on time and depth of training in the changing Strategic situation.

Last year I reflected on the rising tension in our region. This trend continues with both a focus on terrorism together with conventional confrontations between nations in Asia, the Middle East and Europe. While the legacy of our recent involvements is still to fully play out there is now a need to restructure and plan for the new challenge emerging in East Asia and our major trading markets.

The Pandemic has a continuing impact on economic performance and public health services both within Australia and in our region. This together with more frequent weather emergencies has increased tasking for the ADF reopening the need to reassess the case for a National emergency response force or the expansion of State based forces.

Finally, I look forward to a resumption of the Annual Reserve Luncheon, this will be held on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June at the RACV Club. The numbers appear quite strong and it is a great opportunity to renew acquaintances in an informal gathering of serving and ex serving members.

Regards

**Peter Alkemade**

President

## RESERVISTS REUNION LUNCHEON –

After being postponed in 2021, we will finally get together for the annual Reservists Reunion Luncheon at the RACV Club on Wednesday 1 June 2022. If past luncheons are a guide and given the time lapse since our last a great time is guaranteed.

## Secretary's Column

Last edition I wrote about the challenges we face maintaining contact with members, especially during times of reduced physical social contact. As an association our primary means of regular communication is through email which is dependent on having up to date addresses. Thanks to the many members who responded to our plea last time to update their email addresses which will enable us to resume regular contact. Thanks also to those who replied with confirmation they don't have access to email. Just having this awareness enables us to ensure that important communication is forwarded by mail to maintain their informed membership.

**The biggest news for the year is the upcoming DRA National Conference on 3 September at Essendon Fields, the first time in many years it has been held in Melbourne. Some details of speakers are yet to be confirmed due to the unavoidable turnover of key players thanks to the recent Federal election and change of all Service Chiefs in July. However the venue, theme and prices have been confirmed and details follow on the next page. You'll hear much more on this subject in the coming months.**

Much of Reserve tradition has involved the training depots where members would meet regularly to train and socialise. While the old drill hall in the main street was often the public image of Army Reserves, Navy and Air Force also maintained successful Reserve training organisations within their full-time capital city establishments. Below is an acknowledgement to the long-serving former Navy and Air Force Reserve training facilities in Melbourne (now demolished and derelict respectively).



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL F00444.010  
HMAS LONSDALE, Port Melbourne



No 21 Squadron, RAAF Williams-Laverton



A final call-out regarding another former Reserve organisation. Monash University Regiment (MONUR) was disbanded in 2012 after 40 plus years of service. While much has been written about its older and more famous sister regiment MUR, thanks particularly to the work of Maurie Ryan, little is documented about MONUR. I'd like to partly remedy that. While we count several former MONUR COs amongst our membership I'd love to here from others who may have served there over the years and who could perhaps contribute some insights into their time at the Regiment

Cheers,  
**Brian Smith**  
Secretary

## VALE: DRA Members

- COL Bruce Warton RFD MB BS died on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2022 aged 78. He retired from the Army Reserve in 2008. His service had included being OC 3 Preventative Medicine Coy and CO of 6 Field Ambulance, and also deployments to East Timor and Bougainville in 2001 and 2002. After many years in private practice, he worked in Regional Health Services, and was active in the State Emergency Service until last year. His last farewell was in Port Fairy, where a large gathering of friends and colleagues celebrated his life and achievements with his family.

## ----- DRA National Conference

**DATE:** Saturday 3 September 2022 from 0830 to 1700h AEST

**LOCATION:** Hyatt Place Melbourne, Essendon Fields, 1 English Street, Essendon Fields.

**THEME:** "Calling out the ADF Reserves - the need for balance and future sustainability";

Post the enactment of the *Defence Legislation Amendment (Enhancement of the Defence Force Response to Emergencies) Act 2020* that replaced 'continuous full-time Service' with 'service for the period(s) covered by the call out order', what does ADF Reserve service look like? Are there more Reservists rendering service for domestic contingencies? Are we de-skilling or misusing our Reservists to compensate for shortfalls in resources and equipment for State emergency services, and the management of multi-jurisdictional tasks? What are the lessons learnt from an ADF Reserves perspective from recent domestic operations?

