



Don't forget, for more photos and to keep up to date with what's happening at RAAFA WA, check out our Facebook page

## ARVL Appeal to help end veteran homelessness

### ANDREW RUSSELL VETERAN LIVING (ARVL) APPEAL 9-16 FEBRUARY 2024



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT TODAY



Western Australian veterans have selflessly risked their lives to protect our nation's best interests. Sadly, upon returning from service, they face yet another challenge.

The latest research suggests that veterans are now three times more at risk of homelessness than everyday Australians.

But the battle doesn't end there, with homelessness being only one challenge that some of our veterans bravely face. According to a recent report, the homelessness has flow on effects for veterans, with suicide being more prevalent with those experiencing homelessness than those who are not. Reports also show retired male and female veterans are more likely to die of suicide than the average Australian.

With most veterans at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness not seeking help until it's too late, what

we're witnessing in our community is a silent cry for help.

To help the veterans who need it most, RAAFA is calling on all Western Australians to join forces to help end veteran homelessness by supporting the inaugural ARVL Appeal.

The ARVL Appeal aims to raise funds to support the development of purpose-built emergency veteran accommodation in our state to deliver RAAFA's ARVL program. Upon completion, the WA ARVL accommodation site will consist of 16 purpose-built units that specifically cater to veteran needs.

What many people don't realise is that veteran homelessness differs from that of the general population, with four in five veterans experiencing homelessness reporting mental health conditions including PTSD.

In response to this, RAAFA's ARVL program will provide vital support to connect veteran residents with wellbeing and health services that will help them get back on their feet. Such services have proven incredibly successful in the South Australian ARVL program, with nine in ten veteran residents successfully securing long-term, stable accommodation after receiving support.

With most veterans in need of emergency accommodation having served almost a decade, now is our chance to return the favour for their dedicated service.

Help Western Australian veterans experiencing homelessness get back on their feet by supporting the ARVL Appeal and join us to commemorate ARVL Awareness Week from 9-16 February 2024.

To show your support, you can purchase a \$9.00 ARVL Badge on

9 February at the ARVL Appeal HQ in Yagan Square, or from our volunteers at these train stations:

- Mandurah
- Bull Creek
- Fremantle
- Claremont
- Airport Central
- Butler
- Midland
- Joondalup
- Perth Underground
- Elizabeth Quay

Paying tribute to the namesake of the ARVL program, in honour of Sergeant Andrew Russell's tragic passing, all Western Australians who purchase an ARVL badge will be invited to wear their badge with pride in his memory on 16 February. This will also mark the end of ARVL Awareness Week.

You can also donate online at any time by visiting the ARVL Appeal donation website.

Page 3  
ARVL Appeal

Page 4  
Sharing the joy

Page 8  
Meadow Springs Silver Anniversary

Page 9  
RAAFA's 4 Stars

Page 10  
Sustainability success

#### PURPOSE

Pursuing excellence in care and heritage

#### VALUES

Respect; Care; Honesty

#### APPROACH

Creating RAAFA communities open to all

# President's view



By Clive Robartson AM

Hello and welcome to 2024. In this first Air Mail for the year, I invite you to come with me on a five-year journey that will take us to our centenary in 2029, the same year as Western Australia celebrates its bicentenary.

The next five years will be crucial to maintaining 'our Purpose - pursuing excellence in care and heritage' as AFA in WA and indeed across the nation, going 'above and beyond' for those we seek to serve and support.

Through the latter months of last year, the Division Council, CEO and the Executive Leadership Team collaborated in the redesign of the RAAFA Strategic Plan 2024-2029.

Our Purpose and Values have not changed but our Approach and Aspirations have. Periodic reviews and updates of any strategic plan is crucial to ensure the organisation can realign its objectives with current realities, to capitalise on opportunities that arise and meet the challenges that cross its path.

Our Values - **Respect, Care and Honesty** - underpin and reinforce our strategic perspectives. These Values aligned to our Purpose are:

- ✓ Financial - ensuring our financial sustainability and benevolent status
- ✓ Workforce - building strength in our people
- ✓ Operational Excellence - through leadership and operational distinction
- ✓ Communities - by responding to our customers, our members and need in the community
- ✓ Brand and Reputation - to be recognised so that we can fulfill our purpose.

If I were to ask you to respond to an on-line survey of these values, what would you say? Do any of them ring a bell for you? What might be their impact on your daily life? Are they of importance to you as a member? Our strategies mean little if not embraced by you, the members we are here to serve.

## Obligation of members

Our current Rules (constitution) make a number of suggestions about member responsibilities, maintain standards and reputation, act in a manner becoming of the Association, treat all staff with respect, pay the required annual subscription.

Easy, obligations we all expect and observe every day. How about our obligations to the values I referred to earlier? Do we have any obligation to these strategic values? How do we keep in touch with these values as the organisation develops?

## Corporate governance

The Division Council is very aware, that as the Association has grown, so the complexity of operational governance and its demands on Councillors and Executive has also increased, significantly. In addition, pressures from the Australian Government, via the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission are demanding "strengthened provider governance responsibilities" for governing bodies.

At least half of the governing body must comprise of "independent non-executive members" and we must establish and maintain a Quality Care Advisory Body and a Consumer Care Advisory Body.

These have now been put in place.

To meet these and other requirements the Division Council now believe it is essential that our governance structure change from an incorporated association to a company limited by guarantee (CLG). Legal advice recommends this move, expected to provide a much more professional, streamlined and accountable structure required by the Corporations Act and Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission Act.

We have an ambitious program that aims to complete this project by mid-2024 (that's right, this year). We anticipate that a new Constitution will be available by the end of January and that a number of stakeholder meetings will be held during February to receive your comments. A special general meeting of members is required to be held to approve the conversion and if acceptable approve the new constitution.

Thank you for your strong support for our Association through 2023. The new year is well underway and already very busy.

My best wishes for 2024.

## Hall of Fame landing

Late last year, four exceptional individuals were inducted into the Australian Aviation Hall of Fame including WWI flyer, Lieutenant John Cowe McIntosh, AFC.

