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## Stirling apartments takes off



LtoR Tonya Zeeman, Michelle Fyfe and Clive Robartson

Work on RAAFA's Stirling apartments at AFME has started! Forming stage six of the estate's master plan redevelopment, the Stirling project occupies the site of the former Sivyer, Harris, Fraser and Ingram buildings, and will see an additional 63 high quality apartments built to accommodate Western Australia's growing population of retired residents.

The contemporary purpose-designed apartments over six floors will comprise one, two and three-bedroom configurations, with an additional residents' lounge and secure undercover car park located on the ground floor of the building.

And, of course, AFME residents were the first to know that work was about to begin, following a well-attended meeting held at the estate in February, to formally announce commencement of the project's construction - and which saw more than 130 residents in attendance.

CEO Michelle Fyfe said the Stirling apartments will provide high quality, independent living arrangements for retired Western Australians looking for a community to call home.

"RAAFA's Air Force Memorial Estate blends the best of both worlds, offering residents access to tranquil, natural surrounds within the convenience of a well-connected community. We are delighted to be expanding our connected, amenity-filled and thriving community which we know suits the needs of Perth's growing retired resident population," she said.

Set to revitalise the northwestern corridor of AFME, work on the Stirling project is being undertaken by head contractor and local building group Georgiou.

Georgiou Group General Manager Steve Okill adds: "Since our initial engagement it was clear to us that close collaboration with RAAFA

and its trusted consultants would be required to ensure our efforts aligned with their vision. We're excited to continue this journey together and further strengthen our relationship as we bring the project to life."

An ode to the Short Stirling, a British four-engine heavy bomber used during WWII, the Stirling development adds to RAAFA's rich heritage in aviation and service, with the estate also home to the Aviation Heritage Museum.

The master plan will see the site's original units replaced with contemporary apartment accommodation in stages over the next decade. With construction now underway, Georgiou Group has earmarked practical completion of the Stirling project by mid 2025.

And so, what did some of the residents who were relocated for

the demolition have to say about construction starting?

Margaret Trail said, "I'm excited about the new build. I came from Queensland to live here and can't wait to get into the new apartments. I turn 85 in a few weeks and am looking forward to it."

Seet Chong, said "Am very happy that it is proceeding and looking forward to moving and feel very blessed."

Ken and Zina Haake said, "It will be a wonderful 50th anniversary present for us. We were neighbours with Seet in Harris house and think it is fantastic that the development is proceeding."

Pat Sligo said, "I moved from one of the original blocks into another one of the original blocks and have no complaints at all. The estate is very well run."

**Page 3**  
A cinematic life

**Page 4**  
Mates helping veterans

**Page 6**  
Vale Doug Arrowsmith

**Page 7**  
Eternal flame at AMFE

**Page 8**  
Graham Bland awarded OAM

### 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 for another edition of Air Mail. Now well into 2024 in what has so far been a very busy start to the year.

## ARVL appeal

Congratulations to all staff who volunteered to "rattle the tin" at railway stations and venues across Perth to launch the Andrew Russell Veterans Living (ARVL) appeal, on Friday, 9 February.

Support from Hon Paul Papalia CSC MLA, Professor Kylie Russell

and CEO Michelle Fyfe made for wonderful publicity across all media, and an outstanding launch of this important initiative of RAAFA.

Response to date has been outstanding. Thank you, members, for your ongoing financial support, we still have a way to go, but I am confident we will find the additional funding needed to start building in Cannington. Your support both financially and in helping spread the word for this important initiative is very much appreciated.

## Conversion to a Company Limited by Guarantee

The Division Council has been delighted with the response by members to our information sessions on corporate governance and the recommendation of the Council to change our entity from an incorporated association to a company limited by guarantee.

This is a bold step, and one that the Division Council strongly believes is in the best interests of AFA WA members and considered necessary as a result of our exceptional growth through the last decade.

The next step is a Special General

Meeting (SGM), at which members will be asked to vote on a number of resolutions. Details of the meeting and proposed changes will be provided in a forthcoming special edition of Air Mail.

The upcoming special edition includes details of the proposed change; an outline of why these changes are considered necessary; and the clauses in the current constitution that are proposed to be changed.

## ANZAC Day

Once again ANZAC Day is approaching quickly and I would like to encourage all of our residents and members to support your local village ceremony or local community events.

Due to the dwindling numbers that have marched under the AFA banner at the ANZAC Day march in recent years, it has been decided that we will not participate this year. However, the Association strongly encourages you to participate under your respective service banner where appropriate.

The Association will be represented at the traditional Dawn Service held

in Kings Park and will be laying a wreath.

I will be representing the Association on the dais in St Georges Terrace for the march past and attending the associated ceremony that follows in the Perth Concert Hall.

For the first time in Perth, the servicewomen (past and present) of the ADF will march behind a new ADF banner. This is an historic moment as the women of the Navy, Army and Air Force join together to march in solidarity. If you have never marched before, I encourage you to do so.

## Stirling Apartments - Stage 6 redevelopment

The first week in March saw the commencement of work on the new apartment development at AFME in Bull Creek following civil and building construction company Georgiou Group being awarded the contract. A meeting of estate residents was held prior to commencement to advise this exciting step in the project and discuss the details of the construction process.

# Bowled over by big win

■ Rumour has it there were a few sore heads amongst the bowling pros at RAAFA's Meadow Springs estate last month, following the Meadow Springs Bowling Club team winning the flag and ascending through to the second division.

"We were stoked when we won our last game, there were high-fives all around and admittedly some of us woke up the next morning with a hangover following our celebrations," laughs team captain, Joan Walker, who still has competitive spirit in spades despite being 87 years young.

"We're all on top of the world, winning the championship has been fantastic and we can't wait until the league gala day next month where we will collect our pennant."

Joan - who has been playing lawn bowls for over 35 years - explains that a great number of friendships have been formed within the lawn bowls club over the years.

"Clubs like ours are really important because they offer social connection, opportunities

to participate in fun (and competitive!) activities, and you also have to use your grey matter a bit," adds Joan, who hails from Lancashire in England originally.

"And while great friendships have been developed, there are a few rivalries of course," she laughs.