### **PRICE:**

#### **Early-bird pricing (for bookings before 1 August)**

Conference \$85.00 (includes lunch and morning tea)

Dinner \$80.00

Conference & Dinner \$165.00

#### **Post Early-bird pricing (for bookings after 31 July)**

Conference \$100.00 (includes lunch and morning tea)

Dinner \$95.00

Conference & Dinner \$180.00

**Bookings and payment will be online via Eventbrite. Details for registration log in will be provided by 1 June. iPads will be available at the Reunion Luncheon on 1 June to enable attendees to take advantage of the early discount by registering at the luncheon.**

Further details regarding speakers, accommodation and other information will be distributed as it becomes confirmed.

## News from Associations and Calendar of Forthcoming Events

***The COVID-19 situation may cause changes, so please check beforehand.***

**MURA** (Melbourne University Rifles Association) have reported that MUR have returned to the Grattan St. Depot, following its refurbishment. They offer congratulations to their former CO, BRIG Michelle Campbell on her recent promotion and appointment as Deputy Commander of 2 Division.

### Military History and Heritage Victoria

- 'Courage And Compassion: A Stretcher-Bearer's Journey From No-Man's Land And Beyond' – Speaker: Don Farrands QC Wednesday 22 June 2022 7:00PM-8:00PM (Australian Eastern Standard Time). This presentation will be 'on-line'

**The presentation.** Barrister Don Farrands QC became interested in the story of his grandfather Nelson Ferguson when his mother shared some old long-forgotten diaries of her father and his sketches and paintings during WWI, describing the daily life of a stretcher-bearer.

Nelson Ferguson, from Ballarat, was a stretcher-bearer on the Western Front in France in World War I. He survived the dangers of stretcher-bearing in some of Australia's most horrific battles: the Somme, Bulle-court, Ypres and Villers-Bretonneux. But in April 1918, at Villers-Bretonneux, he was severely gassed. His eyes were traumatised, his lungs damaged. Ferguson returned to Australia and despite the damage to his eyes, took-up a position as a disabled art teacher at the Working Men's College, Melbourne (now RMIT). By the late 1950s, Ferguson's art teaching career had ended as his sight had by that time completely failed him. Courageously enduring the terrible long-term consequences of war, he was nevertheless able to assist his son and son-in-law in their stained-glass window business conducted in Ferguson's backyard, producing wonderful windows installed in churches across Victoria and elsewhere. In 1968, the Repatriation Department contacted him with the possibility of surgery to replace his corneas. By the miracle of science and providence, Nelson's eyesight was fully restored, allowing him to once again see the beauty around him, including the church windows he had assisted in making. Ferguson died in 1976. This story will stir your soul. **As the presentation is on-line, tickets need to be booked:** <https://www.trybooking.com/BZDOP>

- **The Bloody Beachheads: The Battles of Gona, Buna and Sanananda – One Day Conference** on Saturday 12 November, 8.30am-4.30pm, Keilor East RSL, 2-22 Hoffmans Rd, Essendon. Cost including morning, afternoon tea and lunch: MHHV members \$60, non-members \$90, concession \$70. **Contact:** <https://www.trybooking.com/BIMAO>

As the battle for Guadalcanal dragged on the Japanese advance on the Kokoda Track culminated and they were ordered to 'advance to the rear'.

Two delaying defensive positions at Eora Creek and Oivi-Gorari imposed a toll on the Australians' pursuit, but allowed time for the Japanese to complete a labyrinth of bunkers and trenches around the Papuan beach head villages of Gona, Buna and Sanananda.

