



**Branch Patron**

Air Commodore Tony Jones

**President/Secretary**

Basil Nelson

Phone: 0456 992 621

email: [tvlsec@raafaqlld.org](mailto:tvlsec@raafaqlld.org)

**Postal Address**

PO Box 4031

KIRWAN QLD 4817

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION – TOWNSVILLE BRANCH

# FLIGHTLINE

Volume 23 No. 3

**Next Branch Meetings**

TBA - January 2024

(Monthly Meeting)

Time: TBA

Bolton Clarke Community Centre

Rowes Bay

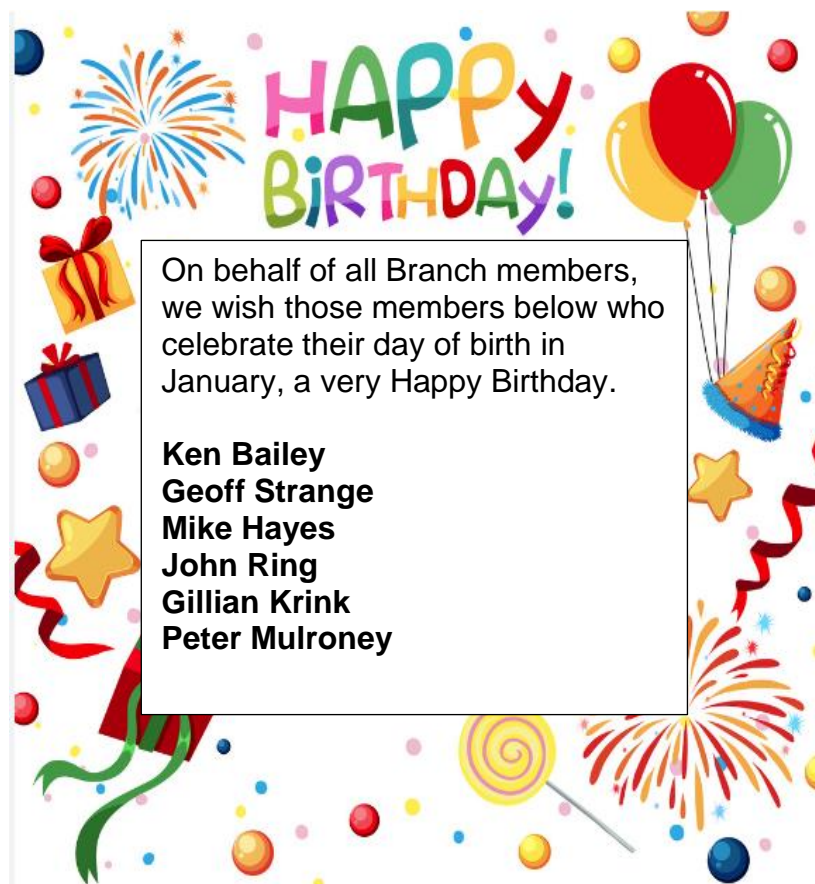
**Next Branch Event**

Christmas Lunch

03 December, 1130

The Sun Hotel

Mundingburra



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## **Christmas Message**

We wish all members a very safe and happy Christmas. Enjoy time with your family, friends, and loved ones. Stay safe and we look forward to seeing you in Townsville in 2023.

### **BRANCH PRESIDENT's CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2023**



We have no falling snow and no sleigh bells ringing; we don't roast chestnuts over an open fire and Jack Frost is nowhere to be seen; but the spirit of Christmas is ever present amongst us at this time of year.



It is at this time that we reflect on the 12 months just gone - the good times and the difficult times. We think of those caught up in poverty and conflict across the globe, particularly those struggling to survive and those who are charged with protecting them. But for most of us it is a time for family. A perfect time to get together; a perfect time to enjoy the hugs and the laughs; a perfect time to just be with each other. It's also an opportunity to mix with old and new friends and to remember those who are no longer with us. A chance to reminisce about past times – with embellished stories of course.

I like to think of our Branch as family who I enjoy being with and who are willing to support each other no matter what. I'm grateful for all our members, particularly those who organise and contribute to our activities. Without their commitment we would not see the successes that we have experienced. As family, I implore you to be especially careful during the festive season, be careful on the roads, look after each other and stay safe.

I'll take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and that you all have a happy and healthy 2024.