"But at the end of the day it's all good fun and everyone who participates enjoys it."

And so congratulations to the two teams who won the championship this year. They include Joan Murray, Elsie Jackson, Joan Biffin and Raelene Bartlett in the first team, and Daphne Osborn, Trish Hyde, Sandra Bell and Joan Walker in the second. And, we also have it on good authority that the ladies in the



LtoR Elsie Jackson, Trish Hyde, Joan Walker, Joan Biffin

fourth division only just missed out in playing for a flag!

The RAAFA community will watch

this space for more news on the League Gala Day, and perhaps a photo of the team, trophies in hand.

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**Air Mail story deadlines**

**3 May for June / July**  
**5 July for August / September**

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



# Message from the CEO



By Michelle Fyfe

As you probably know, we had International Women's Day in March, a cause I personally feel very strongly about.

When asked why we should have a special day that celebrates women, my answer includes the fact that on Australia's first International

Women's Day in 1928, women called for equal pay for equal work, an 8-hour working day and paid leave. Nearly 100 years on, these equal opportunities for women are still being fought for.

Some of you may remember when women were first elected to the Commonwealth Parliament in 1943. That it wasn't until 1965 that Australian women won the right to drink in a public bar and that during the 1960s many working women were forced to resign from their jobs when they got married. This may have even been your story.

Closer to home, our own Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) provides a compelling example of women stepping into traditionally male-dominated roles and making essential contributions to Australia's war efforts during WWII. International Women's Day honours the vital role women played, breaking down barriers and challenging gender stereotypes that

limit opportunities for women.

RAAFA is in a distinctive position with over 85% of our workforce female. This is an opportunity and a responsibility.

The fact that there are industries such as ours which are highly female driven, points to those industries which are not, and exposes some entrenched cultural barriers that form what is called gender segregation of occupations.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows female workplace participation has increased by 41% since 1980 but there's still a low proportion of women in industries such as construction, mining, technology, and engineering. Interestingly these sectors dominate the WA landscape. It further stresses why we need to take our role seriously at RAAFA. We should be a local role model and it requires a whole of business focus.

The federal government report

and plan regarding participation of women in the Australian economy (2023-2033) notes that women more often experience economic inequality and insecurity. This inequality is despite performing essential activities in paid and unpaid capacities including the care and education of children and the care of elderly people, in both family life and in paid employment.

Those activities enable the economy to function, yet the work is more often than not undervalued, and has a negative effect on women's capacity to build wealth, progress in careers and have equal economic opportunities.

At RAAFA, we strive for diversity, and remain committed to gender equality, inclusion and equal pay for equal work.

Looking ahead, you can expect to hear more from me on this issue as we take up the challenge within WA to showcase what good looks like.

## Cinematography passion recognised

RAAFA's AFME resident Daryl Binning has been recognised for his contribution to the film industry with a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) during this year's Australia Day honours.

The AFME resident originally qualified as an electrician but spent the majority of his working life as a professional cinematographer and film producer, a career path that saw him filming major events including the Vietnam war protest marches and the Beatles tour in Sydney during the early 1960s.

A qualified pilot, Daryl also covered stories for various Australian and overseas TV stations over the vast distances in Western Australia, and also in Papua New Guinea where he and his late wife Wilma lived for five years between 1962 and 1967. Whilst in PNG, he also filmed for Disney and did stories for the UN, and even filmed a young Prince Charles on a school trip to the country.

"I loved what I did and never really considered that I was going to work, I was just fortunate to be able to make a living out of my hobby," says the 84-year-old who has two daughters, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

"I was surprised and humbled by the award, though I don't really think I've digested it as yet."

A passion for cinematography from a very early age led Daryl to join the Australian Cinematographers Society, into which he has now been inducted into its Hall of Fame.

Returning to Perth from PNG,

Daryl continued to shoot cinema newsreels and film advertisements during the day, while in the evenings he worked as a projectionist at the Lakeway drive-in. Apart from producing numerous documentary films, he worked on the many early telemovies and feature films produced in WA. One in particular - the ABBA Movie - proved a bonus. After their last concert in Australia at the Entertainment Centre, Daryl introduced his 11-year-old daughter to the band members. As they were flying home the next morning, they gave her all their costume jewellery, which she treasured.

Film-making continued into the 1970s when, assisted by his wife and daughters, Daryl also screened children's films at the Fremantle Town Hall during school holidays - something he loved and continued to do for the next 13 years.

At the same time, he established other film exhibition venues as well as sound recording studios, lighting trucks and silenced generators for the emerging local film production industry, including manufacturing film lighting equipment and writing technical articles for international cinema journals.

"I always loved the technical side of things, and in fact still have my electrician's licence," he says.

A volunteer at the Aviation Museum, Daryl is currently going through the film archives to establish what footage is of historical significance and is suitable for digitisation.

"It's a race against time as a lot of the collection has already

deteriorated beyond restoration," he explains.

"But I think it's important and I'm hopeful that a grant can be gained to turn some of the most significant footage into a digital format so that it's preserved for the future."

Before retiring to Bull Creek, Daryl

published a book on the history of the pioneering silent movie travelling picture showmen in the south-west - Nitrate Nomads, copies of which he donated to all of RAAFA's village libraries.

Congratulations Daryl on your Australia Day honours.





# Mates help veterans make the transition

RAAFA has launched Transition Mates, a new program that aims to create a network of supporters for veterans exiting service and returning to life as a civilian.

Transition Mates connects veterans who have left the Australian Defence Force in the past three years with RAAFA volunteers who have undergone training through RAAFA to serve in the capacity of a 'Mate'.

Mates undergo a specialised induction, are provided with a resource guide and have access to ongoing supervision and support from a qualified counselling psychologist. Each Mate is educated in the 'art of listening' and learns skills to create psychological safety, allowing them to build a healthy and mutually purposeful relationship.

CEO Michelle Fyfe, said the Transition Mates program is a pilot designed to see how the organisation can help with what can be a difficult process for many who leave the armed forces. Michelle believes improved mental health and wellbeing of veterans through connection to community builds on the organisation's commitment to support those in need.