RAAFA member and Division Councillor, Charles Page, was honoured to attend the event at Albion Park in NSW and provided an address on RAAFA's scholarship named in McIntosh's memory.

Other inductees included friend and fellow pilot, Raymond Parer AFC; Christine Davy MBE and Edgar Johnston DFC.

The function began with a guided tour of the museum, which includes a Southern Cross replica, Constellation, Caribou and Dakota, and was followed by dinner.

Charles said, "I was seated at the McIntosh table with relatives Kylie McIntosh from Queensland and Christine Williamson from Perth. We were next to the Parer

table, with Dick Smith and Parer's relatives.

Since its inception in 2011, the Australian Aviation Hall of Fame has honoured 51 Australians who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of aviation and aerospace in this nation. A further 10 organisations have been recognised with the Southern Cross Award.

John McIntosh, AFC, was a British-born Australian aviator, having been born in Scotland in 1892, later emigrating to Western Australia. At the outbreak of WWI in 1914, John enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps, serving with the 4th Field Ambulance in Gallipoli, reaching the rank of Corporal.

In 1918, John transferred to the Australian Flying Corps and commenced flying training in England. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in 1919 and promoted to Lieutenant.

After the end of WWI, the Australian government offered a prize of £10,000 for the first flight from England to Australia. John joined Ray Parer and although leaving well after the event had been won, they arrived in Darwin on 2 August 1920. Their aircraft was an Airco DH-9, G-EAQM (known as 'PD'). They were the only other entrant to successfully complete the race and the first single engine aeroplane to fly from Great Britain to Australia. He and Ray Parer were awarded the Air Force Cross (AFC) for this feat on 23 November 1920, as well as £500 each.

In 1921, John McIntosh was killed in an aircraft accident near Pithara in



Western Australia. It was the first fatal aircraft accident in the State.

**Air Force Association  
(WA Division) Inc.  
Trading as RAAFA**

**18 Bowman Street, South Perth WA 6151**

**T** (08) 9288 8400

**E** enquiries@raafawa.org.au

**W** www.raafawa.org.au  
**f** RAAFA WA

**Air Mail  
Enquiries** Julie Stearne

**E** airmail@raafawa.org.au

**Air Mail story  
deadlines**

**8 March for April / May  
3 May for June / July  
5 July for August / September**

Please email articles to [airmail@raafawa.org.au](mailto:airmail@raafawa.org.au) (preferred) or post to **Julie Stearne, 18 Bowman Street, South Perth WA 6151.**

# Message from the CEO



By Michelle Fyfe

I think we can all agree that the year is well and truly underway, though I very much hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas break and a very happy start to the New Year.

Although the holiday period was a time to enjoy the company of family and friends, many of our team sacrificed spending it with their own family to care for our residential care residents. A heartfelt thank you to all those staff who worked

through this period, your dedication and commitment to our residents is truly appreciated.

Looking forward to the year ahead, 2024 is set to be hallmarked by exciting change and opportunities for RAAFA and I can attest that there is some wonderful work currently being undertaken in support of that.

## Veteran accommodation

Firstly, you may have seen that we recently joined forces with RSLWA to launch a targeted accommodation program specifically for veterans in WA. The joint initiative is set to provide quality housing for former members of the defence forces in a refurbished apartment building in South Perth. Excitingly, this unique program has been made possible through a partnership with Hancock Prospecting, which has purchased an existing property to support the needs of WA veterans.

The property, which will be known as Sir Valston Hancock House - after a former leader of the Royal Australian Air Force and the uncle

of Mrs Gina Rinehart AO, Executive Chairman of Hancock Prospecting, will be completely refurbished to create a total of nine two-bedroom apartments. Work is commencing on the renovations, and we're looking to house veterans by the middle of this year. As you would expect, we're incredibly grateful to Hancock Prospecting and Mrs Rinehart for her very generous contribution towards this initiative.

## ARVL appeal

And staying on the theme of our core values and why we do what we do, we are looking to significantly elevate the fundraising for our Andrew Russell Veteran Living (ARVL) program during February.

Commencing on Friday, 9 February, our appeal is an opportunity for RAAFA to highlight the growing issue of veteran homelessness within our community. As such, we will be selling lapel pins at Perth metropolitan train stations to raise awareness for this cause, which is both very important to us and central to our philanthropic endeavours - taking care of veterans.

## Environmental sustainability

In other news, this year we will also see an even greater focus on our environmental sustainability and the further minimisation of our impact on the planet. We have many initiatives afoot in this area, but our e-car charging network is key to this strategy. Other initiatives will be announced throughout the year.

And so, in short, 2024 is going to be both challenging and exciting for RAAFA. Our team worked incredibly hard last year and delivered some amazing outcomes, particularly in the residential care space. As such, I know we couldn't have a better placed team to manage all the innovative plans we have for 2024.

In closing, please keep up to date with our activity via our communication channels, including Air Mail and our Facebook page, for more news and announcements over the coming months.

Wishing you all a very happy 2024.

# ARVL Appeal

Professor Kylie Russell explains how the ARVL program began with a knock on the door.

For families that have a member serving in the Australian Defence Force, there's always the dread of receiving that knock on the door.

Sadly, for Sergeant Andrew Russell's family, this day came far too early. Serving in the Perth-based regiment, Sergeant Russell was the first Australian to be killed in battle since the Vietnam War. He tragically lost his life in battle on 16 February 2002.

Ahead of ARVL Awareness Week (9-16 February) we sat down with Andrew's widow, Professor Kylie Russell, to remember this life-changing moment and the actions they took to remember his legacy.

"Being the wife of a soldier, you always know that there's a risk that at some point in time you might get that knock on the door. And then I did and that just changed everything," said Kylie.

"Something that really stuck with me when I tried to figure out what to do after Drew's passing. I remember him talking to me after the Black Hawk tragedy and saying that if anything was to ever happen to him, it would be just me and I'd have to learn to look after myself."