**Bas Nelson**

Branch President

## MEMBER PROFILE

**HELP! More entries needed.** If you have not already appeared in the “Member Profile” section, all you have to do is answer the questions below and send them, with a smiling headshot, in an email to [tvlsec@raafaqlld.org](mailto:tvlsec@raafaqlld.org).

Your Name;

*Where were you born?;*

*Where did you go to school?;*

*What are your interests/hobbies?;*

*Do you have a favourite book/movie/song?;*

*When did you join the military?; Where was your favourite posting?;*

*What is on top of your bucket list?;*

*What do you like about Townsville?*



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### So what, what now? I need your help. – Heston Russell

On Wednesday this week, the appeals process for my judgement against the ABC closed. With this, the ABC has by default accepted that they and two of their journalists were guilty of irresponsibly defaming me and my soldiers, and in doing so have caused serious harm. Now sending you this today, there is still not a word, let alone acknowledgement or an apology from anyone at the ABC. The same journalists are still working and receiving their full income (paid for by you, me and every other Australian taxpayer). Zero responsibility, zero accountability. This from the same media who are the first to profess their self-appointed position as a ‘fourth-pillar’ in our democracy and seek to hold others accountable. This absolute hypocrisy goes against our core Australian values and sets a disgusting example for all young Australians to learn from, and for our country to be seen with internationally.

At the start of this month I sent a request to both the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese and the Defence Minister, Richard Marles, to meet with them next week in Canberra during the Parliamentary sitting week. My request was to discuss this and the [Veterans’ Protection Act](#) we propose to better protect our Veterans from this irresponsible trial by media back home in Australia after serving on operations for our Nation. Yesterday, Richard Marles’ staff member replied and said I should meet with the Veterans’ Affairs Minister instead. I am still yet to receive any response from the Prime Minister. It’s fascinating to realise how quick Albo was to jump in next to me when I campaigned for the Royal Commission (below) and be unwilling to even respond now even after the Federal Court ruling, let alone the devastating impacts we have seen these ongoing media attacks cause our Veteran community and families.



I find myself standing in a position where I see so clearly how those in government, elected by us, for us - are not with us. How they are not willing to support those who fight for all freedoms, including free media, when it is a choice between only allowing members of the media to report on war crimes once they are proven in a court to the criminal standard (beyond reasonable doubt). As a 5th Generation Veteran who has been proved to be targeted and having serious harm caused by our government funded media, I am so dejected by this rejection.

I need your support - because only through strength in numbers and making enough noise to get their attention, can we collectively achieve what is needed for our current and future Veteran community.

Please take the time to contact the Prime Minister directly via his online form - [Click here](#).  
- Please ask him to meet with me to at least discuss these issues.

Please also take the time to contact the Defence Minister (and Deputy Prime-Minister) Richard Marles directly via his online form: [Click here](#).  
- Please ask him to meet with me to at least discuss these issues - and not to push me off to the Veterans' Affairs Minister.

Please ask them why they have not made any statement or even comment after the ABC have been found to have defamed me and my soldiers - calling us war criminals for an incident they claimed happened when we weren't even in Afghanistan at the time.

I need your support to please flood these two elected officials with letters that will require their unavoidable action. Albo & Marles have the power to ensure that this devastation to our Veteran community ends. With your support we can make this happen.

Please forward this far and wide to anyone and everyone. The power of the people must again be released. Word of mouth and individual action are the weapons we have in this fight. Can I please call on your support to help win this fight for the freedoms of our Veterans.

If you haven't already - please also sign the survey calling for the [Veterans Protections Act](#) here - again, our strength in numbers must compel these politicians into action.

[VETERANS' PROTECTION ACT - CLICK HERE](#).

Yours in Service,

HESTON RUSSELL





## Are you ready for storm season??



With summer now well and truly upon us its time to get ready and be prepared for the worst that mother nature can throw at us. Hopefully, our preparation will be for nothing, but in the instance, we have events you will be ready. Townsville city council and the QLD government have great resources available. (click images to go to relevant websites).



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### Nuclear veterans (From the United Kingdom) take legal action over 'illegally withheld' medical records.

Military veterans who took part in nuclear weapons tests in the 1950s and 60s are to take legal action against the UK Ministry of Defence in an attempt to gain access to medical records they claim have been illegally withheld.

The son of one of the men who took part in the tests said the MOD had to be held accountable because disclosing the information would have "lessened the trauma... and anguish" suffered by their families.

Some of the claimants said they had had cancer, blood disorders and lost children - and their descendants have spoken of being born with obvious disabilities.

