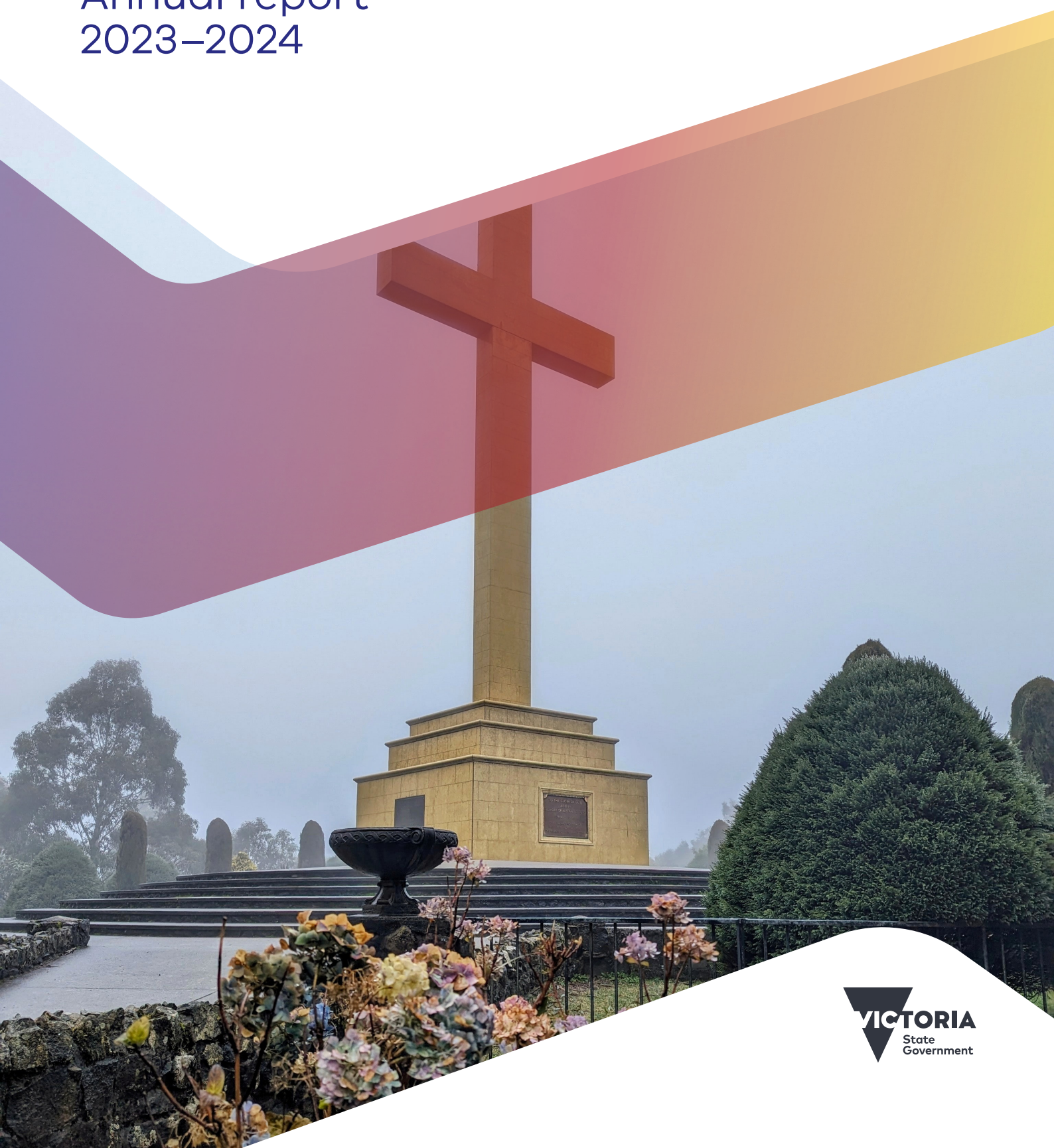


Victorian Veterans Council

Annual report 2023–2024





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Chairperson's foreword



 **Commodore Greg Yorke, AM, CSC**
Chair

As chair of the Victorian Veterans Council (VVC), I am pleased to present our annual report for 2023–24.

This year we expanded our network and strengthened existing relationships within the veterans sector, deepening our understanding of current and evolving community needs.

With the release of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's final report in September 2024 and leading up to the 90th anniversary of the Shrine of Remembrance, it is critical that we continue to connect with and support Victorian veterans and families.

These two events are a time for reflection and connection to recognise the service and sacrifice of all those who have come before us and the continued work ahead.

The VVC is proud to be a voice for veterans in Victoria, providing lived experience insights and advice to the Victorian Government on the needs of veterans and their families.

The VVC recognises that we are one part of a dedicated and resilient veterans sector, and we welcome and appreciate input from the sector. The VVC is committed to engaging with you to continue to honour and support Victorian veterans.

In honouring this commitment, in 2023–24 the VVC drafted its first engagement strategy and sought feedback from the sector, incorporating this feedback into the final document. The strategy outlines the VVC's commitment to the sector and provides a framework for ongoing engagement. The strategy is based on the principle that

the VVC's engagement with stakeholders should be meaningful, inclusive, transparent and informed.

