



Defence Reserves Association  
Victoria Branch

President: Brigadier Peter D. Alkemade RFD

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# NEWSLETTER of the Victorian Branch DRA: January 2022

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## President's Message

Welcome to a new year, hoping for a less complicated future and if not a return to normal at least to a more open society. We are planning for a return of the June Reserve Lunch and also in August the DRA Annual Conference returns to Melbourne as both a real conference as well as a streamed event for those unable to attend in person. We are hopeful of strong attendance from our local members and also in the attraction of serving members who seldom get to hear directly from senior leaders. More details elsewhere in the newsletter.

I note with regret that last year marked the passing of a number of our long-term members and in many cases the inability to gather to mark their passing and offer support to those left behind. Some of our affiliated associations are considering ways to address these issues and our committee would welcome suggestions from members on what might be considered.

December provided some optimism about the end of lock downs and the reopening of state borders. It seems that the optimism was a little premature and that the latest version of the virus is both more contagious and more serious than originally expected. It is still wise to practice distancing and limit your exposure where practical. You may have seen some news reports of the continuation of the assistance to State Authorities by the ADF including Reserves to address staff stress and illness particularly in health care.

On the international scene the existing tension in East Asia continues and tension in the East of Europe has returned to a higher level. While in the Pacific increased social disputes have resurfaced in the Solomon Islands and the recent major eruption in Tonga have both required ADF responses at short notice.

It goes without saying that the recent withdrawal from and subsequent collapse of Afghanistan has once again demonstrated the limits of international assistance and the fragility of democratic and diplomatic solutions in the face of fundamentally divided social norms and goals. The dramatic pictures from Kabul airport to some extent mask the tragedies occurring in the towns and cities across this divided nation and the shattered hopes and expectations of many of its young people.

Regards  
**Peter Alkemade**  
President

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**Secretary's Column**

The enforced distancing regime of the past two years is slowly easing with the hope that we will be able to return to some degree of normality in 2022 although they say things will never be quite the same again. In all walks of life there is an acceptance that some interactions can be just as effectively, or more effectively, conducted remotely in lieu of face to face meetings. That said there is no substitute for regular personal contact with colleagues and mates. It's a matter of balance which we hope to achieve.

Remote contact is of course dependant on up to date contact information and I thanks the members, or their families, who have advised me of changes in address, particularly email addresses. Without this we lose contact and the opportunity for members to maintain connections going back decades. So my plea is to keep in touch regarding changes.

Unfortunately changes often involve the death of a member. We attempt to advise the membership of the passing of one of our members as soon as we become aware. Sometimes we hear for family members, sometimes from Corps associations and sometimes from other members. In all cases it is appreciated so if you hear of a member who has passed and we haven't notified it please let me know. The frequent feedback I receive from members who knew or served with departed members often reflect their qualities and esteem in which they were held.

With the return of the luncheon and the annual conference in Melbourne this year it is the perfect time to be engaged and catch up with other members who may have been just an email address for the past two years. I'm certainly looking forward to meeting many branch members in person this year.

Regards,  
**Brian Smith**  
Secretary

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**The Request to our Members, in the last Newsletter**

Thank you to all who responded to the request about possible attendance at the 2022 National Conference. Your replies have provided some guidance to the Committee in their planning.

Confirmation of details is just awaiting National Executive endorsement but will be early September at a commercial metropolitan venue easily accessible for both local and interstate attendees. These details will be advised along with the conference theme and pricing schedule as soon as it is approved. The conference will be followed by a dinner on Saturday evening.

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**Australia Day Honours List**

Two Victorian Reservists were recognised in the Military Division of the 2022 Australia Day Honours List. Congratulations to all recipients:

***Conspicuous Service Medal (CSM)***

**Major James Rohan ELING**

For meritorious achievement as a Joint Task Group 629.2 Strategic Planner supporting Emergency Management Victoria State Control Centre during Operation COVID 19 ASSIST.