Nuclear test veteran is the first to hold new medal fresh off the production line  
Analysis: Threat of nuclear attack never higher and could kill five billion  
£200,000 funding scheme for programmes recognising nuclear veterans opens for bids  
In a statement, the MOD said it "remains the case that no information is withheld from veterans", but said it could not comment on ongoing litigation or claims.

According to the MOD, more than 20,000 military personnel were present at the UK nuclear weapon tests between 1952 and 1967 in Australia and the South Pacific.

As part of the legal claim, veterans said blood and urine samples taken at the Cold War weapons trials had been reclassified as

"scientific data" and placed at the Atomic Weapons Establishment - an agency of the MOD - which means they cannot be accessed.

Reportedly sources at the MOD said the archives at the Atomic Weapons Establishment had been searched on numerous occasions and do not contain the medical records of service personnel.

The claimants say they can prove the nuclear testing was repeatedly ordered over a 10-year period and up to 100% of personnel at some of the sites were affected.

Veterans also claim ministers have repeatedly misled Parliament and that they blocked information being given to their next-of-kin last year.

Played 'genetic Russian roulette with his life'  
Steve Purse, 49, who was born with short stature about a decade after his father, Flight Lieutenant David Purse, served with the RAF in Maralinga, Australia, where British nuclear tests were carried out, said: "You wonder whether you have played genetic Russian roulette with his life.

"It's as if the MOD are withholding these records because they're a bit frightened of what might come out.

"If they have withheld information that could have saved lives, but, certainly, would have lessened the trauma and would have lessened all the anguish all these families have gone through, then they need to be

held accountable for that because they have done that knowingly and willingly."

The veterans claim their military medical files had been edited to remove all records from their time at the tests, making it difficult to claim war pensions on the basis of radiation-related injuries.

Jason McCue, managing partner of McCue Jury & Partners which is representing the claimants, said if the veterans' GPs had been "given proper access to their military records, there might be many more of them alive today".

The law firm has appealed for anyone who took part in the tests and clean-ups under UK command to contact them if they wish to be part of the legal claim.

A crowd-funding page has been launched to support the veterans' legal claim [here](#).

Veterans have campaigned for years over illnesses they say were caused by radiation exposure, in a fight which reached the Supreme Court in 2012, where those

involved in 1,011 test cases lost their bid to be allowed to seek compensation.

MOD response

A spokesman for the MOD said: "We are grateful to all service personnel who participated in the British nuclear testing programme and contributed to keeping our nation secure and are pleased that they will now be receiving a medal in recognition of this.

"It remains the case that no information is withheld from veterans and any medical records taken either before, during or after participation in the UK nuclear weapon tests are held in individual military medical records in the Government's archives, which can be accessed on request.

"The MOD is not able to comment on ongoing litigation or claims, nor would the MOD be able to comment if they were yet to receive the claim."

Source [Forces Net](#)

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#### DEPARTURE LOUNGE (NOV 2023)

NAME	YEARS
WGCDR Mark Anderson	40
WOFF Andrew Skeat	40
WOFF Paul Goodrich	37
SQNLDR David Tuite	35
WOFF Jamie Bordiuk	32
SGT Claire Aram	27
WGCDR Melissa Mailler	25
WOFF Danny Waldron	25
FLTLT Jonathon Schoenmaker	24
CPL Mark Bakes	22
WGCDR Robyn Tatnell	21

#### RAAF Departure Lounge

Departure lounge from the Air Force News November 2023, members who have completed 20 or more years full time service. If you would like to read the latest version of the Air Force or other service news, please [click here](#). The newspapers are published fortnightly.

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## Air Force Association

A reminder that the Air Force Association has up to date news being published on its National website as well as distributing the WINGS magazine on the website as well as through the member page of the MMS. Click on the above image to be directed to the website.

## Medals and Awards

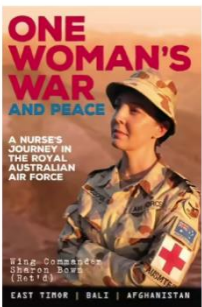
Do you have any outstanding medals and awards or unsure if you have your full entitlement of medals or awards? If so [click here](#) and fill out an application form and the Department of Honours and Awards will check through your service record to confirm any eligibility.