Through quality engagement with the veterans sector, the VVC aims to achieve greater outcomes for Victorian veterans. This is by way of its role as a voice for veterans and representing their concerns to the Victorian Government and as a key connector for veterans community stakeholders.

On behalf of the VVC I thank everyone who contributed to the strategy. We look forward to continuing our engagement with the sector in 2024–25.

25th anniversary of INTERFET

In 2024 we will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), the Australia-led peacekeeping operation that aided East Timor to achieve its independence. The first Australian peacekeepers landed in Dili on 20 September 1999. More than 5,000 Australian personnel took part in the 22-nation peacekeeping operation. Australia's leading role in the operation shows our commitment to freedom and democracy for all peoples. INTERFET brought an end to the violence and paved the way for humanitarian aid. It helped forge strong bonds between Australia and countries in our region.

Australian personnel helped the people of East Timor with our trademark values of courage, endurance and mateship. As we come together in September to remember all those who served during INTERFET, let us commemorate their service and reflect on the continued need to support all those who have served.

Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

Since it began in July 2021, the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has shone a light on the issues that we in the veterans community know all too well, as well as highlighting lesser-known stories of defence and veterans hardship. It has reinforced the vital need to honour and support veterans and their families. The Royal Commission received 5,889 submissions on themes including the:

- culture of the Australian Defence Force
- treatment of women and LGBTIQ+ members
- complexity of the compensation and rehabilitation system
- lack of adequate data on defence force and veteran suicide.

The Commission also had 6,588 phone enquiries, held 886 private sessions, had 346 witnesses appear at hearings and published 1,011 submissions. The Commission held hearings across the country, including in Melbourne from 28 August to 8 September 2023.

The VVC welcomed the Royal Commission's *Shining a Light: Stories of Trauma & Tragedy, Hope & Healing*, which highlights the vital role of hearing from people with lived experience of defence suicide and honoured their contribution to the Commission.

The Royal Commission released its final report on 9 September 2024 and the VVC is currently reviewing the findings and recommendations.

Veterans Card – Victoria

The VVC was pleased to see the Veterans Card – Victoria launch in July 2023. The Veterans Card is the first of its kind in Australia. It offers veterans and serving defence force personnel living in Victoria access to discounts and cost-of-living benefits including:

- a \$100 discount on the registration of one light motor vehicle
- free trailer and caravan registration

- a fishing licence exemption and free boating (marine) licence
- free public transport on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day
- access to veterans-specific employment programs run by the Victorian Government.

Prior to the release of the card, the VVC held discussions with the veterans sector and provided feedback to the Victorian Government on the card. I am pleased to see the recognition of veterans in the state, and I encourage all Victorian veterans to sign up for the card.

A voice for veterans

As chair, I want to thank all members of the VVC for their service and dedication throughout the year. I extend a special thanks to the outgoing members whose terms ended during the year – Pelagia Markogiannakis and Daniel Cairnes. I thank Pela for her work and commitment as the deputy chair of the VVC from January 2020, and Dan for his leadership as the Funding Sub-Committee chair from April 2022.

I would also like to thank Simon Thorn and Ken Tsirigotis, who served as the RSL Victoria and Melbourne Legacy nominated members. They both concluded their terms in April 2024.

I give a warm welcome to the incoming members of the VVC, including Peter Swandale as the RSL Victoria nominated member and Emily O'Dwyer as the Melbourne Legacy nominated member. I look forward to working with them in supporting Victoria's veterans and ex-service community.

I thank the Minister for Veterans, the Hon Natalie Suleyman MP, for her continuing support for Victoria's ex-service community and to the VVC. The VVC is also grateful for the excellent support of the Office for Veterans in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. We look forward to another year of supporting and honouring our veterans and their families.

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About the Victorian Veterans Council

The Victorian Veterans Council (VVC) is an independent statutory body established in August 2006 under the *Veterans Act 2005* (the Act).

The VVC plays an important role in supporting Victorian veterans and their families. The VVC is responsible for reporting to the Minister for Veterans on issues affecting the Victorian veterans community.

Under the Act, the VVC has specific responsibility for distributing the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund and the Victorian Veterans Fund. The VVC also assists the Victorian Government by providing:

- general advice to the Minister for Veterans on issues affecting Victoria's veterans, including the current and future needs of veterans and their families
- advice to the Victorian Government on matters relating to the regulation of patriotic funds
- advice on a range of government-led programs and initiatives.

The Office for Veterans in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing supports the VVC.

Objectives and functions of the VVC

The objectives and functions of the VVC are detailed in ss 5 and 6 of the Act.

The **objectives** of the VVC are to:

- promote the wellbeing of all members of the Victorian ex-service community
- promote the commemoration of those who have died in the performance of service or duty
- develop a better understanding among Victorians of the service and sacrifice of Victoria's veterans in war and peacekeeping operations, and the contributions of Victoria's ex-service community
- actively promote the significance of, and key values associated with, the spirit of Anzac
- promote cooperation and collaboration across organisations dealing with veterans' welfare and other ex-service community issues, including the Trustees of the Shrine of Remembrance.