"Transitioning from service in the Australian Defence Force to life as a veteran can be challenging. Respecting that everyone is on their own journey, Transition Mates aims to improve the wellbeing of veterans through mateship. It's a simple yet effective way to help bridge the

transition from service to civilian life and by creating a dedicated program with trained volunteers we hope to encourage veterans to engage in this vital service," said Michelle.

Mates come from all walks of life, some of them are veterans themselves, some are partners of veterans and some have no prior connection to the Australian Defence Force — but are members of RAAFA and are eager to offer their support.

Wendy said, "My husband Robert served in the Navy and we both wanted to support people exiting.

Wendy and Robert de la Nougerede both wanted to offer their support to the program, volunteering as mates for the support they felt they could give as well as what they would gain. "Robert served in the Navy in the submarine squadron and when he went through the transition he faced many challenges," said Wendy. "He was lucky enough to have a strong supportive family network. I felt I also have something to offer, having been through the journey together."

Janette Bonser said, "I was interested to see if this program may be beneficial to help current serving members who were departing the forces, and if so, I was very keen to be part of that system. With a military and nursing background I felt I could be an asset."

Also, for the first time in Perth, the servicewomen, both past and present of the Australian Defence Force will march behind a new ADF banner.

The Branch invites you to join them for this historic moment, as the women of Navy, Army and Air Force join together to march in solidarity.

There will be many female veterans marching for the very first time and if you have never marched before you are encouraged to do so this year.



In 2023, it was decided to rename the branch to Women of the Air Force WA to be more inclusive for all women who had served in either the WAAAF, WRAAF or more recently in the RAAF.

"With the change of name we decided it was an ideal opportunity to set about designing a banner to include all women who served. It will be proudly displayed for the first time at the parade on ANZAC Day 2024," said Sue.



Volunteer mate Ian Hurst said he was keen to be involved in the program because he was associated with RAAFA through the Pearce Flying Club whose membership included some ex-military. He said, "I can see the benefit and hopefully this program will help bridge the gap during the transition period into civilian life."

"I'm the sort of person who likes to talk to people," said volunteer mate Steve Lucks. "I suffer from PTSD and years ago I had a neighbour who was dealing with a life-threatening illness. One day I was busy dealing with my own issues and didn't stop to chat and heard that two days later he had passed away. I have pledged since to always take the time and make

the effort to stop, listen and ask the question."

The Transition Mates pilot program builds on RAAFA's recent Andrew Russell Veteran Living (ARVL) appeal, which aims to support veterans at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness in Western Australia.

With the pilot program now underway, RAAFA is inviting veterans to register their interest in connecting with a Mate via: [veteranservices@raafawa.org.au](mailto:veteranservices@raafawa.org.au)

Upon expressing interest, veterans will be connected with a dedicated program team to understand their personal circumstance and search for the best suited Mate to introduce them to.

## Striving for inclusivity

This year marks the inaugural joining of the tri-services women who will march together on ANZAC Day in a show of unity.

Sue McKinnon, President of the Women of the Air Force WA Branch explained that back in April 1985 the first meeting was held for the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) Branch WA. And, although the WRAAF was incorporated into the RAAF in 1977 the WRAAF branch remained strong with a membership of former serving women.

In 2023, it was decided to rename the branch to Women of the Air Force WA to be more inclusive for all women who had served in either the WAAAF, WRAAF or more recently in the RAAF.

"With the change of name we decided it was an ideal opportunity to set about designing a banner to include all women who served. It will be proudly displayed for the first time at the parade on ANZAC Day 2024," said Sue.

## Community tapestry

Amidst the tranquillity of RAAFA's Amity Village Albany there exists a vibrant tapestry of volunteers woven together by threads of generosity, kindness, and unwavering dedication.

Gathering together earlier this year for morning tea, the residents and staff celebrated these invaluable contributions which enrich the very essence of the Amity Village community.

Each moment they dedicate, each smile they share, and each act of

kindness they extend, brightens the lives of their fellow residents with warmth and joy.

Estate Manager Cheryl Clark said, "This year we welcomed a record crowd of over 80 residents and volunteers. I think Amity Village is such a special place to work and to call home."

Thank you to everyone who contributes in some way, helping make Amity Village the community that it is. We hope you enjoyed the cake and company.



Ronnie Ryan, Wendy Dunn, Denise Booth and Murray Adams



# Enjoying making music

▲ Meadow Springs Estate resident, Carole Post, has more than one reason to have a spring in her step.

The relatively new resident, who moved into the popular village in November last year, not only says making the estate her new home is one of the best things she's ever done, she's also found a new hobby that she totally loves - learning to play the ukulele.

"It was time for me to downsize and moving into the estate was really a natural progression for me, as I lived just opposite the Meadow Springs golf course," explains Carole, who recently turned 70 and admits she still feels young at heart.

"And then, when I made the move, my neighbours couldn't have been more welcoming.

"Several came over to invite me along to the next street party and I

have got to know so many people on the estate, all of whom are incredibly friendly."

Carole, who is a seventh generation West Australian, explains that when she heard about the ukulele club, she was keen to join as she played piano for many years as a child and has always loved music.

"Unfortunately, I've forgotten how to read music, but I'm hoping it will come back slowly as I practice. We have great teachers who are very patient, and I'm learning slowly but surely, despite never having played a string instrument.

"There's about 15 people in our group and we are all enjoying learning together, it's really good fun and I, for one, get a great sense of accomplishment."

So, does Carole, as a relatively new resident, have any advice for anyone considering moving into a

retirement village?

"I'd say have a good look around. I was pretty sure that I wanted to move into RAAFA Estate Meadow Springs, but I visited other estates just to make totally sure," she explains.

"I was fortunate in that I had a friend who had moved into Erskine Grove and she was adamant that it was the best thing she'd ever done, plus one of my previous work colleagues now works at RAAFA, so I was able to have a chat with her.

"In the end, the house that I came to see was just perfect for me, I loved it straight away. It's beautifully



appointed and is freshly renovated, it's just gorgeous and I fell in love with it straight away.

"From the very start I just felt comfortable here, and I knew RAAFA's Meadow Springs estate is where I wanted to be."

## Ukuleles strike a chord

▲ After three years of learning to play the ukulele, RAAFA Estate Meadow Springs resident Gail Lilly is an absolute convert.