**Nuclear Test Medal** – Although a very controversial subject due to the horrible effects this has had on those involved. The British Government has minted a medal for those who served during the Nuclear Tests in Australia and the Pacific between 1952 and 1967 inclusive. This medal is awarded to British service and civilian personnel and individuals from **other allied nations** who served. If you think you may be eligible [click here](#) to read the directives.

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## Book Reviews

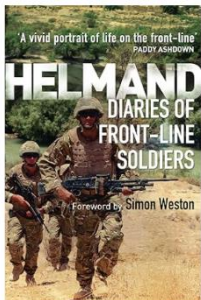


### **ONE WOMAN'S WAR AND PEACE** Wing Commander (Ret'd) Sharon Bown

This is a terrific book, inspiring and from the heart. Sharon Bown OAM was inducted as a Member of the Order of Australia on 31 Oct 23 for the work she has undertaken representing veterans and as an ambassador for the Royal Australian Air Force.  
-Martin Mayes

'An honest and inspiring account of one woman's life in the service of her country. Sharon has experienced the lowest of lows and the highest of highs, yet in every circumstance, Sharon's amazing courage shines through'. - Air Chief Marshall (Ret'd) Sir Angus Houston AK, AFC

'Sharon's story is one that is rarely heard. One of compassion, commitment, and courage'.  
-Mark Donaldson VC



### **Helmand: Diaries of Front-line Soldiers**

Includes diaries from a range of Royal Marine Commandos from 40 Commando, including some that lost their lives fighting the Taliban.

'A vivid portrait of life on the front line through the diaries of soldiers who content with mustache competitions one minute and life threatening action the next. Funny, heart-breaking, absorbing and above all, honest. A must read book'. Paddy Ashdown GCMG, KBE PC

## DVA Updates

### Tickets for ANZAC Day services in Turkiye and France now available

Australians planning to honour the fallen at the 2024 Anzac Day Dawn Services in Türkiye or France can now [register](#) for their free attendance passes. Registration is essential.

### Veteran Oath

For those who have not applied and received their [Veteran oath](#) please apply through MyService.

### Support for participants in British Nuclear Testing

Former Australian Defence Force personnel who satisfy the definition of having rendered British Nuclear Test (BNT) defence service or service as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan after the Second World War are eligible to [claim for conditions](#) arising from that service.

### Vietnam War commemorative medallion and certificate

To acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, the Department of Veterans' Affairs will produce a Commemorative Medallion and Certificate of Commemoration. Apply [here](#).

For more news from DVA click [here](#).



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## Accommodation Reviews and Holidays

"I have just returned from a trip, some time of which was spent in Brisbane where I stayed at Angus House for a couple of weeks. Michelle Byrne who runs the place asked me to advise anyone who is visiting Brisbane that they are most welcome to stay there. It is a great facility with Aircon double/triple rooms a kitchen, a dining room, 3 lounges with TVs, a library, a laundry, and a secure car park, all this with meals thrown in for \$20 a day. Families are welcome".

"Most of those visiting are in Brisbane for medical reasons and the partners stay there while the other half is having hospital treatment. It is within walking distance of the Wesley Hospital".

Contact: Michelle Byrne, [michelle.byrne@rslqld.org](mailto:michelle.byrne@rslqld.org), Mobile: 0418721300, 53-55 Bayliss Street, Toowong Q. 4066, P.O. Box 984, Toowong Q 4066.

Walter Raleigh





Don't forget Defence Holidays NQ have some great weekend escape, accommodation and holiday deals. They are non-for profit for serving and ex serving ADF only. Either click the image or phone the Lavarack Barracks office on [\(07\) 4725 3842](tel:0747253842)

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

A consultation process is now open to inform a proposed new entity to follow the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. Click [here](#) to read more.

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### **The Oasis – Townsville Updates**

#### **RSL Townsville Banjo & Coffee Breakfast**

Join fellow veterans of all ages and services for the last Free small coffee and Bacon & egg Banjo (English muffin) this Friday 01 Dec 23. You need to register [here](#) before close of business Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 23.

#### **Path of Remembrance**

The Oasis Townsville is building a Path of Remembrance at Homebase that will be made of pavers with names inscribed on them of people who have served. We've all got an ancestor and/or a relative from service in the ADF. Here is your chance to remember them by placing their name on a paver and having that laid into the Path of Remembrance.

Click [here](#) for more details.

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### **Check your NBN Plans**



NBN Co's wholesale prices have resisted inflation and have not increased in real terms over the last ten years, despite the fact that most of the company's input costs have been subject to inflation.