The **functions** of the VVC are to:

- ensure the objectives of the VVC are met to the maximum extent practicable
- monitor and advise the Minister for Veterans on issues affecting Victoria's ex-service community
- investigate and report on any aspect of veterans' affairs referred by the minister
- consult with the ex-service community when developing advice for the minister
- support the welfare activities of ex-service organisations through the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund (in keeping with the *ANZAC Day Act 1958*)
- fund activities furthering its objectives through the Victorian Veterans Fund (under s 20 of the Act)
- advise the minister responsible for administering Pt 4 of the Act or the Director of Consumer Affairs on matters in relation to regulating patriotic funds under Pt 4 of the Act.

Members of the VVC



 **Commodore Greg Yorke, AM, CSC**
Chair
Appointed 15 February 2022

Greg was appointed chair of Victorian Veterans Council in February 2022. Greg is a part-time member of the Royal Australian Navy and holds the position of Senior Naval Officer Victoria. He brings a wealth of experience in the navy and the Department of Defence.

Greg joined the navy in January 1974, rising to the rank of Commodore in June 2016. He has worked as a principal warfare officer in the Executive Branch, having completed many sea postings including exchange in *HMS Liverpool* and his 2 most successful commands, *HMAS Gladstone*, a Fremantle class patrol boat, and *HMAS Arunta*, an ANZAC class frigate.

He was awarded a Conspicuous Service Cross for his leadership role as Chief Staff Officer (Operations) Maritime Headquarters during Operation Falconer (Iraq 2) in 2003 and was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia in the 2022 Queen's Birthday Honours.

Greg also had a successful second career as a management consultant during a 10-year absence from the navy. He has been a non-executive director on the board of the Australian National Veterans Arts Museum since 2017.



 **Lieutenant Commander Pelagia Markogiannakis**
Deputy Chair
Member from 6 February 2018 to 7 June 2024
Appointed Deputy Chair 29 January 2020

Pela has been a navy reservist since 1986 and has attained the rank of Lieutenant Commander. She has had a variety of logistics, engineering and infrastructure-related roles.

Pela is an engineer and certified project professional. She has been the Aide-de-Camp in Waiting to His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales and the His Excellency the Administrator of the Commonwealth of Australia. She is currently serving as a reservist.



 **Dan Cairnes**
Member from 8 June 2021 to 7 June 2024

Dan served in the Australian Regular Army as an artillery officer where he fulfilled a range of regimental, operational and training appointments. The majority of his service was with the 8th/12th Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery.

His operational deployments include Iraq (Operation Catalyst) and border protection (Operation Relex II). On leaving the army, Dan entered the construction industry where he has worked in trade and management roles on building and infrastructure projects. Dan is a graduate of the Royal Military College, Duntroon and RMIT University.



 **Robin Hunt**
Appointed 3 October 2023

Robin was conscripted into the Australian Army in 1969 and, following officer training at Scheyville, was commissioned as an artillery officer. He saw active service in South Vietnam in 1970–1971 with the 4th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery. After completing his full-time national service obligation, Robin was allocated to the Army Reserve.

Following his army service, Robin then held various management positions at RMIT University while also completing a fellowship in public administration and a degree in business administration. Robin's public sector career has involved roles supporting Victorian Government TAFE boards and senior roles with the then Australian Government Department of Industry, and in support of various ministerial councils.

Robin left the public service to pursue business opportunities, chairing a charitable foundation and serving on the committee of a charitable trust. He was at one time elected vice president of Philanthropy Australia. Robin also acted as a trustee for several Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade loan funds aimed at assisting overseas students and served on the board of a Victorian public hospital.

Robin is retired and devotes his time to pursuing many varied interests (especially military history) and in support of his family.



 **John McNeill**
Appointed 3 November 2021

John has had extensive involvement in veterans family advocacy and support for the past 10 years as a qualified advocate. He served as a rifleman with the First Battalion and served in East Timor in 2007.

John has battled his own medical constraints post service and now supports others needing assistance throughout Australia to help them transition after service.

John holds positions on state and national boards such as the Deputy Commissioner's Forum and the Operational Working Party. He is also a Level 3 Compensation Advocate with the Victorian Veterans Advocacy Centre.

John's extensive involvement extends further by being the director of a social enterprise – Aussie Veterans Pty Ltd – established in Melbourne in 2017.



 **Bruce Mildenhall**
Appointed 7 August 2018

Bruce is not a veteran but has broad experience and strong personal interest in the veterans sector. He is currently involved in commemorative activities as chair of the Mt Macedon ANZAC Dawn Service and has assisted as support rider in the Vietnam Veteran VetRide. Bruce's father was a Rat of Tobruk and his maternal grandfather an officer in the ANZAC Light Horse.

As a former State MP and Parliamentary Secretary for Veterans' Affairs, Bruce helped draft Victoria's veterans' legislation, the *Veterans Act 2005*, and led the first Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize tour to the Western Front.



Jo-Anne O'Brien

Appointed 17 May 2022

Jo-Anne is a member of the ex-service community as a surviving partner and widow of a veteran. She has significant knowledge and lived experience of veterans' welfare and the needs of veterans' surviving partners and families. Jo-Anne was nominated to become a member of the VVC by Warrnambool Legacy Club.