Gail has recently set up the Meadow Springs ukulele club which meets at 3.00pm every Monday afternoon, along with fellow resident Steve Kennedy.

And the self-described baby boomer doesn't hold back when extolling its benefits.

"As seniors get older, playing a musical instrument gives them the opportunity to socialise with new friends and learn something new, which is great for cognitive function," she explains.

"And apart from the obvious mental health benefits, being around music is so beneficial. When we all get together as a group there are so many smiles on people's faces, it brings everyone joy."

Gail explains that she had the idea

to start the club when a village survey showed that residents were keen to learn a new musical instrument, to keep the 'grey matter' challenged.

"Ukuleles are one of the easiest instruments to learn, so it was an obvious choice really," says Gail. "It's such a positive force for engagement, friendship, social inclusion, acceptance and so on, and it's great fun too.

"Plus, the benefits of music for mental health are long established, so it's really a win-win all around, and we are so pleased that we have more than half a dozen group members after only a few weeks."

The ukelele has a reputation as one of the least intimidating instruments for people to pick up. Total beginners can play a one-fingered C chord, and Meadow Springs residents can borrow a ukulele for a very small fee, so they can give the instrument a whirl.



"We warmly welcome any new members who would like to give the uke a try," adds Gail.

"Even if people would like to just 'come along to see' or to be part of the experience, we'd love to have

them join us."

The ukelele group takes place at the sports bar at RAAFA Club, Meadow Springs, every Monday afternoon from 3.00-4.00pm.

## Commemoration of the Vyner Brooke tragedy

▲ The 82<sup>nd</sup> commemoration of the Vyner Brooke tragedy took place on 18 February at Point Walter in Bicton. Attendees gathered to pay tribute to the lives lost and President Clive Robartson laid a wreath on behalf of RAAFA.

In 1942, with the fall of Singapore imminent, 65 Australian army nurses, along with civilians and crew, boarded the SS Vyner Brooke and departed Singapore on 12 February. Two days later the ship

was bombed by Japanese aircraft and sank in Bangka Strait.

Twelve nurses were lost at sea, eight died as POWs, and twenty-one were ordered into the sea, and machine-gunned at Radji Beach, Bangka Island. Sister Vivian Bullwinkel, although wounded, was the only survivor. She was later captured and lived to testify at the War Crimes Tribunal.

The commemoration organised by the Applecross Sub-Branch of

RSLWA saw flags marched on by 703 Squadron AAFC, and guest speaker Sarah Fulford gave a tribute to the nurses.

Then after the singing of the 'Captive's Hymn', Anthea Hodgson spoke of her great aunt, nurse Minnie Hodgson, who was killed in the massacre.

The ceremony concluded to the tune of 'Danny Boy', a song sung by the captive nurses.





# Decorated WWII pilot and friend dies



Decorated WWII bomber pilot and a member of the wider RAAFA community, Doug Arrowsmith, sadly passed away in February.

Mr Arrowsmith, one of Western Australia's oldest and most decorated WWII soldiers, died at the age of 101.

Born in April 1922, the WWII pilot was the skipper of a 460 Squadron RAAF Lancaster crew which flew together for a tour of 35 operations from mid-October 1944 until late March 1945. The survival rate was less than one in 10.

After VE Day, Doug volunteered and rejoined 460 Squadron to be part of Tiger Force, which was to be the Bomber Command in the Pacific War.

Past RAAFA President Graeme Bland said it was always an honour to be in the presence of such a great man.

"I cannot imagine what he would have gone through, completing over 30 missions," he says.

"Doug was a man of incredible bravery, moral conviction, generosity, patience and respect, and he will be sadly missed."

Doug, in comparison, just described himself as lucky.

"I don't think I was ever afraid," he told Nine News Perth last year.

"I think a major part was, I'm in charge, I've got a job to do and I'm going to do it well."

When he returned from the war, Doug had a successful career in banking and an extraordinary run with lawn bowls, representing WA 51 times.

And by any standard, he had a full and rich life, which he captured in his aptly titled autobiography *A Skipper's Tale* published in 2022.

He also remained humble to the end. Even in his last year, the centenarian was still driving the same Holden he had owned for 54 years.

He was married to wife Hannah for 68 and is survived by his two children, four grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

His legacy of mateship, teamwork and leadership will be remembered and it will live on within the RAAFA community.

## Celebrating 72 years together

Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge couple Alan and Peggy Hair celebrated their 72nd wedding anniversary late February and took the opportunity for a trip down memory lane.

Nonagenarian Alan, who was born in Colac, Victoria and moved to WA when he was just 10 years old, recalls first setting eyes on Peggy at a dance at the Embassy Ballroom in Perth, in 1950.

"I looked across the room and thought to myself 'I really like her', but my friend had already asked her to dance," explains Alan, who owned a successful business that manufactured lawn mowers for over 50 years.

"And so, I was extremely pleased to have the opportunity to dance with Peggy following the interval, after which I offered to drive her and her friend home."

Family folklore has it that Alan then popped over to see Peggy on his way home from the beach a few days later - wearing nothing more than a pair of Speedo's! Right there, on the doorstep, he asked a somewhat aghast Peggy to a dance in Scarborough with him the following weekend. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Peggy and Alan were married at St Andrews Church on St George's Terrace in February 1952, followed by a honeymoon in Bunbury, Albany and the Southwest.

They initially lived at Peggy's parent's house in Shenton Park and after their honeymoon lived in Nedlands and went on to buy a home in Scarborough.

As was typical of the time, Peggy gave up her work as a seamstress in Nedlands to have their two children, a son and daughter. And, over the years, their family has extended to four granddaughters, three great granddaughters and one great-grandson who is due in April, and who will be the first boy in the family.

And so, do the happy couple - who admit they have been blessed with good health - have a secret to a successful marriage?

"I think the biggest thing is cooperating with each other and not competing," says Peggy, who moved on to the Cambrai Village with Alan when the couple retired, ostensibly because their good friends Kevin and Pat Davenport lived there.

"I'd also say it's about considering



and respecting your partner," adds Alan, a keen fisherman and someone who has been dedicated to volunteering in his community over the years.

