



- THE VETERAN CENTRE -
JANUARY 2025
NEWSLETTER



RSL
Gympie Sub Branch

Photograph on Front Cover

Australian soldiers being ferried in a small craft, from troop transport HMAS Sydney on its arrival in North Borneo (Sabah) as part of their defence aid programme to Malaysia.

This conflict, known as the 'Indonesian Confrontation' or 'Konfrontasi' in Bahasa Indonesian, had its beginnings in 1961 when the then Malayan Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman proposed that Malaya, Singapore and the two British Territories in North Borneo, Sarawak and Sabah should form a federation to be known as Malaysia.

The then President of Indonesia, Sukarno strongly opposed this proposal particularly since he considered the two states in Borneo as part of Indonesia.

The Malaysian Federation came into being on 16th September 1963.

The Australian Government welcomed the formation of the Federation but was caught in a bind since it wanted to maintain good relations with Indonesia.

In the beginning Indonesia limited itself to brief guerrilla raids into Sarawak and Sabah however, these escalated when the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia) guerrillas were reinforced by troops of the Indonesian Army. This, in turn, required a build up of British and Malaysian Federation combat units.

Australian forces were committed from 1964 until the end of Confrontation in August 1966. This included a secret war fought in Kalimantan against Indonesian regular forces.

For further, in depth information go to the Australian War Memorial Website and search, 'Confrontation/Secret War and Wikipedia Indonesia - Malaysia confrontation.



VALE

Kenneth Maxwell Clements
4 May 1952 to 13 December 2024

We Will Remember Them

Lest We Forget

A wish from me to you that you may enjoy all things good during this New Year and beyond.

By the time you read this, January 2025 will almost be upon us and, since, it seems, time flies, almost become history, as will many, if not all, the New Year's resolutions we shall impose upon ourselves at the chimes of midnight!

You know the classics: no more alcohol after the raw egg remedy for hangover. Eat better after the self indulgent stuffing of, well stuffing. Go to bed earlier after sitting up all night watching the cricket/foo'bawl/Gran Prix/etc. Go to the gym at least 3 times a week after experiencing difficulty lifting the beer glass...oh wait, we're giving up drinking right? Got out of that one easily. And so it goes.

Then there are the more serious ones like, I'll stop telling my kids how to parent their kids! I'll stop criticising my friend's dress sense. I'll stop being so judgemental. I'll drive more carefully and control my road rage, no matter how much I'm provoked. I'll take better care of my appearance even if I'm not going to leave the house. I'll listen more attentively and speak more thoughtfully. I'll do no harm.

One thing is certain, no matter what we resolve to do or not to do and whether we manage to maintain these promises to ourselves or not, we are not islands unto ourselves; we are connected one to another in myriad ways and so all we do or, not do, has consequences for both ourselves and others.

You may rest assured the Veteran Centre will continue to work assiduously on your behalf and for you. The dedicated people who work at the Centre irrespective of their roles, have a sole aim in their professional or volunteer lives. To attempt to make your life better in whatever way they can.

If you need help, please ask, no shame, before whatever has happened becomes too big to handle. If you want someone to listen with empathy and care. If you need advice about how to deal with issues, particularly but not limited to, your service or that of a loved one or friend, there will be someone at the Centre with the knowledge, expertise, experience and humanity to offer it.

I don't think I'm exaggerating if I write that there are very few organisations in our society that care for their members, no matter who they are, better than the Gympie Veteran Centre.

Please remember though, that the Centre is staffed by your fellow human beings who have their own lives and needs, so care for them as they care for you.