In addition to her knowledge of veterans' welfare issues, Jo-Anne brings to the VVC significant experience working in the community and local government sectors relating to tourism and economic and community development, as well as a number of volunteer roles including with Rotary and the Country Fire Authority.



Lucy Saaroni

Appointed 8 February 2022

Lucy is a risk management professional and a veteran with a passion for community resilience building.

As a public affairs officer with the Australian Army, Lucy has deployed on warlike military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and has also supported politico-military missions in the Gulf States and North West Africa.

Working in the Office of the Defence Attaché at the Australian Embassy in France between 2008 and 2013, Lucy had the privilege of supporting large-scale multinational military commemorative ceremonies including the reburial of 250 Australian and British World War I soldiers at the Fromelles Military Cemetery and planning the ANZAC Centenary Commemorations in France.

In 2018 Lucy was awarded the Australia Day Medallion for service to Defence and Indigenous Communities.

With qualifications and extensive experience in risk management, strategic communications and community engagement, Lucy has held senior advisory and executive management roles in local and state government.



Simon Thorn

Member from 20 September 2022 to 30 April 2024

Simon is a former commissioned Australian Regular Army Officer who served in a wide variety of operational roles including in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since leaving Defence, he has held senior roles at the Office of Police Integrity and the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. He has been the senior executive responsible for regulating the apprenticeship and vocational education and training (VET) sectors in Victoria and was a senior executive with the Commonwealth VET regulator.

Simon was a State Executive member of the Victorian Returned and Services League, where he chaired the Risk, Audit and Governance Committee. He is passionate about ensuring veterans are supported through sound policy and that ex-service organisations are supported to deliver in an ever-changing environment.

He holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of New South Wales, a Master of Business Administration from Latrobe University, is a graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and an ANZSOG Executive Fellow.



Ken Tsirigotis

Member from 25 August 2020 to 16 April 2024

Ken completed 22 years of service in the Australian Regular Army in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps, with the majority of his service as a reconnaissance soldier at the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (Parachute). His overseas service has included exchanges and regimental duties to Indonesia, New Zealand, France, Belgium, Thailand, the UK and Switzerland.

Operational experiences include International Forces East Timor (1999–2000), United Nations Transitional Authority East Timor (2002), Timor-Leste Battle Group Three as part of the Ready Company Group deployment (2008), Timor-Leste Battle Group Four (2008) and Operation Slipper as a Mobile Mentoring Team Commander in the Uruzgan Province Afghanistan (2012).

Ken has been awarded various Australian Defence Force (ADF) awards including the Soldiers Medallion for Exemplary Service, Commander 1st Division Commendation (Bronze), Deputy Chief of Joint Operations Commendation (Bronze) and ADF Commendation (Silver).

Ken transferred from the Australian Regular Army in 2016, taking up employment with Melbourne Legacy. He held various roles with Legacy, most recently as the chief operating officer, where he supported the service delivery operations of the organisation.



 **Brett West**
Appointed 20 September 2022

Brett is a Yamatji man from Western Australia and veteran of the ADF, serving 30 years with the Royal Australian Air Force including operational service and tours in South East Asia and the Middle East.

Brett's roles in the ADF related to ordnance safety, training, maintenance and explosive ordnance disposal, as well as later roles on policies and programs relating to Indigenous recruitment and retention, community engagement and mentoring.

Since leaving the ADF in 2017, Brett has worked with the Victorian Government's Department of Education in roles focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training. He is currently with the Department of Premier and Cabinet working with Traditional Owner groups throughout Victoria.

Brett was appointed to the VVC in 2022 and is a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans and Services Association.



Highlights of the year

Engagement with the ex-service community

Throughout the year the VVC continued its engagement with the veterans community and with Victorian ex-service organisations. The VVC received regular updates from ex-service organisations such as the Returned & Services League of Australia (Victorian Branch) (RSL Victoria) and Melbourne Legacy through its representatives on the VVC.

The VVC also met with stakeholders including:

- taking part in the Department of Veterans' Affairs Deputy Commissioner's Consultative Forums throughout the year
- attending the official opening of Vasey RSL Care's V-Centre, which provides veterans-specific accommodation to assist with transitioning from the ADF
- meeting with VetRide representatives Peter Liefman and Gary Vale
- participating in the third National Forum for ESOs to discuss establishing a sector peak body for ex-service organisations.

The VVC also met with and heard presentations from:

- Vasey RSL Care
- Bradley Campbell, Veteran Advocate about issues facing veterans in Victoria and the work of veteran advocates
- Dean Lee, the Chief Executive Officer of the Shrine of Remembrance, on the shrine's commemoration and education programs and planning for the shrine's 90th anniversary
- David McNamara, the Chief Executive Officer of Carry On, to hear about the work of its subsidiary, Veteran Housing Australia, which is the first veterans-specific community housing organisation in Australia.

Commemoration and Anzac Day services

The VVC supports Anzac Day and other commemorations and events in local communities by overseeing the Victorian Veterans Fund. This funding is distributed under the Victoria Remembers Grant Program.