"And also enjoying the same things at the same time - we have loved

camping and caravanning in our retirement.

"But at the end of the day, if you've got your health, you've got your wealth and that's what matters.



# Eternal flame to fly forever

After receiving a grant of \$10,000 under the Saluting Their Service (STS) Commemorative Grants Program, which was then boosted by additional funds from the Memorial Estate Residents Branch, AFME in Bull Creek is now the home to a stunning eternal flame sculpture - a symbol of eternal life, a reflection of lives lost, sacrifices made and hope for the future.

Designed by Leasha Craig, a contemporary sculptor who works and lives on the NSW Central Tablelands, the eternal flame is a contemporary rendition of the traditional Ode Flame which has been designed after the artist spent several years working closely with veterans from all theatres of war and peace keeping operations.

Rhonda Mays, past president of the Memorial Estate Residents Branch, explains that the committee had been looking for a suitable eternal flame sculpture for several years to enhance the estate memorial precinct.

"We like to do things that benefit all of our residents and felt that an eternal flame would be a special addition to our estate, something that everyone - both residents and visitors - could appreciate and also something that would be available to us all for those special days, including ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day," explains Rhonda.

"This has very much been a team effort and I would like to thank everyone involved, including Madge Bicknell, our treasurer who undertook the important background research. The sculpture really is magnificent, and it takes pride of place just in front of the Spitfire at the Aviation Heritage Museum."

Artist Leasha Craig says she very much enjoyed the collaborative nature of the commission process.

"Co-creating this piece with RAAFA has been a wonderful experience and I am very proud to have one of my artworks over in Perth," she says.

"The work I've done with veterans



LtoR Madge Bicknell, Rhonda Mays and Hazel Love

over the years has given me a great appreciation of their experiences which, in turn, have been the foundations on which the sculpture is built. With this in mind, it is such incredible synergy that it will be part of the AFME community, for

everyone to experience for decades to come."

The official unveiling took place on Wednesday, 24 January by Peter King, DVA Deputy Commissioner WA and was followed by a sundowner.

## Second career continues, full steam ahead

It was a chance conversation that changed the trajectory of Stu Usher's retirement, and that of his wife Erica.

The Cambrai Village couple were enjoying a cruise to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary back in the early 2000s, when Stu got talking to a chap at the bar. During the conversation he happened to mention that he had a long-held passion for military history and was close to retiring from his role at the Ministry of Defence in London.

"Little did I know at the time that I was talking to the cruise director, who then mentioned that cruise lines were always on the lookout for people to give interesting presentations and lectures on a wide range of specialised topics," explains Stu. "And then he asked if I would be interested in doing just that."

"I had no idea at the time that such people were needed, and so I mentioned that, while I could be interested, I had another 12 months to go until I retired, and perhaps I contact him then. After that, I didn't really think much more about that fateful conversation.

"And then, a year later, I did phone him and was delighted to hear that he remembered me and would pass my name onto a cruise entertainment agency. That was 20 years ago now and the rest, as they

say, is history."

As a result of that serendipitous conversation, Stu and Erica have spent the past two decades on various cruises, during which time Stu has given a range of lectures tailored to either the northern or southern hemisphere, depending on the cruise liner's itinerary.

With over 20 presentations in his repertoire, including such topics as Battle in Paradise - the destruction by HMAS Sydney of the German commerce raider the Emden at the Cocos Keeling islands, the loss of the Batavia on the Houtman Abrolhos islands, and the Mystery of X5; the search for a midget submarine that attacked the German battleship Tirpitz in Northern Norway in WWII, Stu has been enthralling and informing cruise ship passengers since his first assignment in 2005.

"I really never anticipated this second career in retirement, or the opportunities it would offer," says Stu, whose passion for military history began after he researched his own grandfather's background, a man who had a distinguished and intriguing aviation career in the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force.

"But as a result, Erica and I have sailed far and wide across the globe, from the Faroe Islands to the Philippines, Iceland to Borneo, and throughout Scandinavia and



Southeast Asia.

"During that time my passion for military history has only got stronger. As soon as I finished and presented one lecture, I would be asked questions and that would break open another story for me to explore.

"I really do thrive on research of that kind, and I guess that has succeeded in keeping the grey matter active for the past couple of decades," he laughs.

And despite being well and truly into his 80s and having over 50 cruises under his belt, there seems to be no stopping the demand for

Stu's on-board presentations and expertise.

"I do a lot of work with Cunard, and during March we flew to Sydney to join the Queen Victoria, which sailed up the east coast to Cairns and then on to Manila in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Singapore, which Erica and I very much enjoyed," adds Stu.

"Really, never in a million years did I anticipate doing this sort of thing in my later years, and I actually thought they might have had enough of me now that we're post COVID. But they're still asking me and, while they are, I'm very happy to oblige."



# Volunteer service congratulated

One of RAAFA's past State Presidents of four terms, long-term volunteer and member of over 30 years, Graeme Bland, has been granted a Medal of the Order (OAM) during this year's Australia Day honours in recognition of his work with the veteran community.

"To be honest I was a little stunned to hear the news and I don't think it will sink in until after the investiture, but obviously it's a real honour and hopefully it gives more recognition to veterans issues and throws a spotlight on the need for more veteran support in the community," Graeme says.

Graeme's award comes after more than 30 years of voluntary service at RAAFA, following a 23-year career in the Air Force, and a secondary management career in the agricultural sector.

The born and bred Victorian joined the RAAF in 1957 as an apprentice airframe fitter and, after three years at Wagga Wagga, was posted to 1AD in Laverton Victoria to finish his five-year apprenticeship.

From there he was posted to the Aircraft Research and Development Unit where he served until being posted to Butterworth in Malaysia in 1963. Whilst there, he had three, eight-week tours to Ubon in Thailand in the lead up and start of

the Vietnam war.

On returning to Australia in August 1965, Graeme served at Point Cook, at Pearce and spent time in Italy and France to learn the technical side of the Macchi aircraft, after which he continued to teach at Pearce. He retired in 1980 as a Warrant Officer Engineer.

"After I retired, Judy, my wife and I spent more than 10 years volunteering at the aviation heritage museum," explains Graeme.