NBN Co's new wholesale prices, which come into effect on 1 December 2023, will see significant reductions in the prices of our entry level and higher speed tiers.

For more information click [here](#) and contact your individual provider

**Doug Millican**

## Brunch at the Heritage Tea House

On Sunday the 19<sup>th</sup> October a number of members went to the Heritage Tea Rooms for brunch. The numbers were down from the last time we ate there but the company was terrific as usual, and the weather was perfect.

The food was up to their usual standard, and I believe everyone enjoyed their meal and all seemed to have a great time. As you know we organise an outing each month but would appreciate ideas from the members if they know of somewhere people would enjoy.

**Doug Millican**

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## Coordinating attacks on Black Dagger



Exercise Black Dagger, the culminating activity for the 72 joint terminal attack controller (JTAC) course, has successfully concluded at RAAF Base Townsville.

The exercise kicked off in early November and required students to coordinate the live and simulated employment of aircraft and ordnance in air-to-ground scenarios.

Exercise Director and Commanding Officer of 4 Squadron, Wing Commander Steven Duffy, said Exercise Black Dagger consolidated everything the JTAC students had learnt throughout the course.

“Black Dagger saw the students draw from six weeks of training in close air support missions, and they were assessed from their planning and briefing to their controlling and reporting,” Wing Commander Duffy said.

“The exercise ensured that the JTACs are ready to call in weapons strikes from air combat aircraft, as well as artillery units and other ground fire, in support of the joint force.”

4 Squadron also deployed the Pilatus PC-21 aircraft, and the exercise was supported by F/A-18F Super Hornet aircraft from 1 Squadron as well as Army elements.

For the first time, personnel from the Republic of Singapore Air Force and Philippine Air Force took part in the exercise – in an observer capacity.



The observers spent a week watching ground activity at the Townsville Field Training Area as well as 1 and 4 Squadron aircraft involvement.

Wing Commander Duffy said international observer participation was beneficial to overall outcomes.

"The interaction was very much a two-way street, with all parties sharing their own knowledge and gaining from the engagement with each other," Wing Commander Duffy said.

"We very much welcomed what the observers brought to the table and it can only benefit us in the future."

Commanding Officer of 1 Squadron, Wing Commander Sean Hamilton, said Exercise Black Dagger provided an excellent opportunity to practice armament procedures and close air support to contribute to the joint force.

"The F/A-18F is well suited to close air support due to its two-seat crew and large payload. Black Dagger provides an opportunity for our air combat group aircrew and ADF JTACs to build close working relationships and enhance our collective effectiveness," Wing Commander Hamilton said.

For Australian Army Captain Craig Macaulay, the opportunity to undertake the course has been an unforgettable milestone in his career.

"The course has been very challenging but superbly rewarding," he said.

"I'm certainly looking forward to applying what I've learnt from this course - knowing it is a massive responsibility in the units that I'm going to be posted to."



Source - <https://www.defence.gov.au/news-events/news/2023-11-23/coordinating-air-attacks-black-dagger>

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### **We Need some ideas.**



As this is your newsletter for your association, let us know what you would like to see in it and we will endeavour to research it. Remember, we are all volunteers, so our time is as precious as yours. Even better, if you find or write a story/article you would like published send it in to [tvlsec@raafaqld.org](mailto:tvlsec@raafaqld.org).

Also, if you have any ideas for social activities/ commemorations please send them into the above email address.

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### **A Couple of Laughs**



**I really hate it when people use the same word twice in a sentence. Enough is Enough!**

**My wife has stood by me for twenty years. I really should buy another chair.**

**I've got a date with a woman who identifies as a wheelie bin, but I can't remember if I'm taking her out Tuesday or Wednesday.**

**The problem with the gene pool is that there is no lifeguard.**

## Upcoming Branch Events

### **3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023 Christmas Lunch**

Well, where has the year gone. Come and join us for the annual branch lunch at the refurbished **Sun Hotel** in Mundingburra. Lunch will commence at **1130 hrs.** Please book your attendance through the **MMS** and by following instructions on the flyer.

### **January 2024 (Date & Time TBA) Branch Meeting**

The next branch meeting is to be held in January 2024, the date and time has not yet been finalized. However, the meeting will be held at the usual venue unless otherwise notified. It would be great to see maximum attendance to kick off the year. Remember this association is for you and your input is valued. The **MMS** will be updated soon to reflect 2024 dates. Keep an eye out for emails.