"After Drew's passing, I had an amazing network of people around me who had offered to support me if I wanted to pursue opportunities

and make a difference for our veterans. And so that was what I did. I started reaching out to people and making connections and talking about how we could make a difference.

"When our veterans started to return from Afghanistan, the injuries were horrific. The stories that I was hearing, I just couldn't breathe. I was going to sleep each night in my home, in my comfortable place, knowing my daughter was safe and it troubled me that Drew's mates were coming home and didn't have that same sense of safety or security. And so it was time to make a change.

"I journeyed on and joined a number of various committees to support veterans and eventually found my way into the Veterans Living program space. It was there I was introduced to RAAFA and realised that together we could make such a difference to the lives of our veterans."

Together with RAAFA, Kylie developed the Western Australian Andrew Russell Veteran Living (ARVL) program in memory of her late husband, Sergeant Andrew Russell. Working in union, RAAFA and Kylie have dedicated extensive time and resources to address the most pressing issues our veterans face when returning from service.

Kylie confirmed that while there's a lot of talk in the media about the defence force and veterans being

at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness — no one understands why.

"I don't think Australians always understand why veteran homelessness or suicide occurs. But what we've learned from our research and input is that when our veterans leave the military, that's a huge time of adjustment. They're leaving the very people who are there to support and understand their lived experience. They don't even need to speak the words, just by being together they know how they're feeling and they look after each other," said Kylie.

"When they leave service, a defence force member becomes very vulnerable as they begin the journey of a veteran. They often in Australia move to the other side of the country. They may go to live with family who haven't lived nearby for decades. They now find themselves in a place that may not be that familiar and they're with people who simply don't understand what they've experienced and what they're feeling and how that's impacting on them.

"That's the life of being in the military. I'll always remember a veteran telling me that on leaving the defence force and taking that time to find a new job, it left too much time to think, to relive the memories. And in reliving the memories came the sorrow, the fear. Then came the drinking. Then came the arguments with family and



loved ones. Then came the divorce, followed by the homelessness.

"This was a space that this veteran had never thought that they would ever find themselves in, and no veteran ever does. But no one knows until they leave what their life may be and that is why the ARVL program was developed," said Kylie.

In honour of his service, ARVL Awareness Week will begin on 9 February 2024, and continue through to the day of his passing, 16 February 2024.

Show your support for veterans in need and donate to the ARVL Appeal today.



# Another great sport to try at AFME

‘Whack it, smack it, swing it, hoop it, tap it, but try not to miss it’ is the latest mantra for players using the new croquet court at RAAFA’s AFME.

The new croquet court has taken pride of place on what was the unused second bowling green at the estate. And it now provides yet another light activity for those who are part of the community and want to stay active and remain sociable.

And while it might not be the most intense workout to be had, the game is both mentally stimulating and involves a lot of thought. It’s also a great way to meet people and develop new friendships.

“I noticed that the second bowling green wasn’t being used and I had the idea that it would be great to offer croquet on the estate as an alternative to bowling,” explains Sydney-born nonagenarian and AFME resident, Norm Ashworth, who has championed the new activity coming online.

“So we were very pleased when the new court was finalised at the start of October, with the main focus being on providing the opportunity for social croquet for residents and their families or friends,” Norm explains.

“It’s really a game suitable for all ages, and it’s simple to play given all you need is two teams of two people, so a total of four players.”

Norm explains that the game is played by two sides, with the objective being to advance the balls around the lawn by hitting them with a mallet and scoring a point for each hoop made in the correct order and direction. The winning side is the first to score six points.

“The activity offers non-strenuous exercise and an effective low-intensity workout for all ages, but particularly for older people,” he says.

“It really is a sociable activity that combines both mental and physical



LtoR Pat McAnuff, Norm Ashworth, Brenda Jorgensen

skills, and we think it will be enjoyed by residents and their younger family members.

“Currently we have availability to loan out everything needed to

play, so I would encourage anyone who wants to give it a try to get in touch on 0478 824 822 for what will hopefully be a fun and enjoyable game.”

## Loving lending a hand

73-year-old Cheral Harman had a long career in oil and gas and is the first to admit that she had never really had much contact with elderly people during her lifetime.

But when Cheral retired, she decided she wanted to give back to the community and found a voluntary role at Gordon Lodge through the popular website Volunteering WA.

“I had been volunteering at Kings Park, but it was an early start and the traffic was terrible, so when I saw that help was needed at Gordon Lodge I realised it was close to home and it peaked my interest,” says the born and bred West Australian who has three daughters and four grandsons.

“That was six years ago, and I’ve been at Gordon Lodge ever since. I really love my time with the residents, listening to their stories, talking to them, taking them on walks and doing a bit of gardening with them, their company is really enjoyable.”

Cheral, who lived overseas with her late husband for many years in various locations, including Iran, Papa New Guinea, New Zealand and the UK, is also very involved with Legacy WA, the not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting the families of veterans.

“I remember when I first started volunteering in residential care there was a lot of negative press

about the sector and I was a little apprehensive about what I would find, but I have to say that the staff at Gordon Lodge are absolutely wonderful and incredibly kind.

“There is always a happy atmosphere and so much going on which the volunteers are always keen to help with, whether that’s Christmas celebrations, Valentine’s Day activities, Easter egg hunts, Melbourne Cup sweeps and all of those kind of events throughout the year.

“My time helping out every Wednesday, and often other times during the week if I’m needed, is a real highlight.

“I would recommend volunteering to anyone with a few hours to spare every week. You really do get what you give.”



Cheral with Gordon Lodge resident Dorothy Trump

## Sharing the joy

Christmas will seem like many moons ago for so many of us, but we thought this image perfectly summed up the RAAFA spirit, and we had to share.

Taken at the Alice Ross-King Care Centre, the photo highlights some of the fun that was had over the festive season, not just by the residents, but by the staff as well.

Therapy Assistant, Ana Mesa, summed things up nicely when she said that the most fulfilling and rewarding part of her job was seeing resident’s happy and fulfilled.