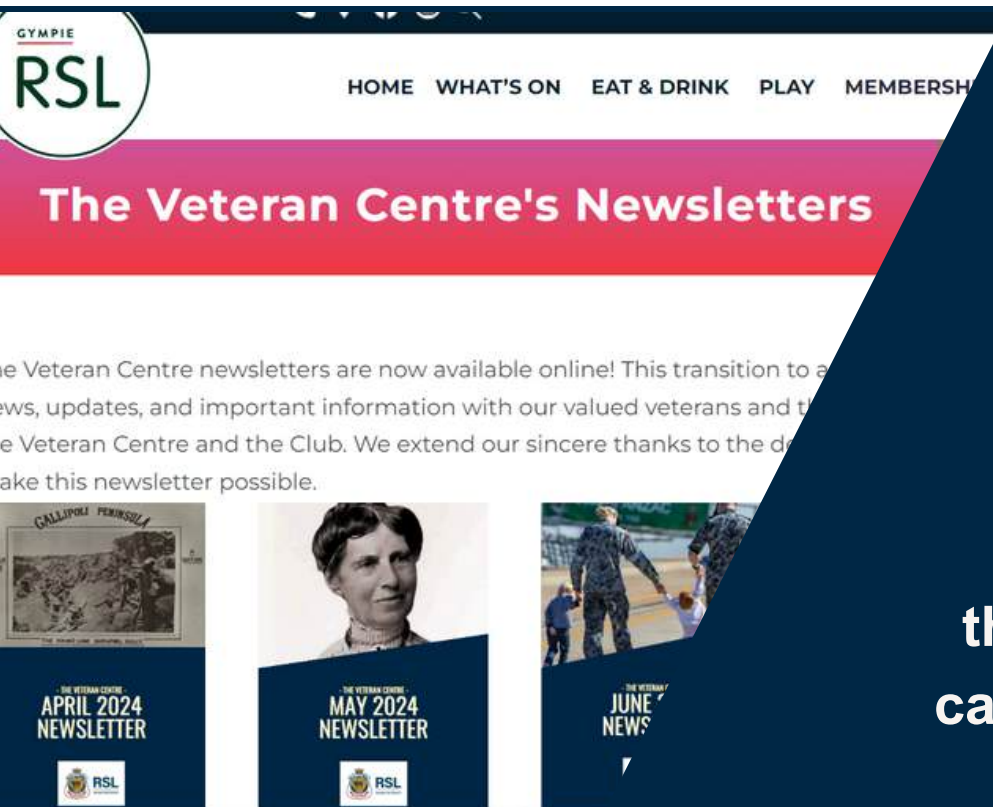
Let us resolve to do this and not betray the pledge.

A Note from the Newsletter Team

We're always looking to improve and welcome your suggestions.

Please send your submissions to
news@gympiersla.com.au

Our deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month. Submissions received after that may be included in the following month's issue.



**Missed a past
edition of the
newsletter?**

**Don't worry—
the last 6 editions
can be found online.**

gympiersl.com.au/veteran-centre-newsletters/

Letter from the President

ADEL AMIN

*President of the Board of Directors,
Gympie RSL Sub Branch*



As the years continue to pass, it is essential that we never overlook the debt of gratitude we owe to those who gave so much in every theatre of service involving members of our Australian military. Commemorations play a vital role in helping us recognise our military service history and honour those who have served in wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations. It is more important than ever to pause, reflect, and pay tribute to all who have served, their sacrifices, and the sacrifices of their families. We must also remember and honour those who continue to wear our nation's uniform today.

Significant Commemorations in 2025

This year brings several major milestones that highlight the significance of our military history:

- **110th Anniversary of Anzac Day:** On 25 April, we will mark 110 years since the Gallipoli Landing in Türkiye in 1915. Enhancements to two of Gympie's most prominent war memorials and heritage sites will further deepen the meaning of this special day.
- **105th Anniversary of the Gympie & Widgee War Memorial Gates:** First unveiled in 1920, these gates commemorate the 167 local men who died in service or were killed in action during World War One, as well as two who died in the South African (Boer) War. This year also marks the centenary of Henry Moore's design of Memorial Park (1919–1921), a cornerstone of our local commemorations.
- **Relocation and Integration of the Memorial Flame:** A new memorial flame will be unveiled on the eastern side of Memorial Park, enhancing the connection between the heritage lane and park while honouring all military service. This addition will create a profoundly moving experience, especially as the dawn breaks on Anzac Day.