This year VVC members attended services, commemorations and events across Victoria. These included the Toongabbie Cenotaph Dedication and the Remembering the Battle of Leyte Gulf service, unveiling the commemorative plaque. The VVC supported these projects through the Victoria Remembers Grant Program. The VVC also attended the Premier's Anniversary of Anzac Day State Luncheon, as well as services including:

- Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Service
- Australian Nurses Memorial Centre Anzac Commemoration
- Anzac Day Dawn Service at the Shrine of Remembrance
- Remember Prisoners of War Service.



Riders prepare to depart for Ride Anzac in March 2024. Credit: VetRide Incorporated.

Anzac Day Proceeds Fund highlights

Through the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund, the VVC is proud to provide grants to support the welfare activities of Victoria's ex-service organisations. A complete list of grants awarded in 2023–24 is available in the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund section of this report.

Recent initiatives and activities supported by the VVC that were funded or delivered in 2023–24 include the following:

- \$150,000 to the Melbourne Legacy Youth Wellbeing Support Camp program, providing veterans with the opportunity to improve their social connectiveness, work on peer support, develop resilience and leadership skills, establish friendships and enjoy time-out in a fun and supported environment. These camps provide respite for children, allowing them to build skills that are essential for their ongoing mental health and wellbeing.
- \$150,000 to Carry On (Victoria) to provide support to veterans who experience unexpected financial distress, helping veterans with vital expenses like household bills and medical fees. The program also provides for crisis accommodation and essential cards for veterans in need.
- More than \$63,000 to support Aussie Veterans social programs to provide a range of fun and engaging activities for veterans and their families by building on family connections, friendships and creating positive mental and physical health, in collaboration with multiple service providers and support networks.
- \$30,000 to VetRide as part of the 2022–23 Anzac Day Proceeds Fund for Ride Anzac. Ride Anzac took place this year and brought together veterans and the public in a mixed active cycling environment to improve veterans wellbeing and increase public understanding of service.

- More than \$8,000 to Warragul RSL Sub-Branch as part of the 2022–23 grant program to provide a specific veterans respite and retreat program to support veterans with PTSD, mental health, family and social deprivation issues. The program was held this year in Noojee, on the banks of the Latrobe River.
- \$7,500 to Torquay Surf Lifesaving with the assistance of Torquay RSL Sub-Branch to identify returned service personnel who would benefit from more community contact. The funding provided them with club membership, a uniform and training to become patrolling lifesavers at the Torquay Surf Life Saving Club.
- \$4,500 to Upwey Belgrave RSL Sub-Branch for women's wellbeing. This brings female veterans together to promote wellbeing, fellowship, self-care and motivation by holding a range of activities including guest speakers.



Veterans hiking on the Warragul RSL Sub-Branch Veterans Retreat in April 2024. Credit: Warragul RSL Sub-Branch.

Victoria Remembers Grant Program highlights

The VVC, through the Victoria Remembers Grant Program, is proud to support community projects that promote a better understanding of the service and sacrifice of Victoria's veterans in war and peacekeeping operations. It also commemorates those who have died in the performance of service or duty. A complete list of grants awarded in 2023–24 is available in the Victorian Veterans Fund section of this report.

Promoting education and understanding

The Victorian Remembers Grant Program supports projects that educate about and enhance understanding of the participation of Victorians in war and peacekeeping operations. Projects that were funded or completed this year included the following:

- \$30,000 to ATOMVic – an initiative to enrich the Victorian school curriculum with an in-depth understanding of the Anzac tradition and legacy, with experts crafting new lesson plans to ensure the reverence and significance of the Anzac story continues to resonate with school students.
- \$28,000 to This Story Australia for documentary interviews of 4 veterans from Williamstown Football Club to both preserve their personal stories and identify the importance of the club in their lives.
- \$22,000 to create a podcast that looks at the way the armed services and communities commemorate conflict with a focus on the Vietnam Veterans' Commemorative Walk at Seymour, central Victoria. With interviews of returned servicemen and women about their war experiences, the podcast traces the changing face of commemorating war.
- Funding for Bright RSL Sub-Branch's project to educate members and the public about the previously unrecognised services of women in active service in Australia and overseas, expanding their knowledge about the contribution of women. Delivered this year, funding was awarded through the 2022–23 grant program.



*Documentary interviews screened at the Williamstown Football Club.
Credit: This Story Australia Ltd.*



*Recognition of women in active service at Bright RSL Sub-Branch.
Credit: Bright RSL Sub-Branch.*



Commemorative mural at Inverloch RSL Sub-Branch. Credit: Inverloch RSL Sub-Branch.

Supporting commemoration and remembrance

The Victoria Remembers Grant Program supports the community to recognise the service and sacrifice of Victoria's veterans. This year services and commemorative events supported through the Victoria Remembers Grant Program included:

- Battle of Crete and Greece Commemorations
- Borough of Queenscliffe Anzac Day commemorations
- Hawthorn RSL Sub-Branch Anzac and Remembrance Day commemorations
- Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf in World War II
- 2024 Mt Macedon Anzac Day Dawn Service
- Torquay RSL Sub-Branch Anzac Day commemorations
- Oakleigh Carnegie RSL Sub-Branch Anzac and Remembrance Day commemorations
- Over \$6,000 for the Inverloch RSL Sub-Branch to create a mural close to its Commemorative Garden for veterans to reflect on the sacrifices of the many men and women who have served in the ADF.