“I really enjoy dressing up for our regular events, but one of my

favourite times is putting on my elf costume for our resident’s Christmas party,” says Ana, who has worked for RAAFA for just over five years.

“As the popular song goes: “Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year”, and the common goal of the therapy team is to make sure that all of our residents are able to enjoy the Christmas party and events we organise for them.

“The important thing was that everyone has fun on the day, not only the residents, but their families and the care staff too.”



# Valued volunteers thanked

National Volunteer Week was commemorated recently with a celebration at AFME to recognise the hard work and tireless commitment of all of the estate's highly-valued volunteers.

During the lunchtime celebration, Estate Manager, Penny John, said she was honoured to stand before the group of volunteers to express her heartfelt gratitude for the huge dedication, in addition to time and energy, which the volunteers invest in serving the village.

"Your unwavering commitment to the betterment of our community is truly commendable and deserving of recognition," she said.

"Volunteers are the backbone of our village, the unsung heroes who work tirelessly to make a difference to the lives of our neighbours and friends. Your selfless contributions have a profound impact on the quality-of-life people experience at the village, and we are deeply appreciative of your dedication."

During the event, one volunteer was singled out in particular - Grace Anderson, who has been a volunteer since she moved into the estate in 2011.

In her voluntary capacity, Grace spends time in the estate office every month, where she helps with administration and the monthly statements.

"I would like to make a special mention and present a certificate to Grace, who has volunteered in both the Central Support Office as well as the estate office, where she has compiled the monthly accounts and worked on the Chatter newsletter for many years," added Penny.

"Her reliability and dedication every month, always with a smile and never any objection, has been very much appreciated over the years, and we are extremely grateful."

Unsurprisingly, Grace admitted to being thoroughly humbled and shocked by the special recognition.

"When my husband was alive, he got all of the recognition and I was very much in the background," laughs Grace. "And so receiving this special thanks really did take me by surprise."

"The fact is that I love volunteering, I'm lucky enough to be in good health and I realised that it's also very good for my brain."



A special thanks to all of RAAFA's volunteers at AFME and in fact at all of our estates, facilities and the museum.

In Penny's words: "Your contributions are immeasurable. Whether you are mentoring the youth, assisting the elderly,

beautifying our surroundings, administering, or getting involved in activities and essential services, your actions exemplify the power of community.

The spirit of volunteerism is most certainly alive and well at RAAFA."

## Intergenerational friendships forged

An intergenerational partnership between students at Coo loongup Primary School and residents at RAAFA's Challenger Court in Rockingham has seen students and seniors gain the opportunity to become friends over boardgames, storytelling and reading.

Every Tuesday over the past few months, the young school students and residents from the popular retirement village have spent quality time together and gained the opportunity to become well acquainted.

One of the participants in the program is Suzanne Ainger, who originally hails from Queensland and has lived at Challenger Court for just over two years.

"I just love being with young people, they make me feel young myself even though I know I'm not," says the 74-year-old who has two sons and five grandchildren, and who has lived in many different countries around the world during her lifetime.

"I think it's important to spend time with the younger generation to really learn what it's like for them, and at the same time I really enjoy being in their company.

"I've learnt that the feeling was mutual, as one of the students involved told me that she was always excited when she woke up

on a Tuesday morning, knowing she would get to spend time with us seniors from the village."

Initiated by Challenger Court's previous Estate Coordinator, Bruce Carstairs, the program began with the focus of enabling the children

and seniors to gain an insight into each other's lives and learn more about their life experiences.

"In total there were three young boys and one girl in the program, and all of them were completely different in terms of their

personalities," adds Suzanne.

"They were incredibly interesting in different ways and I very much felt the program was a huge success from both perspectives, and one which will hopefully be continued into 2024."



# Play has special meaning

RAAFA Merriwa Estate resident, Joan Meader, left Margaret Thatcher's Britain in December 1980, and says she has never looked back.

"My previous husband's mother, sister and brother were all living out here, and my husband at the time was also keen to emigrate, so although it took me quite a while to get to grips with the idea of leaving my family, we finally made the decision and I never looked back," says the 85-year-old.

Joan says the opportunities for her three daughters in Australia, and now her seven grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren, have been incredible, and - during her working years - she was also able to carve out a career that she loved too.

"I worked for Silver Chain as a carer for over 21 years and loved my job," says the great-grandmother, who has lived at RAAFA's Merriwa estate for almost four years."

While she worked as a carer, one of Joan's clients was a particularly high-profile West Australian, Vivian Bullwinkel, after whom RAAFA's very own Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge was named, which first opened its doors in 2007 at Cambrai Village.

And in what can be seen as a serendipitous turn of events, a play

is set to open in Perth during April, which will detail Vivian Bullwinkel's life - something that is set to have special meaning for Joan.

"I cared for Vivian for over five years in the 1990s, right up until just before her death in the year 2000. In fact, I was lucky enough to visit her just the week before she died," Joan explains.

"She was certainly a big part of my life for many years."

21 Hearts: Vivian Bullwinkel and the nurses of the Vyner Brooke details the true story of Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel, AO, MBE, ARRC, ED, and 65 Australian nurses who boarded the ship the Vyner Brooke to flee the Japanese invasion of Singapore in February 1942.

Tragically the ship was bombed by Japanese fighter planes and, after spending days at sea, Vivian and several other survivors found their way to Radji Beach on Banka Island, where they surrendered.

Subsequently, in one of the most atrocious acts of war crimes in Australia's history, 22 nurses were forced to march into the sea where they were callously machine gunned. The only survivor and witness - Vivian - spent the rest of the war in a prison camp, and her remaining years fighting for

recognition of the bravery of her friends and colleagues.

"Vivian was such a kind person and she was so polite, whatever I did for her she was always very happy and grateful," explains Joan, who cared for Vivian's every need, including doing her hair and makeup, and helping her to dress for important occasions, such as ANZAC Day.

"She was a very private person and didn't like to talk about the war years and what happened. She would talk about anything else, but not what she went through in captivity.