**Colonel John Marton MOLNAR**

For meritorious achievement in the state emergency response to the Coronavirus pandemic in Victoria as the Senior Australian Defence Force Advisor to the State Control Centre.

In addition, the former Commander of 2 Division was recognised:

**BAR TO THE CONSPICUOUS SERVICE CROSS (CSC and Bar)**

**Major General Kathryn Jane CAMPBELL AO CSC (Retd)**

For outstanding achievement as the Commander of the 2nd Division  
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**RESERVISTS REUNION LUNCHEON - reminder**

As advised earlier, this was postponed until Wednesday 1 June 2022 but still being held at the RACV Club. A flyer for the Lunch will be sent out directly in late February to all DRA members, and also to those non-members whose payment for the cancelled 2021 Lunch has been carried over to 2022.

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**News from Associations and Calendar of Forthcoming Events**

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

**Military History and Heritage Victoria**

- **[Eleven Bats: A Story of Combat, Cricket and the SAS](#)**, MHHV Zoom Speaker Event, Tuesday 15 February 7.00-8.00pm: for access contact the event organiser - <https://www.mhhv.org.au/category/speaker-programs/>
- **[The Bloody Beachheads: The Battles of Gona, Buna and Sanananda – One Day Conference](#)** on Saturday 12 March (*a COVID-postponed date*) 8.30am-4.30pm at Keilor East RSL, 12-22 Hoffmans Rd, Essendon. Cost is MHHV members \$60, non-members \$90. Concession \$70. It includes morning and afternoon tea and lunch. Contact <https://www.trybooking.com/BSRTC>
- **4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Two-Day Conference: [Hard Fought: Australia in the Mediterranean Theatre 1940-1945](#)**, to be held on 9-10 April 2022 at Waverley RSL.

**Tickets** (includes all conference sessions, lunch, morning, and afternoon tea):

Early-bird (pay by 8 February) \$150

Full price: (MHHV members) \$170; (non-MHHV members) \$200;

(University students or concession-card holders) \$170

Conference Dinner (3 courses): \$50 per head. Drinks extra.

More information: [hardfought@mhhv.org.au](mailto:hardfought@mhhv.org.au)

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.

Other events: to be advised.

**VALE: DRA Members**

- Commander John Silver RAN, MB BS, FAFOEM a Life Member of the Association, passed away on 11 July 2021. As well as his Navy Reserve service John practiced as an Occupational Health Physician in Melbourne with a special interest in Aviation Medicine and Dive Medicine.
- LTCOL Barry Ingram AM RFD ED, a member of RAInf, and a Life Member of the Association, passed way in mid-October2021. He was a recruit to 5 Battalion, Victorian Scottish Regiment in 1952, commissioned in 1957, saw action in Vietnam in 1969. Promoted to Lt. Col., he was the CO of 1 RVR in 1974-1975, then CO 2 RVR 1975-1978, before being posted to CSTU, a part of HQ 3 Training Group and retiring from the Army Reserve in 1980. He was highly thought-of Reservist, who passed away in October.
- MAJ Merv Taggart RFD ED, a Life Member of the Association, passed away on 25 November.2021 Merv was a well known and highly respected Gunner of 32 years service, mainly with the guns, though interspersed with postings to OCTU, CSTU and MUR. During the active period of the war in SVN Merv also moved to Full Time Duty for 5 years with OCTU and 2 Fd Regt. Following his retirement, Merv went on to serve with the RAA Assn of Victoria for a further 20 years, 12 of which were as President, and latterly as an ANZAC Day parade marshal.
- LTCOL Bruce Larkin ED, a long time member of the Association passed away on 31 January 2022 aged 93 years. Bruce left school to enter Duntroon in 1945 but the war ended before commissioning so, like so many others, he discharged. He enlisted in the CMF in the Victorian Scottish Regiment in 1950 and was commissioned in 1953. He then served with 1 RVR following the reorganisation and later as 2IC OCTU before retirement in 1975. He then served as Deputy Chairman of the Defence Reserve Support Council (Victoria) from 1985 to 1994.
- MAJ Margaret "Maggie" More OAM RFD, a long time member of the Association passed away on 4 Feb 2022. She enlisted in the CMF in 1966 and served in the Army Reserve 33 years before discharge in 1999. She served in the ranks with Intelligence before commissioning and serving in a variety of administrative and

training roles including 3 Trg Gp and Monash University Regiment. She was an office holder of the WRAAC Association and served as a Governor of the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance from 2006 until her death. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queens Birthday List in 2021 for service to veterans.