Other important anniversaries include:

- **50th Anniversary of the End of the Vietnam War:** Observed on 30 April, this milestone marks the conclusion of the Vietnam War in 1975.
- **80th Anniversary of Victory in the Pacific:** On 15 August, we will commemorate the end of World War II in the Pacific in 1945.

A Focus on Contemporary Veterans

In 2025, the Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL) will launch a significant initiative to better understand the impacts of Australian Defence Force (ADF) service since 2002, particularly in conflicts in the Middle East. This research will explore the unique nature of these conflicts, review existing studies, and investigate the specific physical and mental health challenges faced by veterans, including Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI).

The project will also address the impacts on families, acknowledging how these conflicts differed from earlier wars, especially given the absence of a widespread perception that the nation was at war. By examining the legacy of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the research aims to identify the needs and concerns of contemporary veterans and their families, enabling RSL sub-branches to better engage and provide tailored support.

Gratitude and Reflection

As we begin a new year, it is a time to reflect on the past, cherish the present, and look forward to the future. To our Gympie veterans: we extend our deepest gratitude for your service and sacrifices. Your courage and dedication have shaped our nation and continue to inspire us every day.

To our staff: thank you for your unwavering commitment and compassion in supporting the veterans in our care. Your dedication is an inspiration to all, both within and beyond our organisation.

To our Board members: your invaluable contributions and support have been instrumental. I look forward to another year of growth and development as we work together to serve our community.

***May the year ahead bring health, happiness,
and continued progress for us all.***

ADEL AMIN

*President of the Board of Directors,
Gympie RSL Sub Branch*



Happy Birthday!

*To our Members celebrating a
new decade in January:*

Mark C - 60th


Dulcie D - 80th

Leon K - 50th

Samuel M - 80th

Robert O - 80th

*Our best wishes to you all, and
to all members celebrating
birthdays this month!*





All the world's a stage

By William Shakespeare

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion;
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Recollections of Vietnam and Beyond

by Garry R Casey

...continued from December 2024 Newsletter

On my return to Darwin I obtained a job with the Department of Transport and Works as a supervisor in the Government Taxi Service at the two and a half-mile. I obtained a second job as a bouncer at the old Darwin Restaurant. I was a bit wild and drank and partied hard. After twelve months or so it started to take its toll. I played rugby league for South Darwin in 72 and 73 to keep fit. I decided it was time to settle down and got married at the beginning of 1974. I was living at Nakara when Cyclone Tracy hit. I escaped with the clothes I was wearing. Everything else was gone. All my souvenirs, photographs and slides from Vietnam as well. That really hurt.

During the clean-up I coordinated transport for the clean-up groups. On one occasion I went with the bus to Ludmilla School and there was my old unit. I knew most of the guys and most had had a promotion of some sort. We forgot about the scheduled clean up and both busloads went to my old house to see what could be salvaged. Unfortunately, not much was found. The guys found my ash tray which the LAD guys made for me out of a 105MM howitzer shell in Vietnam. I got an invite to the Officers mess at Larrakeyah for drinks that night. My former 2IC spotted me and came over and said, "Corporal Casey. What are you doing in the Officer's Mess." I replied, "Sir. I have been out of the Army since 1971". He said, "Oh! I thought you were still with us". It was typical of the guy and you wondered at times how you survived under an Officer like that! (No names No pack drill)

A few weeks after the cyclone I was transferred to Brisbane with my job where the Department of the Northern Territory set up officers until Darwin could be re-built. I didn't want to leave home but I had no choice. About six months on, I saw an ad in the Courier Mail for the NT Police. I rang the Recruiting Sergeant, who was Mick Palmer and who had been my rugby league coach. I was accepted and came home after completing my Recruit Training at Woodside Army Base in South Australia in December of 1975.