"I still remember her well, she was an incredibly special person and I, for one, am very much looking forward to seeing the play and



watching her story of hope, courage and resilience."

Written by Jenny Davis, the play will run at Como Theatre from 11-21 April and the 90-minute performance is being described as a celebration of the human spirit, offering an uplifting and inspiring story which is also a reminder of the great futility of war.

## Introducing Aaron

RAAFA welcomed Aaron Crowther to the executive team recently to lead the association's brand programs, helping to optimise the experience residents, customers and members have such that the rest of WA sees just how wonderful RAAFA is.

Aaron says it's helpful to think of in this way. Great brands aren't known for what they sell, but the way they make people feel and the best brands are the ones that are unique and inspire people to talk about them.

To this end RAAFA's marketing and membership teams have joined forces and expanded to include communication. This means we will be changing the way we connect with each other, and increasing the range of people we can reach in the community that we care for. Aaron will also take responsibility for fundraising and RAAFA's Aviation Heritage Museum.

On introducing Aaron, CEO Michelle Fyfe said, "RAAFA's business is evolving, and we have opportunities to grow and expand, not only in residential care and retirement living, but also in the services we offer to veterans and their families. This is an exciting opportunity for RAAFA and its brand, which we

need to be strong and recognisable in the wider community."

Born in Sydney, Aaron was raised near Newcastle and is consequently a Rugby League fan. He is also a family man. Moving to Western Australia in 2019, Aaron and wife Clementine are now proud WA locals and happily call it home with their young sons Reuben (5), Hamish (3) and Charlie (1).

Starting his early career in journalism and travelling to report stories all over Asia, North America and Europe, Aaron's career has traversed a range of professions and industries and he says the one thing that has stayed consistent is his desire to understand people with a hope he can use that insight to inspire.

Some of his career highlights include rebranding for Western Sydney University, launching the Sustainability Development Goals for the United Nations and even launching Heineken's first low alcohol beer - something he admires in RAAFA's recent launch and collaboration with Indian Ocean Brewing.

"In a very short time I have been blown away by the passion that exists right across RAAFA and



the dedication evident in all of the people, providing respectful and caring communities. I am excited to be a part of such a caring place and to help support our members, residents and families across the incredible range of services we offer."

When asked to describe himself as a leader, Aaron says he is a lifelong learner who aspires to ask good questions and listen attentively to both what is said and what is left out. He also endeavours to be

someone who supports his teams to chase new and different ideas.

"I've worked in tech, aged care, emergency services, education, advertising and media and I think that probably explains that I like to test myself. I like to explore. And I'm really happy to draw on these experiences to enhance the already great work RAAFA does."

Please join us in giving Aaron a very special warm RAAFA welcome to the team and we look forward to sharing the exciting results to come.

# Making the move to Meadow Springs

Most people who move into a RAAFA retirement village need to be shown around and go through some kind of informal induction process, but not the latest resident at RAAFA's popular Meadow Springs Estate.

Joan Biffin moved into her new home just a week before Christmas, after a long association with RAAFA that has spanned more than 20 years.

"My late husband and I always lived in the country, but after he became unwell we moved to Mandurah where we joined RAAFA first and foremost so we could play bowls," explains 81-year-old Joan, who is a mum to three sons and a grandmother to four.

"We really enjoyed spending time on the estate over the years and I joined the art group that meets every Friday too, which I loved, so much so that I'm now the president and have been for some time."

Joan explains that her husband passed away six years ago and, in recent times, she had found the upkeep of her 4 x 2 family home

quite challenging, particularly maintaining the garden and getting things fixed when they went wrong.

"I had a very good neighbour who would help out with repairs, but I realised I would have to move eventually, even though I found that thought quite daunting as you just accumulate so much stuff over a lifetime."

Joan explains that, after making the decision, her family and a couple of very good friends pitched in to help sort out her home and prepare her for downsizing.

"It all happened very quickly as the house sold almost immediately, and then I had a holiday booked to Singapore which I still went on.

"And then, on 18 December I moved into the estate, and I have to say that I felt right at home straight away. It's obviously only been a few weeks, but already I love my new place and living on the estate."

And so, does Joan have any advice for anyone in a similar situation who is thinking about making the move into a retirement estate?



"I would say start the process early as it's so much harder if you leave it until later," says Joan, who says she also loved the layout of her new home, and the fact that it's in a very private position at the end of a cul-de-sac.

"I feel very safe here and I know that if anything goes wrong, I can just phone up and it will get fixed, which

gives me great peace of mind.

"I'm very happy that I made the move, as are all my family who are all delighted for me. In fact, they all came over to enjoy Christmas day in my new home and we had a great time, even if we did sit at a makeshift kitchen table, surrounded by packing boxes," she laughs.

## Best place in the world

Despite living in many countries around the world, including America, Zimbabwe and South Africa, new Merriwa Estate residents Avril and David Hurst say there is nowhere else on the globe they would rather be at this time in their lives.

"We are just so happy to be here," says 77-year-old Avril, who moved into the friendly community with

her husband of 54 years, David, just a couple of months ago.

"Everyone has been so welcoming and kind to us since day one, whenever you walk around the estate everyone is very polite and friendly and all the staff are so helpful, we can't fault anything and really couldn't ask for more."

Living in Australia is a far cry from

the country that the couple called home for many years, and where David was born – Zimbabwe.

"Of course we still miss our previous life a great deal, Africa is arguably the most beautiful continent, but sadly it seems to be the most doomed and we lost virtually everything when we left the country, like many other Zimbabweans," adds Avril, who explains that she and her husband were only able to get back on their feet as a result of the incredible help from family in America.

"And so, for us, it did take a while to settle in Australia when we first arrived, we were used to having help around the house and garden from our domestic staff who, to us, were like part of the family. Life 'down under' was a whole 'new scene', so to speak.

"And even though our eldest son lives in Iluka, we have another son living in Devon in England, so our family, and extended family, are scattered all over the world now.

"But with the family's help, we were able to move into a little house in Yancheep when we first arrived 'down under'. We lived there for almost 14 years until we decided that it was time to move to somewhere where we had backup as we got older."