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## **Updates on News**

### **Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide**

The DRA submission may be found on the DRA website homepage.

[https://dra.org.au/latest-news-item/45070/dra-submission-to-the-royal-commission-into-defence-and-veterans-suicides/?type\\_fr=4](https://dra.org.au/latest-news-item/45070/dra-submission-to-the-royal-commission-into-defence-and-veterans-suicides/?type_fr=4)

*The extracts below summarise the thrust of the submission:*

The DRA considers that it is important for the Royal Commission, in examining the systemic issues affecting the mental health of Reservists, to understand the differences between Reservists and permanent members of the ADF in terms of their obligation to serve and their conditions of service; and the different types of Defence Reservists. There are different service categories across the spectrum of Reserve service that forms the Total Workforce System (TWS) in Defence.

The unique nature of military service applies to all members of the ADF, regardless of whether those ADF members are Reservists or permanent members. There is a cost of this ADF service, particularly in regard to mental health and well-being.

If the Government, ADF and DVA are serious in reducing the number of veterans who self-harm, then the inescapable conclusion is that all members of the ADF, regardless of how long they served, when they served, where they served or in what capacity they served, should have access to the same standard of treatment for mental health.

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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."

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## EMPLOYER SUPPORT AWARDS 2022 - CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

### Introduction

1. The Employer Support Awards (ESA) are presented annually to recognise the contributions of employers of reservists in supporting Australia and its national interests. The awards program does not provide any financial or commercial rewards to employers but does provide formal recognition of their support for Defence Reservists.

### Award

2. The ESAs are hosted at both state/territory and national levels:
- State Employer Support Awards.** State and territory Employer Support Awards are hosted annually in each state/territory capital to acknowledge those employers who have provided continued and significant support to the reservists in their employment. The winners are decided by an independent panel and the awards announced at the awards ceremony.
  - National Employer Support Awards.** Following the completion of all state and territory ESAs, all winners are considered for recognition at the national level. Identified category winners and their Defence Reserve nominators are invited to attend a ceremony to have their contribution recognised by senior Defence personnel and Ministers.
3. Nominations are now invited for the ESA for 2022 and close on Tuesday 31 May.

### Categories

4. ADF Reservists may nominate their civilian employers for an ESA within the following categories:
- Private - Small (0-19 employees)
  - Private - Medium (20-199 employees)
  - Private - Large (200+ employees)
  - Public
  - Public (Department of Defence) and,
  - Not-For-Profit.

### Eligibility Criteria and Nominations

5. Any serving Reserve members can nominate their employer for an ESA in their state or territory.
6. Nominations are to be completed by completing the application form [DRS-ESAjssd.drs@defence.gov.au](mailto:DRS-ESAjssd.drs@defence.gov.au) and submitted to

### Timeline of events

Call for nominations	January 2022
Nominations close	31 May 2022
State / territory Selection Boards	June 2022
National Selection Board	July 2022
State / territory ESA ceremony events	July - 30th October 2022
National ESA event	23 November 2022

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### From a recent report in the Warrnambool Standard newspaper:

'Judge blames under-resourcing for compo delays'

A Federal Court Judge has slammed the Federal Government over lengthy delays in deciding a veteran's compensation claim, saying resources have been inadequate for

some time. Ruling on an application by an Army Reserve veteran, Justice John Logan said a statement by the Commonwealth, indicating it was committed claims under military compensation legislation within 90 days was “nothing more than cant”.

The newspaper reported that the Reservist took the case to court for a better outcome for himself and others.

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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 this 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.

**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.**