"It was the early 90s and I became secretary and treasurer of the new museum branch and was the instigator of the production of a promotional trailer about the museum, which was taken to community fairs and country 'fly-ins' to promote RAAFA and our much-loved museum.

"Judy and I also started fundraising by holding annual 'trash and treasure' events, and later we organised breakfasts and dinners under the Lancaster which became very popular."

It was during his time as State President that Graeme became interested in advocacy work, and as a result he instigated the opening of an office at AFME to assist serving and ex-serving people with entitlement claims to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"I always remember the first young person I helped. Initially, he couldn't look anyone in the eye, but he reached out for assistance with his entitlements claim to DVA and I was really happy to support him," recalls Graeme.

"One day he came into the office and looked me straight in the eye and shook my hand. I really saw in that moment what great progress he'd made and the possibility of how I could make a significant difference to another person's life.

"Although it was many years ago now, that young man really stands out in my memory, and was the impetus for me carrying on with my work within the veteran field over the years."

Today Graeme remains heavily involved with RAAFA's veteran support services, ostensibly by mentoring other advocates and, in effect, training a steady stream of new volunteers.



"I've always been involved with volunteering, and that is often the case with ex-service people," Graeme explains.

"It's amazing how many veterans get involved with their community, whether that's in their local footy club, Scouts or by volunteering at their local school, they really want to continue to be of service.

"Volunteering is really meaningful, you know you are doing something good when you're able to help someone else. Indeed, making a difference to the trajectory of another person's life can often make a profound impact on your own."

Congratulations on your much deserved OAM Graeme, from all of your friends at RAAFA.

## Volunteers make the world go round

In a world where time is a precious commodity, there are those who selflessly give of themselves to ensure that others can enjoy their best life and reach their destinations safely and with ease.

Behind the wheel of the bus, our volunteers at Cambrai Village embody the spirit of generosity and service. We take this opportunity to reflect on their invaluable contributions, and extend our heartfelt gratitude to two village residents, Neil Munt and Maurice Bond.

Neil and Maurice volunteer to drive the bus for the residents at Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge, helping to bring joy and fulfilment to their lives.

Therapy Assistant, Genene Hewitt said, "I want to extend a huge thank you to these two amazing residents. Nothing is ever a problem, and they always make themselves available on the dates and times I need. Outings and bus tours are important for our residents wellbeing, helping bring variety and fun to their daily routines.

"Neil and Maurice are always so happy and cheerful. The residents

love Neil's commentary during the drive which also provides everyone with a good laugh."

Their impact extends far beyond the roads these two travel. Their dedication not only facilitates physical transportation but also fosters a sense of connection and belonging within our little community and we extend our sincerest appreciation for their tireless efforts.



LtoR Neil Munt, Maurice Bond



## Committed to caring

Karri and Tuart Lodge resident Lois Mann has been a dedicated volunteer all her life - and is still volunteering despite being 83 years young.

Lois volunteers every day at Jasmine House, the residential care home's dementia wing, where she helps the occupational therapy team with meaningful activities for all the residents.

And the mum to three, grandmother to six and great, great grandmother to three says she has always found so much satisfaction in helping others.

"It's a pleasure to be able to do things for other people, and I'm fortunate that I can still lend a helping hand despite being a resident myself now," says Lois, who has also prided herself in being a dedicated mum and grandmother.

"I've always got so much enjoyment out of volunteering, and over the years, I've helped various organisations in a variety of ways and have met many interesting people.

"I would recommend volunteering to everyone because there are so many benefits."



# There's a trio of Queens at Meadow Springs

The sisterhood is most certainly alive and well at RAAFA's Meadow Springs Estate, thanks to a trio of ladies, all of whom are firm members of one of the largest worldwide movements for women which was established to connect, support and encourage each other.

Joan Bailey, Libby Clarke and Gail Lilly have all been members of the WA branch of the Red Hatters for more than 16 years, and as a result have a definite focus on fun, friendship and fulfillment.

It is the first time in any of the RAAFA estate's that there has been three Red Hatter leaders or 'Queens' as they are known, living at the same estate, and their first event of the year - Purplemania - which is taking place on 20 April is already a sell-out.

"We are very lucky that RAAFA has enabled us to book Middleton Hall and invite 180 ladies from both within the estate and outside to join our fun at this fabulous event," says Gail Lilly, who has 16 years of Red Hatting under her belt.

"We are all about supporting other women, offering companionship and having some fun, and we'd love to hear from anyone who would like to join us."

"As a result of being a Red Hatter for over 20 years, I've had some great experiences and made sound friendships that have developed over the years," adds Joan Bailey.

"For anyone looking to build more friendships and having a little more fun, Red Hatting is the way to go."

The Red Hatting sisterhood is open to all women of all ages and is focused on living life to the fullest and the joy of the sisterhood.

Hatters meet up in distinctive colours for all manner of different activities and gatherings, sometimes in small local groups while at other times connecting for larger interstate and international events and conventions.

Women over 50 years dress in distinctive purple clothing and red hats while women under 50 dress in lavender and pink and are known as



LtoR Libby Clarke, Joan Bailey and Gail Lilly

'Pink Hatters'.

"There's lots of fun to be had by being part of a Red Hatting group," adds Libby Clarke. "And many opportunities to make friends and socialise with other fun-loving women, which is all part of making

life rich, fabulous and interesting."

For more information about the Red Hatters, go to: [www.red-hatters-wa.net](http://www.red-hatters-wa.net).

## Animals make seniors' day

Residents from Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge got up close and personal with a range of four-legged friends recently.

Organised by the therapy staff, more than 50 residents enjoyed a visit from a small family-owned animal conservation organisation, based in Baldivis, who came hand-in-hand with a baby koala called Hazel, a blue-tongued lizard, a 14-year-old python and a four-week-old little sugar glider that apparently stole everyone's hearts.

Geneve Hewitt, Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge's therapy assistant, says all the residents who took part had a wonderful experience.

"The visit was so therapeutic in so many ways for our seniors," says Geneve.

"Everyone loved getting close to the koala, in particular, and some of the residents were happy to have the snake around their neck.

"The visit also instigated a trip down memory lane, whereby those involved reminisced about trips to Yanchep

National Park with their families when they were much younger to see the koalas, and the smell of the gum leaves really brought back many vivid memories.