Avril explains that it was a local friend, who she originally went to school with back in Rhodesia, who

suggested RAAFA's Merriwa Estate as a fantastic place to live. And so she and David checked out the estate and were very pleasantly surprised.

"We looked at a few houses in the estate and then one came up, which I liked immediately," adds Avril, who was born in Scotland and migrated to South Africa with her family when she was just four years old.

"We were used to space and a garden as we loved pottering around, and my husband David isn't fully retired as he works a couple of days a week, but we still felt it was the right thing to do.

"And I must say that we have settled so well here, it just feels amazingly safe and I have slept like a log knowing that we are in a secure community. For years we had both slept with one ear and one eye open, as that's the way it was in Zimbabwe.

"We love all the facilities at RAAFA, the therapy pool has been a real lifesaver as it has been the perfect way to exercise, plus we've been to a number of sundowners and evening events that we've very much enjoyed.

"It actually feels quite a privilege to be here and I can't recommend the estate highly enough. We're both very content to be here and so happy to have found this community. We would recommend it highly to anyone."



# Silver anniversary celebrations

It's fair to say that the vast majority of RAAFA's Meadow Springs Estate joined in the celebratory lunch to commemorate its 25th anniversary in November.

And it's also fair to say that fun was had by all, in addition to a trip down memory lane as estate manager, Joanne Fraser, reminisced about the year 1998 and its many highlights, including Australia coming home from the year's Commonwealth Games with 199 medals.

Closer to Perth however, and as Jo recounted, the Mandurah Mail was advertising large bananas for \$1.79/kg (today they sell for 81c each) and an ocean front 'mansion' was advertised in Mandurah for \$295,000, while a two-bedroom, fully furnished, ocean front duplex in Halls Head could be had for \$74,000.

And as Jo recounted, the first twenty residents of the Meadow Springs Estate were known as the 'estate pioneers', two of whom were Keith and Judith Lockhart, with Judith sharing her story as part of the event celebrations.

"In January 1999, Keith and I came out to look at the estate to see if we'd like to live here," she said. "Our one-acre block was getting a bit too much for us, but I still felt a bit of apprehension as I hadn't long had my 60th birthday and thought that moving into an 'old people's estate' would mean I'd probably be sitting in my chair reading books all day.

But, how wrong I was! I've never sat in my chair reading any books! It was the best decision we ever made."

Judith continued: "We have watched the estate grow from our block of land, which started off as a pile of sand, to the lovely home it is today.

"And we've been so lucky to have had wonderful neighbours, great get-togethers, barbecues, breakfasts and dinner parties. All good times, though sadly there are only three of us originals left now - Judy Mather, Enid Barker and myself.

"Keith was so involved in the estate and on all the committees. Sadly, I lost him nine years ago, but I was so grateful to be living here as it made his passing so much more bearable - everybody was so kind."

During the event, Jo Fraser also shared memories of the estate's history, as well as some of the colourful characters that have called the estate home over the years.

"Most of all I would like to thank all of those residents who have literally sweated buckets to develop our estate into the community we have here today," she said.

"And also for the work they have done over the years to see our community grow whilst enriching the lives of residents through their generous volunteer activities and kind neighbourly deeds."

"The list of all those incredibly community-minded and generous individuals is too long to mention. But, suffice to say, long may the spirit of caring, sharing, fun and laughter prevail at RAAFA Estate Meadow Springs, and here's to the next 25 years."

What the residents said:

"I've moved into the estate during January 1999 and have been so



LtoR Pam Calver and Joan Walker



LtoR Allan Elliot, Hugh and May Brett

happy here over the years," says Barbara Burchell.

"When we came to have a look at the estate it was just really dust and there was a tractor, so that was our initial impression.

"But I really would recommend it to anyone, there is so much going for the place, it's so friendly and safe. It's not a patch on any other retirement village in Mandurah, I don't think."

Arthur and Joan Walker are also two of the original residents of Meadow Springs estate.

The couple were instrumental in helping to establish the bowling green, which Arthur has been greenkeeper of pretty much ever since. At the same time, Joan has also been a very active and successful member of the club, holding various positions on the committee.

"We were active members of the Bull Creek bowling club to start with," explains Joan, who moved into the estate along with husband Arthur in January 1999.

"We got lots of information about the bowling club from AFME, and it was great to get that help.

"And, since that time, we've loved

every minute of living at Meadow Springs, we never once regretted it. We feel very safe here and if we want help we can always ask for it.

"We have a wonderful community and we appreciate it every day."

Moving in during February 1999, original residents May and Hugh Brett have also got some great tales to tell about the estate.

"May and I were very involved in the early years and used to take groups of residents away for a few days, down to Margaret River," recalls 88-year-old Hugh.

"We used to organise all of the accommodation and the meals, it was great fun.

"And then we have both been involved with various committees over the years, including the social committee where we helped to organise different functions.

"May worked behind the bar as a volunteer about 20 hours a week and we used to regularly go down to Fremantle to listen to the buskers, find the good ones and then book them for entertainment on a Friday night," laughs Hugh.

"We have both been members of RAAFA since 1974, so that's how long our commitment goes back."

## Veteran navigates visit to the museum

The Aviation Heritage Museum hosted a very special visitor recently.

Cliff Hall was an RAAF navigator during WWII, during which time he flew over German-occupied Europe aboard Lancaster bombers, and who recently made the journey from his home in New South Wales to take a trip down memory lane at the museum.

The nonagenarian had previously visited the museum with his grandsons, Brad and Adam, more than 30 years ago. And this time, with the pair now well and truly adults, they again accompanied their grandfather to hear his stories while he was given the opportunity to sit back at the navigator's desk on board the museum's very own Lancaster bomber.

Cliff, who was born in Lake Macquarie, enlisted in the RAAF in 1943, the week before his eighteenth birthday, and commenced service one month later.

On completion of his training, Cliff was assigned to 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron stationed at RAF Spilsby, Lincolnshire, arriving in March 1945 in the immediate aftermath of the 'shock and awe' bombing of Dresden.