Supporting the preservation of Victoria's wartime heritage

This year wartime heritage projects supported by the Victoria Remembers Grant Program included:

- \$30,000 for the Toongabbie Cenotaph, which is now a place for the local community to honour and commemorate our veterans
- funding for the Warrenheip War Memorial to pay tribute to the bravery of Warrenheip veterans
- funding for the Australian Aircraft Restoration Group to create a new interactive exhibit celebrating the vital role of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force during World War II and beyond. The exhibit will feature materials from their archival collection, photos, uniforms, storyboards, sound and vision to deliver the stories and legacy that the women's auxiliary have created.

The VVC is proud to support the preservation of Victoria's wartime heritage and looks forward to the successful completion of these projects.

Corporate governance

Council meetings

The Act requires that the VVC meets at least 8 times each year. The VVC held 8 meetings between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024.

Committee structure

The VVC has established 2 permanent committees to help fulfil its functions under the Act. It also formed working parties to oversee items of work including the:

- Engagement Strategy Working Group
- Communities of Practice Working Group.

Funding Sub-Committee

The Funding Sub-Committee develops and reviews the grant guidelines for the Victorian Veterans Fund and the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund. It assesses applications for both funds and makes funding recommendations to the VVC for grants from both funds. During the year the Funding Sub-Committee reviewed and updated its charter and the guidelines for the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund grant program.

Dan Cairnes chaired the Funding Sub-Committee in 2023–24. Lucy Saaroni was appointed as the Funding Sub-Committee chair from 1 May 2024. Other members of the sub-committee include Jo-Anne O'Brien, Brett West and Robin Hunt. The Funding Sub-Committee met twice during the year.

Governance Sub-Committee

The Governance Sub-Committee ensures the VVC complies with all financial and legal requirements under the Act and any other relevant legislation. The sub-committee is also responsible for governance of the 6 patriotic funds for which the VVC is trustee. It also develops the VVC annual report.

Bruce Mildenhall chaired the Governance Sub-Committee in 2023–24. Other members were John McNeill, Pela Markogiannakis (until 7 June 2024), Ken Tsirigotis (until 16 April 2024) and Simon Thorn (until 30 April 2024).

The Governance Sub-Committee met 4 times during the year to oversee the VVC's administration of patriotic funds, associated investment accounts and matters relating to administering patriotic funds for which the VVC is a trustee.

Secretariat support

The Office for Veterans in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing provided secretariat support to the VVC and its sub-committees.

Audited financial records

The VVC financial results are aggregated into the department's financial statements, pursuant to a determination made by the Minister for Finance under s 53(1)(b) of the *Financial Management Act 1994*. Visit the department's website for **financial statements** <<https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/annual-reports>>.

On 6 September 2018 the VVC applied to the Minister for Finance seeking a full exemption from the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance under the Financial Management Act. On 1 October 2018 the Minister for Finance approved this application, exempting the VVC on an ongoing basis from complying with requirements of the Standing Directions.

Anzac Day Proceeds Fund

The Anzac Day Proceeds Fund receives contributions from sporting events held on Anzac Day across Victoria. These are collected by Sport and Recreation Victoria in the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, in keeping with s 4A of the ANZAC Day Act.

In 2023–24 grants totalling \$679,842 were approved from the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund to 19 projects. Table 1 details the grant recipients.

Table 1: Anzac Day Proceeds Fund 2023–24 approved grants

Organisation	Project	Amount
2/14 Battalion Association Inc.	Veterans, widows & families communication project	\$2,500
Air Force Association – Victoria	Veterans Welfare Program	\$10,000
Aussie Veterans Pty Ltd Auspice: Australian Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Veterans' Association Victorian Branch Inc	Aussie Veterans Socials	\$63,631
Ballarat RSL Sub-Branch Inc	Veterans Welfare Program	\$12,000
Ballarat Veterans Assistance Centre	Gathering the Bees and family camps	\$15,000
Ballarat Veterans Assistance Centre	Welfare support	\$6,200
Carry On (Victoria)	Empowering Veterans for a Brighter Future	\$150,000
Gisborne/Macedon Ranges RSL Sub-Branch	Members Welfare meetings	\$10,000
Guitars For Vets Australia Auspice: Music and The Brain Foundation Ltd	Guitars For Veterans Music Therapy	\$20,000
Inverloch RSL Sub-Branch	Veteran Health and Wellbeing Program	\$36,550
Macedon Ranges Legacy Group of Bendigo Legacy Incorporated	Well-being functions for ageing Legacy widows	\$6,285
Melbourne Legacy	Legacy Youth Wellbeing Support Camps Program	\$150,000
Mount Evelyn RSL Sub-Branch	AED for clubrooms	\$1,926
Returned & Services League of Australia Victorian Branch	RSL Victoria General Appeal – Welfare support	\$150,000
The Legacy Club of Ballarat Inc	2024 Winter Heating Allowance	\$18,000
Torquay Surf Lifesaving Club Inc.	Returned Service Community Life Saving	\$7,500
Upwey Belgrave RSL Sub-Branch	Women's wellbeing	\$4,500
Vasey RSL Care	Ex-Service Accommodation Social Engagement Program	\$5,750
Vietnam Veterans Federation Vic Branch Inc	VVF Vic Branch Inc Welfare	\$10,000
Total ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund		\$ 679,842

Victorian Veterans Fund

The Victorian Veterans Fund was established under the Veterans Act. Revenue for the Veterans Fund for one financial year comes from the Victorian Government's Community Support Fund and is equal to one day's revenue of the Community Support Fund.