"Research has shown how therapeutic animals are, which is why we wanted to bring this experience to the residents; for our team here it's all about ensuring our seniors have enriched lives and can continue to do the things that they have always loved."



## Classic car proves a fun project

Gordon Lodge resident John Nicolay has had a rich and interesting life by any standard.

The Melbournian who moved to Perth when he was 20 years old, is a past Commodore of the Perth Flying Squadron Yacht Club, has owned and flown planes during his time and was a keen power boater who previously owned a 43-foot boat called Bella. In his younger days he even did a stint at modelling which saw his face plastered all over London buses!

But, more recently, John has added classic car restoration to his list of accomplishments.

John explains that, when he was in his mid-20s, he owned a Morris Minor which he sold to a chap who didn't have all the money necessary for the deal. So, he also traded John his 1928 Standard car as part of the arrangement.

"To be honest, I basically put it in a container on my property and forgot all about it for the next 40 years," explains John, who moved into Gordon Lodge earlier this year.

"And then, about 10 years ago, my late wife started to pester me to see if I could get it started, and that's when I began to restore it. I had to rebuild the motor and replace the brake lining as well as a few other things but, basically, I got it going."



According to John - who attended Greenwood Technical School in Melbourne, in his younger years - the yellow Standard 28 with its vinyl roof and leather seats was a really fun project to work on.

"I couldn't find a restoration manual as such, so I got the driver's handbook sent over from England. The people I spoke to over there were excited that there was going to be another Standard restored, as I was told there are only seven or eight around," he explains.

"I just chipped away at it month by month and it was worth the wait. I had a bit of help from friends and in fact a mate of mine, Jim McGuckin, now keeps it in a shed for me.

"He drives over quite often, and we go out and do a bit of work on it. It looks pretty good and runs pretty well, even if I do say so myself."



# Leadership Award

■ We were excited to announce the winner of the 2023 RAAFA Leadership Award in late January at the Cadets ceremonial parade. The annual award is open to No7 Wing Australian Air Force Cadets (AAFC) who demonstrate good leadership qualities and strive for excellence.

RAAFA has increased the value of the award, which had been temporarily paused during the pandemic, to include the equivalent of two-months paid work experience at RAAFA as well as a cash prize of \$1,000 for the successful cadet and \$1,000 for their squadron. Second, third and runner-up prizes have also been included and were awarded at the parade.

RAAFA President, Clive Robartson, presented the award to CUO Madeleine Szick of 713 Squadron, who was praised for her exceptional leadership qualities. She has been Cadet XO, and Parade Commander, and the selection panel found she displayed a maturity beyond her years.

Madeleine's ambition is to join the RAAF and gain a nursing degree under the Defence University Program.

She has chosen RAAFAs Aviation Heritage Museum to undertake her work experience, where she will rotate through the various aspects involved in running one of the largest aviation museums in Australia, featuring a significant

collection of aircraft and aviation artifacts from both war and peacetime.

Madeleine is keen to pursue philanthropic endeavours through volunteer programs around the world that involve people or animals. After completing her nursing degree, she would like to serve in the RAAF as a nurse in the International Committee of the Red Cross in Africa where she has strong personal ties.

Congratulations are also extended to CCPL Charlie McCrostie of 712 Squadron who was awarded second prize; CUO Aena Siji of 715 Squadron for third prize and



runners up CSGT Shannon Drover, CUO Bethany Doyle and CFLTSGT William Horabin.

As these cadets navigate their journey of growth and leadership, we offer our congratulations and support. May their accomplishments pave the way to a bright future.

## Twist in the tail

■ A recent article featuring RAAFA's Merriwa estate resident Bill Stanley had some very welcome but unintended consequences.

The article, which documented Bill's rich and interesting life, was read by a fellow RAAFA estate resident who remembered working with Bill at the Commonwealth Bank back in the 1950s.

At that time, AFME resident Roy Ansell was also working with another colleague - Jeff Carton - who happened to be Bill's best friend,

Bill explains that he had lost contact after Jeff went through a divorce in his 40s and always wondered what had become of his old best mate who had been like a brother to him for many years and whom he spent time playing sport and going to the gym with.

"I even asked him to be my best man at my wedding, but such were the times that I was told it was forbidden because Jeff was a Catholic and therefore wasn't allowed to enter the church that my future wife and I were to be married in," explains Bill, who said he was also surprised and delighted by the number of comments and feedback he received after his article was published at the end of last year.

"I tried for many years to find Jeff, I looked in the phone book and on the electoral roll, but those were the days before the internet and things were a lot different, so despite my best efforts I just couldn't locate him.

"As a result, I often wondered what had happened to him, so it was really wonderful to get a call from fellow RAAFA resident Roy who caught me up on the news explaining that he had bumped into Jeff several years ago.

"Roy and I spent a couple of hours on the phone together reminiscing about our time working for the Commonwealth Bank and talking about Jeff. Roy told me that Jeff had been searching for me too, but said it was like I'd disappeared off the face of the earth.

"I was so touched to hear that he had been looking for me, and of course it was wonderful to hear about Jeff's life after we lost touch, I was pleased to know that he had found happiness.

"Unfortunately, Jeff had passed away a few years ago, but I really appreciated the call from Roy. Being able to talk about my old friend Jeff was really special for me and also to hear that he too had wanted to reconnect; that gave me some closure in a way."

From the perspective of the Air Mail team, it also gave us a great sense of satisfaction to know that, as a result of the article, Bill was able to find out what became of the best friend he was inseparable from for many of his younger years.

From Roy's perspective...

"I enjoy reading the Air Mail and when I read the story about Bill I recognised the name, although I didn't recognise his face - probably because the last time I saw him was about 70 years ago," laughs Roy, who has lived at AFME for around six years, and before that was at RAAFA's Erskine Grove in Mandurah for over 12 years.

"And then when I saw that Bill had also worked at the Commonwealth Bank, it all came back to me. When I first started work there at 15 years old, I was assigned to a chap by the name of Jeff Carton on my first day, a bank employee who worked in the same office as his best friend, Bill Stanley. Jeff and I sat together at the withdrawal counter and he



showed me what to do, and we ended up working together for about four years until I left to go to teacher training college and qualify as a teacher, a career that lasted almost four decades."