The Battle for the Beachheads, as it became known, saw an estimated 9,000 Japanese troops in well-prepared positions defend to the death the territory they had occupied for the last six months. MacArthur ordered that the positions be destroyed and over the next two months Australian and US Army troops battled not only the resolute Japanese but swampy terrain, kunai grass, oppressive heat, heavy rain, sickness and disease to complete this difficult and brutal task.

The Battle of the Beachheads was the bloodiest of all the Papuan campaigns. The resolve and tenacity of the Japanese defenders was, to Allied perceptions, unprecedented to the point of being

“fanatical”, and had not previously been encountered. It was to mark the conduct of further battles throughout the remainder of the war. Securing victory at the Battle for the Beachheads cost Australia 1,261 dead and 2,210 wounded, and the Americans 734 dead and 2,037 wounded.

What was the Japanese plan? Who controlled the sea and the sky? How did the Allies mass forces onto the northern coast of Papua? Was the order to destroy the Japanese positions necessary? How well did the Australian and American forces cooperate in fighting the battle? Were Allied forces pushed beyond their capability? How much did tanks help to break the stalemate? What are the legacies of this little-known chapter of military history?

Now available on video (check the [mhhv.org.au](http://mhhv.org.au) website for details):

- **Eleven Bats: A Story of Combat, Cricket and the SAS** - Speaker: Harry Moffitt  
Anthony 'Harry' Moffitt spent more than twenty years in the SAS. His decades of service and his multiple tours in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan made him one of the regiment's most experienced and recognised figures. Recorded via Zoom 15 February 2022.
- **How Wars End – Virtual Conference, hosted by Prof. Damien Kingsbury & Richard Iron**  
**CMG** **OBE**  
AIIA Victoria held a virtual conference which addressed perhaps the most important issue in military, strategic and security studies and one of the most important issues in international relations – how wars are ended. It draws on the direct experience of soldiers and specialist academics (some of whom have been both) who in each case have also been policy advisers on fighting and ending wars.

To contact MHHV **Email:** [info@mhhv.org.au](mailto:info@mhhv.org.au) **Mail:** PO Box, 24376, Melbourne 3001  
**Website :** [www.mhhv.org.au](http://www.mhhv.org.au) **Mobile :** 0419 256 681

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**RVR Association**

Infantry Dinner: this has been deferred until November 2022.

**Updates on News**

**From the RVR Association, sent to them by Gary Simmons, Courtesy of Mal Alexander.**

**BEHIND THE SCENE (some thoughts on ANZAC Day)**

Dear Australian media and the general public, it's time for an ANZAC Day education.

Below is a list of things that current, and former members, of the Australian and New Zealand Defence Force would like to point out prior to ANZAC Day:

1. ANZAC Day marks the anniversary of the Gallipoli Campaign of WWI. ANZAC is an acronym for Australia and New Zealand Army Corps. It's written as ANZAC, not Anzac.
2. Each year on the 25th of April we reflect on all Defence Force personnel, past and present, and the sacrifices they've made. It is a solemn day, treat it as such.
3. ANZAC Day is one of Australia's most important national occasions. It marks the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during WWI.
4. Traditionally, Rosemary is worn on ANZAC Day. Rosemary is found growing wild on the Gallipoli peninsula. That's why it's significant.
5. The RED Poppy symbolises peace, death and sleep of the fallen servicemen/woman. While the PURPLE Poppy represents remembrance of the animal victims of war. The ORANGE Poppy represents the acknowledgement of the Service families, and also acknowledges the families' loss due to veteran suicide. The WHITE Poppy worn between 1918 - 1939 symbolises the wearers' commitment to peace. Learn the difference!