I didn't have anything to do with the Vietnam Veterans until my then wife, Valda, who I met in 1986, suggested and then insisted that I should go to the Welcome Home Parade which was held in October of 1987. I'm glad that I did go as it gave me the chance to meet up with old mates and relive old times. I suppose it was the start of the healing process for myself and many other veterans. It showed an acceptance and acknowledgment by both Government and more so, by the Australian public, of our service in Vietnam. With so many diggers together, fundraising started to have a memorial built in Canberra. This would commit Government to the final acknowledgment and acceptance of those that "Served, Suffered and Died" in the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (NT Branch) was formed in Darwin in 1988. I became Treasurer and have been on the Executive Committee since that time filling various positions until becoming President in December 1993 on the untimely death of the then President, Steve Poulter. I had known Steve since going to school in Darwin, but until we joined the Association together in 1988, we had never talked about Vietnam or knew that the other one had served there.

The Vietnam Veteran's Memorial was dedicated in October 1992 and was attended by thousands, including many widows, wives and families of Veterans. The dedication was another part of the healing process for many veterans. A lot of veterans didn't talk about their war service because of the type of war that it was. It was seen as political and Australia was seen as a puppet of the United States and the War was not popular and was not accepted by the Australian public. The War was not for the country. Being so, it was better to remain silent and not discuss it.

When I came back from Vietnam, I went to the Darwin RSL as my Dad was a member. I was now a Returned Serviceman. I had my badge and wanted to join the RSL. Some of the members of the RSL at the time gave me a hard time about how it wasn't a war – it was only a Police Action. I felt hurt and disillusioned and I didn't join the RSL for a very long time.



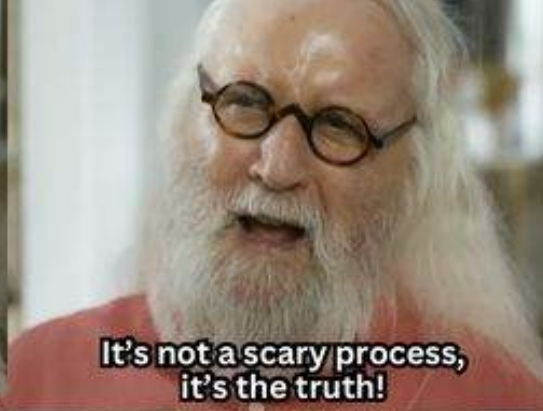
Military History Society of New South Wales



Types of New South Wales Mounted Rifles
Source: Weekly Times (Melbourne), 11th November 1899

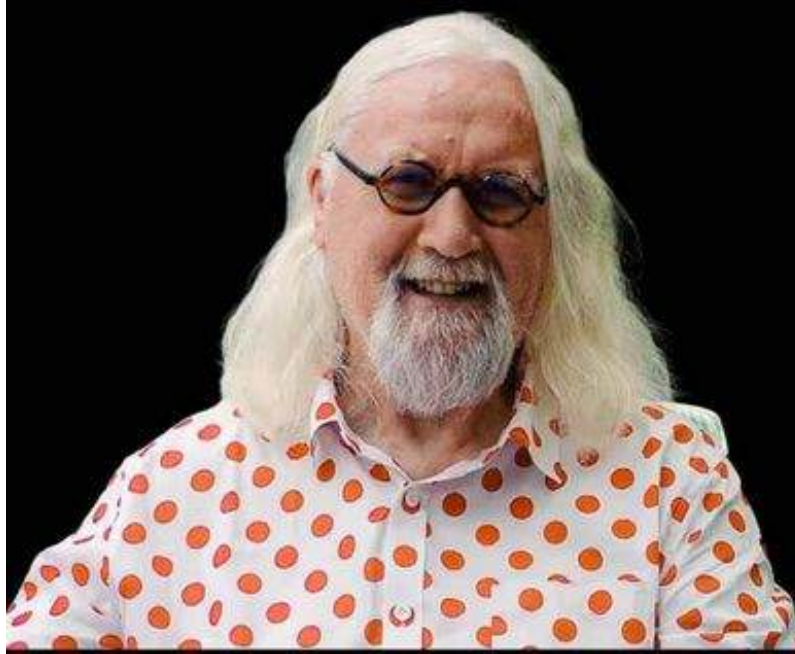


New South Wales Colonial soldiers in London, late 19th century



"I think age is terribly overrated. You're okay as long as you don't grow up. By all means grow old, but don't mature. Remain childlike, retain wonder, the ability to be flabbergasted by something."