Grants of up to \$30,000 (excluding GST) are available for projects honouring or commemorating veterans' service or educating Victorians about veterans' contributions. In 2023–24 grants totalling \$456,703.88 were approved for 27 projects. Funds were distributed under the Victoria Remembers Grant Program. Table 2 details the grant recipients.

Table 2: Victorian Veterans Fund 2023–24 approved grants

Organisation	Project	Amount
Ararat Legacy Inc	2024 Project Remembrance – Legacy in Schools Program	\$4,072
ATOMVic	Victorian Schools Remember	\$30,000
Australian Aircraft Restoration Group	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force & Their Contributions to the War Effort	\$3,855.88
Australians with Serbs Association Inc.	By Far Kaymakchalan documentary	\$29,000
Battle of Crete & Greece Commemorative Council of Victoria Auspice: Cretan Federation of Victoria	2024 Battle of Crete & Greece commemorations	\$15,000
Borough of Queenscliffe	Anzac Day commemorative services	\$23,528
Committee 4 Warrenheip Inc	Warrenheip War Memorial	\$3,836
GLAAS Inc	A Memory in Light: Podcast On Vietnam Veterans' Commemorative Walk, Seymour	\$22,000
Hawthorn RSL Sub-Branch	Anzac Day 2024	\$10,000
Hawthorn RSL Sub-Branch	Hawthorn RSL – Acknowledging those who served	\$19,000
Hawthorn RSL Sub-Branch	Remembrance Day 2024	\$8,500
History Teachers' Association of Victoria	History classroom resources – Significant places of World War I	\$25,000
HOUSE OF JT PTY. LTD. Auspice: Lara RSL Sub-Branch	Of Service	\$30,000
Inverloch RSL Sub-Branch	Inverloch RSL & Legacy Com-memorative Garden	\$6,580
Katipunan Australia, Inc	Commemoration of Battle of Leyte (Philippines) Gulf in World War II (1944)	\$20,000
Mt Macedon Anzac Day Dawn Service Incorporated	2024 Mt Macedon Anzac Day Dawn Service	\$18,909
Oakleigh Carnegie RSL Sub-Branch	Oakleigh Carnegie RSL Anzac Dawn Service 2024 and Remem-brance Sunday 2024	\$1,830

Table 2: Victorian Veterans Fund 2023–24 approved grants (continued)

Organisation	Project	Amount
Residents of Castlefield Auspice: Sandringham and District Historical Society Inc	Castlefield Centenary Project	\$30,000
Rotary Club of Manningham City Inc	Schools Anzac Service for April 2024	\$5,534
Shrine of Remembrance	National War Memorial Design Competition Exhibition (working title)	\$30,000
St John's Primary School, Euroa	St John's School Remembrance Project	\$3,570
This Story Australia Ltd.	Williamstown Veterans	\$28,750
Toongabbie Township Group Auspice: Toongabbie Recreation Reserves Committee Inc.	Toongabbie Cenotaph	\$30,000
Torquay RSL Sub-Branch	Anzac Day 2024	\$15,000
Totally & Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) Ex Servicemen & Women – Geelong Welfare and Social Club	Design work for TPI Veterans Memorial Gardens Complex	\$10,000
Totally & Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen & Women's Association of Victoria Inc	Remembering Pozieres	\$30,000
Yarra Glen RSL Auspice: Vietnam Veterans Outer Eastern Melbourne, Inc	Erection of Yarra Glen Vietnam Veterans Memorial	\$2,740
Total Victorian Veterans Fund	\$ 456,703	\$456,703.88

Patriotic funds

The VVC, in partnership with Consumer Affairs Victoria as the regulator of patriotic funds, advises ex-service organisations on how patriotic funds can be raised and appropriately used, including transfer and winding-up arrangements.

The VVC is the trustee for 6 patriotic funds that are administered under Pt 4 of the Act.

The Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women Scholarship Fund – Albert Coates Memorial Trust

This fund, in association with the Albert Coates Memorial Trust, funds scholarships awarded to students who are studying to become paramedics, nurses or doctors in emergency care at Victorian universities. In 2023–24 the VVC provided \$30,631 to the Albert Coates Memorial Trust to allocate scholarships for rural emergency nursing studies.

The Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women Scholarship Fund No 1 – Nurses Memorial Centre

This fund was first established in August 2006. It supports scholarship grants awarded each year to students undertaking postgraduate studies caring for older people or palliative care at a recognised university. The VVC administers the funds, which are provided to the Australian Nurses Memorial Centre as the facilitator of the scholarships. In 2023–24 the VVC provided \$30,635 to the centre for these scholarships.