6. We commemorate ANZAC Day, not celebrate it. It's not a bloody party.
7. At dawn on the 25th of April 1915, soldiers rowed ashore in boats called 'lighters' during the Gallipoli landings, under fire and without outboards motors.
8. It's a bugle, not a trumpet. The Last Post is sounded, not played. It's not a dance tune.
9. Not every serviceman/woman were 'soldiers'. Some were Sailors and Airmen. Please take the time to ascertain what Service they served in, and use the correct terminology. It means a hell of a lot to us!!!
10. They're medals, not badges. They're citations, not pins. Please learn the difference.
11. Medal recipients wear their medals on the left side of their chest covering their heart; family members/descendants wear the medals on the right side of their chest.
12. No, I am not wearing my father's or grandfather's medals, they are mine. I earned them during my Service.
13. Medals, ribbons and Unit Citations are EARNED, not WON. It's not a chook raffle. They are awarded to the recipient, not given to them.
14. Yes, I am allowed to wear my 'Return From Active Service' badge on any bloody day of the year that I choose to wear it. Get over it. And no, it's not a bloody Medal.
15. Australian and New Zealand soldiers did not retreat from Gallipoli, they withdrew.
16. It really doesn't matter which side you wear your Poppy on, as long as it's worn with pride. Traditionally, men on the left breast and women on the right breast.
17. Please, don't try to draw comparisons between sports players and war veterans. I've never seen a sports player perform acts of heroism whilst under fire, to protect their fellow Service personnel, flag and Country.
18. ANZAC Day isn't a day to go and watch, or play sport. Show some bloody respect to the brave men and women in uniform, past and present, who fought for the blanket of freedom that you currently sleep under.
19. Having a few drinks and playing '2 up' is an ANZAC Day tradition. Getting shit faced, picking fights and acting like a bloody yobbo isn't.
20. 'Lest We Forget' isn't a throwaway line, it actually has meaning: it's an expression of remembrance, par excellence. It has dignified origins, a rich history. Don't misuse or disrespect it.
21. The 'Ode' comes from the poem "For the Fallen", written by Laurence Binyon. The verse, which is commonly known as 'The Ode Of Remembrance', is as follows:

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them."  
Lest We Forget  
Here endeth the lesson.

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### **Advice from DVA regarding to Rapid Antigen Tests**

"Following a meeting of National Cabinet on Wednesday, 5 January 2022, the Australian Government has announced that up to 10 free Rapid Antigen Tests over three months (a maximum of 5 in a month) will be made available free through pharmacies to people holding the following cards:

- Pension Concession Card
- Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold, White or Orange Card
- Health Care Card
- Low Income Health Card

These free tests will become available at most pharmacies within the next two weeks.

The statement from National Cabinet advises that anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or close contact with a confirmed positive case should attend a state clinic for free testing, rather than seek a free test from a pharmacy."

*This information has been inserted again because of the ongoing prevalence of COVID-19.*

## 'Military History of Seymour and Puckapunyal 1903-1969'

This publication provides a good history of the area which many of us knew in our service lives. At 68 pages it is too large to print out for all our members but can be downloaded. The file is too large to be sent out with this Newsletter but is available on request and may bring back memories!

This military history publication was originally circulated by one of our affiliated associations: we appreciate the opportunity to forward the news among members.

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**Please check in with your mates and reach out if you need help.  
Stay safe Stay well Stay in contact with your family and friends.**

**Planned Newsletter Schedule:** Publication months proposed are:

***January April July October***

If you have news or information or an article for the Newsletter, could it be forwarded to the Secretary of the Victorian Branch before the middle of the month of publication.

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**WANTED : ARTICLES of INTEREST to Members.**

The Editor is always asking for interesting articles about experiences related to Defence and Reserve service, present and past. These are desired by the end of the month preceding publication, that is by the end of March, June, September and December. Please send them to the Secretary of DRA Victoria Branch, PO Box 7624, Point Cook, VIC 3030.

ALSO, there are many interesting news and history articles published in newsletter from our affiliated associations. We would appreciate members indicating whether they would appreciate a larger Newsletter, including a selection of these articles. Please let your Association know, today.

To start the conversation: would members like to see a selection of articles from the RUSI-Victoria's more frequent publication *Defence Update*? If so, what topics would interest you most?

**if you know of someone who could join the DRA, you may be able to offer them the form:  
"Application for Membership" for return to  
PO Box 7264, Point Cook, VIC 3030.**