Cliff was demobilised on 18 January 1946, at RAAF Bradfield Park, where it had all begun for him some three years earlier.

Cliff went on to have four children and a successful career in the building industry.

Acknowledgement: Cliff Hall family.





# RAAFA's stars align

In some very pleasing news, which was brought to us in December 2023 by the Department of Health and Aged Care, all of RAAFA's residential care homes have received a four-star rating under the relatively new Aged Care Star Ratings System.

The Star Ratings were introduced by the Australian government in response to recommendations flowing from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, which highlighted the need for a simple and transparent way to compare the quality of aged care homes.

The rating system is designed to support older Australians to compare aged care services and make choices about their care, as a result of a rating process that focuses on transparency, accountability and capability.

"This is very exciting news and one that we are all very pleased about," says Janice Vickery, one of RAAFA's team of Quality Coordinators.

"We are really very proud of the fact that we now have a four-star rating, and this standard will help consumers to understand the quality of RAAFA's care and service provision."

Star Ratings are a simple way of showing the quality of care at a residential care home and how that care compares to other homes and facilities. All residential care homes across Australia now receive a rating between one and five stars, to indicate the quality of their care across several key areas of performance.

"Over the past year the team at RAAFA has worked hard to improve our ratings and we are very pleased with this result," adds Janice.

"Of course, we're always striving for excellence and our next goal will be to reach the maximum 5 Star Rating, which we are already working towards."

Star Ratings have three primary objectives:



- ★ To empower older Australians and their representatives with greater information to make choices about their aged care.
- ★ To incentivise providers like RAAFA in continuous quality improvement and the delivery

of high-quality care to older Australians

- ★ To help support government to provide transparent information about the quality of aged care.

## Your Division Councillor – Robert Stewart

Robert Stewart commenced as an elected Division Councillor in January 2024.

Robert is an experienced financial advisor and has extensive board director experience in the financial, property and construction industries. Robert's current board positions include Chairman of St Leonard's Estate Pty Ltd, Executive Director of Durack Capital Pty Ltd and Chairman of Classic Contractors Pty Ltd.

With a background in Financial Planning, Robert has qualifications in Ministry.



## Art in the community

Residents at Erskine Grove joined together with a group of students from Mandurah Catholic College before Christmas to get down and get stencilling, by adding a touch of festive fun to the streets in the village.

The Year 10 teenagers and residents selected Valencia Drive as the place to start and painted trees and bells liberally on the road and driveways around the village.

The team had a great morning together being creative and spreading Christmas cheer, while the traffic marshals did a stellar job ensuring everyone stayed safe while the painting took place.

According to resident and RAAFA member, Denise Nicolay, the stencils painted by the students added to the Christmas spirit around the village along with other decorations

already in place, which included the Nativity scene, Christmas trees and the festive fairy lights. It was also a fantastic way to bring the community together, be creative and have some fun.

"This year, the branch committee decided to add some additional Christmas cheer to our main street, and so David and Basil set about industriously making stencils of Christmas bells and trees," she explains.

"It certainly added to the festive season at our wonderful estate, so much so that we might even do a repeat performance next Christmas."

Well done everyone, and a big thanks to all the students and teachers from Mandurah Catholic College who contributed so much to both the community and festive



LtoR Shirley Lloyd, Peter Nicolay, David Lloyd and Basil Wilton

spirit that was enjoyed across Erskine Grove.

## For the fete hearted

The Cambrai Village fete is an annual celebration of a year's worth of teamwork and this year was no exception.

Estate Manager, Peter Owens summed it up when he said, "the fete runs for a day, takes a year to organise and would not happen without the commitment of individuals, committees and interest groups across the estate." It is not only a successful fundraiser, but a reason to bring the village together and as a result, creates a friendly,

cohesive community.

This year the fete drew big crowds that spent lots of money, raising over \$13,000, with everyone having had a great time while also walking away with a bargain.

Well done team and we've been told from a reliable source that planning is already underway for next year.



# Sustainability success continues

It's the New Year, and that goes hand-in-hand with improved initiatives at RAAFA, particularly in the area of sustainability.

And so, we are very excited to let you know that last year, RAAFA's property and sustainability team applied for funding from the WA government, through its *Charge Up* program. As a result of a successful application, RAAFA is now set to install Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations at its villages at Merriwa, Meadow Springs, and also the central support office in South Perth.

Phil Bedford, RAAFA's General Manager of Property and Sustainability, explains that despite the initiative being limited to three sites initially, planning has already commenced for further charging stations in the next round of funding applications.

"I think many people would agree that EV charging is the clean, renewable, cost-effective solution for the future," says Phil.

"Our new charging stations highlight the importance of environmental awareness in our RAAFA communities, and also enable us to demonstrate our commitment to, and take responsibility for, the effects that our business activities have on the environment.

RAAFA's charging stations will operate around the clock and are specifically intended for residents, staff, volunteers, families of residents and authorised visitors.

In order to access the charging stations, individuals must bring their own cable, in addition to downloading the specialised phone app, *Charge Hub*.

RAAFA's CEO, Michelle Fyfe, adds that she is delighted to mark

this significant accomplishment with the RAAFA community.

"I'm thrilled to be able to celebrate this achievement with everyone, as we move forward in a future-focused way, which takes into consideration both our social and environmental impact and responsibility," she says.

More detail will follow as the installation of the charging stations is completed and they are ready for use.



## Collaboration in dedicated veteran housing program

We are excited to announce that we have joined forces with RSLWA to launch the first targeted accommodation program specifically for veterans in WA.

The joint initiative between RAAFA, and RSLWA is set to provide quality housing for former members of the defence forces in a refurbished apartment building in South Perth.

The unique program has been made possible through a partnership with Hancock Prospecting, which has purchased an existing property to support the needs of WA veterans.

Mrs Gina Rinehart AO, Executive Chairman of Hancock Prospecting, was named "Honorary Guardian of Veterans" by Soldier On in 2023 for her long-term support of veterans. Under her leadership Hancock Prospecting and its related companies, including Roy Hill, drive the opportunity for veteran employment within each of these businesses.