The War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association Scholarship Fund

This fund supports scholarships awarded by Federation University Australia (FedUni) to students undertaking graduate or postgraduate study a health-related discipline. In 2023–24 the VVC worked with FedUni to update the scholarship agreement to promote the longevity of the awards.

The Victorian Blinded Soldiers' Welfare Patriotic Fund

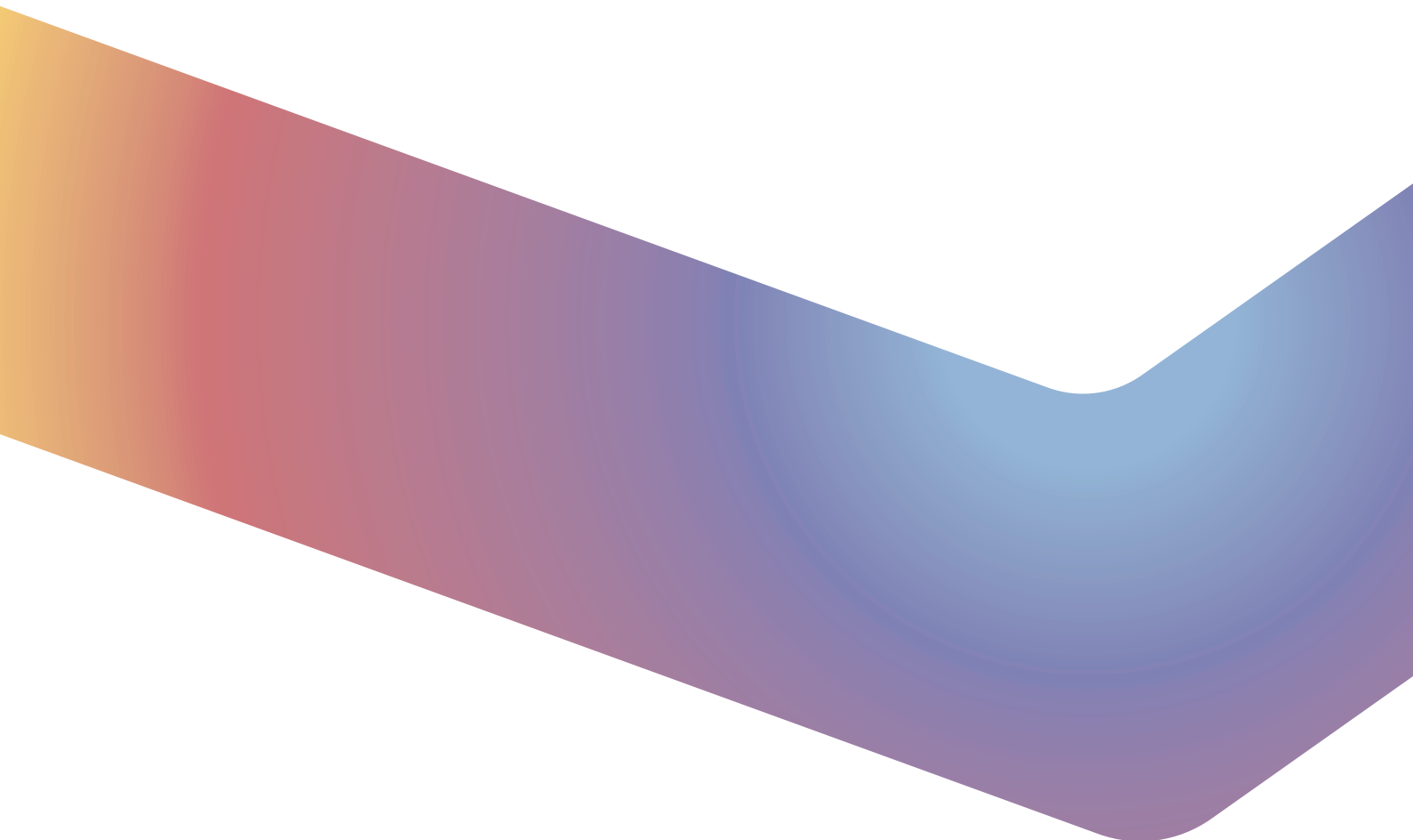
This fund was established in April 2013 from funds provided by the Blinded Soldiers' Association and a letter bequest from the estate of the late Lucy Adamson. It provides welfare assistance to visually impaired veterans and their dependants and offers assistance to former ADF members who have visual impairment due to their service. In 2023–24 the VVC provided \$8,000 to Vision Australia to support its veterans clients.

The Extremely Disabled Association Patriotic Fund

This fund supported the now discontinued Victorian Veteran Community Story Writing and Art Competition, which Austin Health's Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital facilitated. In 2023–24 the VVC explored options for how this fund can continue to support the ex-service community and achieve the objects for which the fund was established.

Australian United Ex-Services Association Patriotic Fund

This fund was established in 2015 to help fund postgraduate study in the field of veterans' health. A memorandum of understanding with Austin Health was signed in February 2016 to deliver the scholarships for training postgraduate students in cognitive processing therapy, with an associated year of supervision. In 2023–24 the VVC explored ways that the objects of this fund might continue to be met through supporting training for clinicians working in the field of psychological trauma.



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