BILLY CONNOLLY





THE PROPHET

By Khalil Gibran

The Prophet is a book of prose written by Khalil Gibran, a Lebanese-American writer, in 1923. It has never been out of print and is one of the most translated and best-selling books of all time.

We hope you enjoy the inclusion of select chapters in this newsletter.

And an astronomer said, Master, what of Time?

And he answered:

You would measure time the measureless and the immeasurable.

You would adjust your conduct and even direct the course of your spirit according to hours and seasons.

Of time you would make a stream upon whose bank you would sit and watch its flowing.

Yet the timeless in you is aware of life's timelessness,

And knows that yesterday is but today's memory and tomorrow is today's dream.

And that that which sings and contemplates in you is still dwelling within the bounds of that first moment which scattered the stars into space. Who among you does not feel that his power to love is boundless?

And yet who does not feel that very love, though boundless, encompassed within the centre of his being, and moving not from love thought to love thought, nor from love deeds to other love deeds?

And is not time even as love is, undivided and paceless?

But if in your thought you must measure time into seasons, let each season encircle all the other seasons,

And let today embrace the past with remembrance and the future with longing.

And one of the elders of the city said, Speak to us of Good and Evil.

And he answered:

Of the good in you I can speak, but not of the evil.

For what is evil but good tortured by its own hunger and thirst?

Verily when good is hungry it seeks food even in dark caves, and when it thirsts it drinks even of dead waters.

You are good when you are one with yourself.

Yet when you are not one with yourself you are not evil.

For a divided house is not a den of thieves; it is only a divided house.

And a ship without rudder may wander aimlessly among perilous isles yet sink not to the bottom. You are good when you strive to give of yourself.

Yet you are not evil when you seek gain for yourself.

For when you strive for gain you are but a root that clings to the earth and sucks at her breast.

Surely the fruit cannot say to the root, "Be like me, ripe and full and ever giving of your abundance."

For to the fruit giving is a need, as receiving is a need to the root.

You are good when you are fully awake in your speech,
Yet you are not evil when you sleep while your tongue staggers without purpose.

And even stumbling speech may strengthen a weak tongue.

You are good when you walk to your goal firmly and with bold steps.
Yet you are not evil when you go thither limping. Even those who limp go not backward.

But you who are strong and swift, see that you do not limp before the lame, deeming it kindness.

You are good in countless ways, and you are not evil when you are not good,
You are only loitering and sluggard.

Pity that the stags cannot teach swiftness to the turtles.

In your longing for your giant self lies your goodness: and that longing is in all of you.

But in some of you that longing is a torrent rushing with might to the sea, carrying the secrets of the hillsides and the songs of the forest.

And in others it is a flat stream that loses itself in angles and bends and lingers before it reaches the shore.

But let not him who longs much say to him who longs little, "Wherefore are you slow and halting?"

For the truly good ask not the naked, "Where is your garment?" nor the houseless, "What has befallen your house?"





WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO SEE YOU!

WHEN: FRIDAY 7TH FEBRUARY

WHERE: TIN CAN BAY RSL SUB-BRANCH

TIME: 10:30AM UNTIL 12:30PM

**WHAT: MEET THE ADVOCATES
(WELLBEING AND COMPENSATION)**

COME AND HAVE A BBQ AND A CHAT



VETERAN CENTRE SPOTLIGHT



Tell us a little about yourself! What do you enjoy doing when you're not at the Veteran Centre? Reading history books, exploring and the beach

What's your favourite part of your job as the centre manager? Any surprising moments? Seeing those moments where we have had a win for a Veteran

If you could describe your role in three words, what would they be? Creative, Chaotic, Rewarding

If you had to pick one song to play every time you walked into the room, what would it be? She Moves In Her Own Way - The Kooks

Do you have a hidden talent or hobby that not many people know about? Skipping

If you could have dinner with anybody (dead or alive), who would it be and why? Robbie Williams and Robin Williams - The conversation, stories and the laughter!