The property, which will be known as Sir Valston Hancock House - after a former leader of the Royal Australian Air Force and uncle of Mrs Rinehart - will be completely refurbished to create a total of nine two-bedroom apartments.

RAAFA CEO Michelle Fyfe said the initiative would provide more targeted and much-needed assistance to the veteran community.

"We're all too aware of the pressures many West Australians are facing to secure accommodation amid the

ongoing housing crisis, and veterans - particularly those moving out of Defence back into community life - are no exception," she said.

"There are approximately 330 veterans who return to civilian life in WA each year and while most don't need assistance, this new targeted program will ensure there is somewhere to turn for those who do.

"Across Australia nearly 6,000 current and former ADF personnel - or 5.3% of our veteran community - are facing difficulty securing accommodation, which is a rate nearly three times higher than the broader population. Together with RSLWA, we are proud to be leading the way in providing solutions and more dedicated assistance in WA."

Once the property renovations are complete, RAAFA and RSLWA will share responsibilities for managing and delivering the program to provide veterans with access to accommodation and wraparound wellbeing services tailored to their individual needs.

RAAFA will oversee program operations including property maintenance, tenancy agreements, and collaboration with RSLWA, which will be responsible for promoting the program within the veteran community, securing tenants, and managing ongoing engagement with residents including connecting them to wellbeing services.

Both RAAFA and RSLWA have



acknowledged the significant support provided by Hancock Prospecting and its Executive Chair, Mrs Gina Rinehart, without whom this important initiative would not have been possible.

"We are grateful for Mrs Rinehart's generous contribution and her ongoing commitment to veterans'

wellbeing. This support is enabling RSLWA and RAAFA to build on our proud legacies of going above and beyond to support WA veterans who have given incredible service to our country," said RSLWA CEO Vince Connelly. The property is expected to be ready to accept residents in the first half of 2024.

# Club Bites

Proof of membership may be required when using facilities. Please have your card available. Non-members are required to be signed in by a member. Want to join? Applications and details available on our website.

## MEADOW SPRINGS CLUB 9582 5375

All bookings for lunch and dinner can be made at the bar.

### Weekly specials

Monday, carvery corner - 2 courses, choice of 2 roasts \$19.50

Tuesday, special day - main meal with glass of house wine or midday \$19.50

Wednesday, club night - meals from \$15.00, chase the ace, bingo and horse racing

Thursday, Happy hour, 4.00pm to 6.00pm

Friday, special day - main meal with glass of house wine or midday \$19.50



## CAMBRAI CLUB 9304 5400

### Weekly specials

Tuesday, darts and happy hour, 4.00pm

2nd Tuesday, parmi night, \$15.00. Bookings essential

Wednesday, morning tea, \$6.00 coffee and cake from 10.00am

1st and 3rd Wednesday, roast dinner \$24.00. Happy hour from 4.00pm. Bookings essential

2nd and 4th Wednesday, carvery \$25.00. Happy hour from 4.00pm

Friday, lunch from 11.30am, no booking necessary

1st and 3rd Friday, sundowner and happy hour from 5.00pm



## BULL CREEK CLUB 9311 4460

### Weekly specials

Monday to Friday, light breakfast 9.00am to 10.00am

Monday to Friday, lunch 11.00am to 2.00pm

Tuesday, Fish and chips \$18.00

Monday and Wednesday, happy Hour 4.00pm

Friday, dinner and raffles 5.00pm to 7.00pm



## MERRIWA CLUB 9400 3640

### Weekly specials

2nd Monday, 2.00pm to 3.00pm Devonshire afternoon tea

1st and 3rd Tuesday, club night \$16.00 parmi or pasta. Includes beverage (bookings essential)

Wednesday, roast lunch \$16.00

Wednesday, happy hour 4.00pm

Thursday, morning tea from 10.00am

Thursday, lunch specials \$16.00

2nd and 4th Friday, bistro night (bookings essential)

3rd Saturday, sundowner bar opens 4.00pm



LtoR Sue Ewers-Verge and June Humphries

## Warm welcome

The social group were thrilled to see so many residents attend the quarterly meet and greet morning tea at

RAAFA's Amity Village Albany.

The turnout was wonderful, and everyone enjoyed the selection of cakes and coffee brought along by residents to share. It was a great opportunity to welcome the newer

residents to this warm community and get to know one another.

It was also provided everyone with an excuse for a good old chin wag and catch up.

# RAAFA Wellbeing Team

## CAMBRAI VILLAGE

Vanessa Priestley  
9304 5280

## RAAFA ESTATE MERRIWA

9400 3778

## AFME

Jo Oliver  
9311 4562

## ERSKINE GROVE

Angeline Carleton  
9586 4309

## RAAFA ESTATE MEADOW SPRINGS

Mischa Matthews  
9582 5369

## RAAFA AMITY VILLAGE ALBANY

Ceridwen Fitzpatrick  
9841 8311

## Meadow Springs

### Seniors Week

What better way than to 'have a go' and give it a try. Activities onsite included pickle ball, croquet, bocce/pentanq, mini golf, lawn bowls and aqua aerobics. Followed by a special lunch and exergaming on the big screen in Middleton Hall. It was a great day with loads of laughs.

### November

The month awareness campaign included information and guidance sessions for the men on their mental and physical health. The month-long fundraising ended with a thank you sausage sizzle and prizes for the best moustache and over \$430 was raised.



## Amity Village

### Art and craft exhibition

Showcasing the extraordinary talents of this regular group.



## Erskine Grove

### Christmas lolly run

The annual Christmas lolly run is always a hoot with the staff and children helping to spread a little cheer with the residents.



### Nonagenarian Christmas lunch

A special Christmas lunch was prepared and served by our team of volunteers to celebrate the season with our senior residents.



### Volunteers

We ran a special thankyou event for our amazing band of volunteers, with entertainment by Cas Sweeny followed by a sausage sizzle.