Roy explains that, when he read the Air Mail article he gave Bill a call, and it was then that Bill asked if he remembered his old best friend, Jeff.

"Well, that was a long story in itself," explains Roy. "Because the answer was yes, I didn't only remember Jeff, but he was actually a good friend of mine after we met by complete chance after we'd both retired."

Roy explains that, on the day he bumped into Jeff as a retiree, he and his wife had driven down to Mandurah to put a deposit on a new house, after which they decided to treat themselves to lunchtime fish and chips.

"I dropped my wife off and went to park, but it took me ages to find a spot and by the time I came back she was sitting chatting to another couple," explains Roy. "I sat down too and joined in with the conversation and I asked the chap his name, to which he answered Jeff Carton.

"I said to him 'I used to work with a Jeff Carton at the Commonwealth Bank', and he replied that he had worked there too, and then the penny dropped that we had worked together all those years ago."

That was the beginning of a sound friendship that lasted many years, with Roy and Jeff regularly catching up socially, along with their wives.

"I knew that Jeff and Bill were best friends, and every time I visited Jeff he would ask me if I'd heard anything about Bill Stanley," explains Roy. "Jeff was never able to find him, or didn't know where to look, and I had never actually worked with Bill so I didn't ever get to know him.

"But it really was great to get in touch with Bill after reading about him in Air Mail, we had a lot in common and it was quite nostalgic to chat with him, as well as fill him in on Jeff's life.

"It was a terrible shame that they were never able to meet while Jeff was alive, but it was really special to talk to Bill at length about him and fill him in on all that had happened in his life."



# 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, roast 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 buffet - 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



### Events

Thursday, 25 April, ANZAC Day buffet lunch, 12noon, \$28.00 per head

## 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

### Events

Thursday, 25 April, ANZAC Day sausage sizzle (funded by Branch Committee)



St Patrick's Day

## 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

Monday, roast of the day special \$20.00

Monday and Wednesday, happy hour 4.00pm

Tuesday, Fish and chips \$19.00

Friday, dinner and raffles 5.00pm to 7.00pm

Saturday, coffee special 3.00pm to 5.00pm \$4.00 cup



Valentine's Day

### Events

Thursday, 25 April, ANZAC Day lunch, full restaurant menu 11.00am to 2.00pm

## MERRIWA CLUB 9400 3640

### Blue Gum Café

Pop down for one of our daily specials or sample something off the menu. Now open Wednesday 11.00am to 2.00pm and Thursday 10.00am to 2.00pm.

### 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

### Events

Thursday, 25 April, ANZAC Day breakfast, 6.30am, \$28.50 per head

# Andrew Russell Veteran Living (ARVL) appeal success

And that's a wrap on our first Andrew Russell Veteran Living (ARVL) awareness week.

With your support, we've raised funds towards bringing our ARVL program to life in Western Australia as well as raising awareness of our journey to help end veteran homelessness.

A big thank you to all who showed their support for our ARVL badges, including WA Minister for Veterans Issues, Hon. Paul Papalia CSC MLA, who stopped by our Appeal HQ in Yagan Square to purchase a badge and show his support.

We couldn't have done it without the support of our community so thank you to everyone who has

donated to the ARVL Appeal. But there's still more to be done to deliver our emergency veteran accommodation site in WA.

If you haven't already, donate to our ARVL appeal online and make our goal a reality to help end veteran homelessness by using the QR code or click the donate button on our website.

We look forward to sharing updates on our ARVL program with you.





# RAAFA Wellbeing Team

## CAMBRAI VILLAGE

Vanessa Priestley  
9304 5280

## RAAFA ESTATE MERRIWA

Julie Neves  
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

### Chair dancing

This new group has been a hit with more participants every week. Chair dancing not only provides a comprehensive workout, it promotes better coordination and balance while encouraging social interaction, significantly improving mental health and well-being.



### Seussical

In coordination with Mandurah Baptist College residents were treated to their own private screening of the school's debuting musical "Seussical". What talent and professionalism we witnessed with everyone saying it was as good, if not better than a Broadway musical.



## Amity Village

### Exercise group

Continues every second Friday for informal exercise based on balance, mobility and confidence.

## Merriwa Estate

### Meet Julie

Have you had a chance to introduce yourself to Julie Neves yet? Why not take a moment to pop down to the Wellbeing office and extend one of our warm RAAFA welcomes.



### Relaxation

Meditation sessions held fortnightly in the meeting room on Monday's at 2.00pm. Details are available in the arcade and TV and classes are by donation. Contact Lorraine for more information 0408 379 703.

# Celebrating women

RAAFA celebrated International Women's Day with the common theme of celebrating the achievements of the women, female elders and family matriarchs who are part of the RAAFA community.

And at Erskine Grove, Estate Manager, Caroline Henning, said that the day offered the opportunity not just to focus on the accomplishments of female residents and staff, but also to recognise the contribution they make to RAAFA's vibrant community.

Caroline said, "I was asked to talk about who inspires me to succeed in life. I am so grateful for the women that came before me and that I live in Australia. We now have the freedom to have careers after marriage, we have no fault divorce laws and our society is working towards equal pay. I acknowledge there is still a lot to do.

"An inspiration for change is following my cousin Sarah Nichols who started her own law firm in the US to represent individuals in the area of workplace equality, she is a lady boss and a true inspiration. Nichols Law, P.C. (nicholslawyer.com)

"My own mum is also an inspiration, she was a farmer, a wife, a carer to my grandma, a community volunteer, indeed the list goes on.

"And just like my mum and my cousin Sarah, we have many female residents here at Erskine Grove who have done things their own way and, in doing so, have blazed a trail and broken-down barriers for younger women following behind them."

"International Women's Day is a great opportunity to celebrate how far we have come and a reminder that there is more to do to protect

women and children who are vulnerable and advocate for the rights of women around the world."

International Women's Day is marked annually on 8 March. It's a global celebration of the social, economic, cultural, and political

achievements of women. It's also a time to reflect on women's progress, to call for change and to celebrate the achievements of ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in their communities.