Coffee, tea, or something else—what's your go-to drink to start the day? I'm a tea and coffee connoisseur. Piccolo or my favourite tea, Le nuit a Versailles - Les Damon Freres

GONNA BE A BEAR

In this life I'm a woman. In my next life, I'd like to come back as a bear. When you're a bear, you get to hibernate. You do nothing but sleep for six months. I could deal with that.

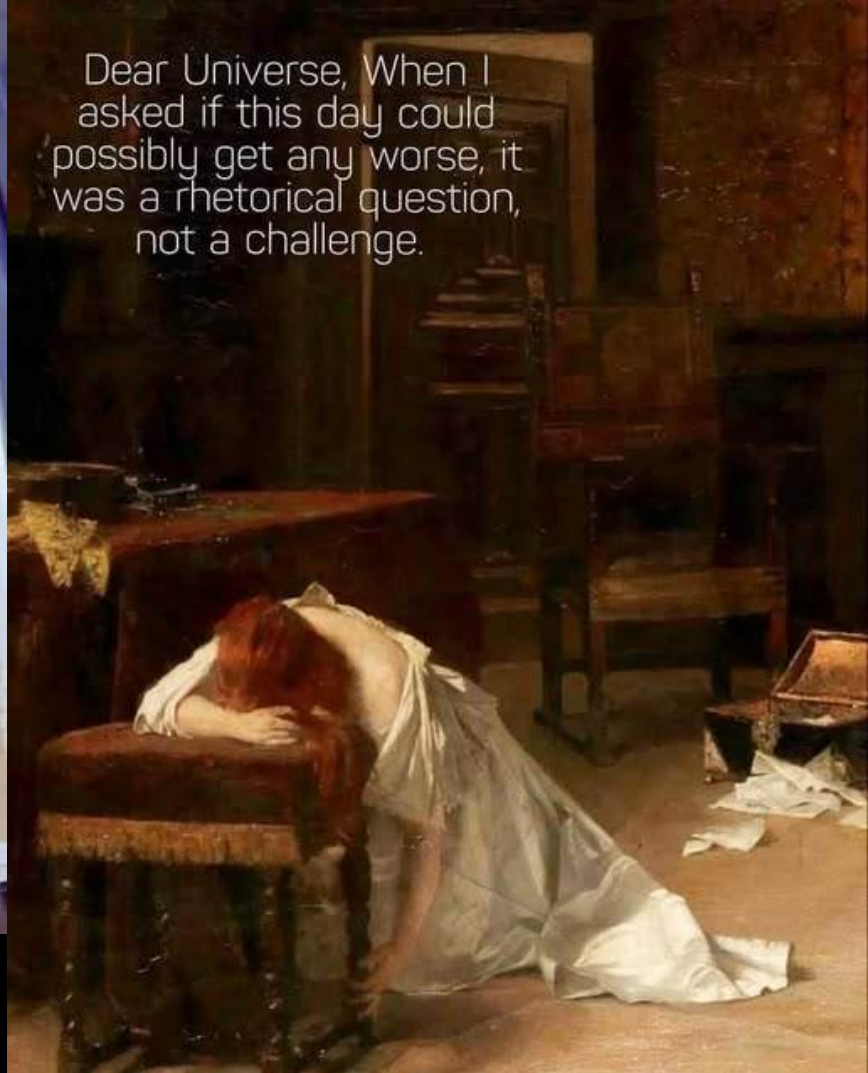
Before you hibernate, you're supposed to eat yourself stupid. I could deal with that too.

When you're a girl bear, you birth your children (who are the size of walnuts) while you're sleeping and wake to partially grown, cute, cuddly cubs. I could definitely deal with that.

If you're mama bear, everyone knows you mean business. You swat anyone who bothers your cubs. If your cubs get out of line, you swat them too. I could deal with that.

If you're a bear, your mate EXPECTS you to wake up growling. He EXPECTS that you will have hairy legs and excess body fat.

Yup, gonna be a bear!

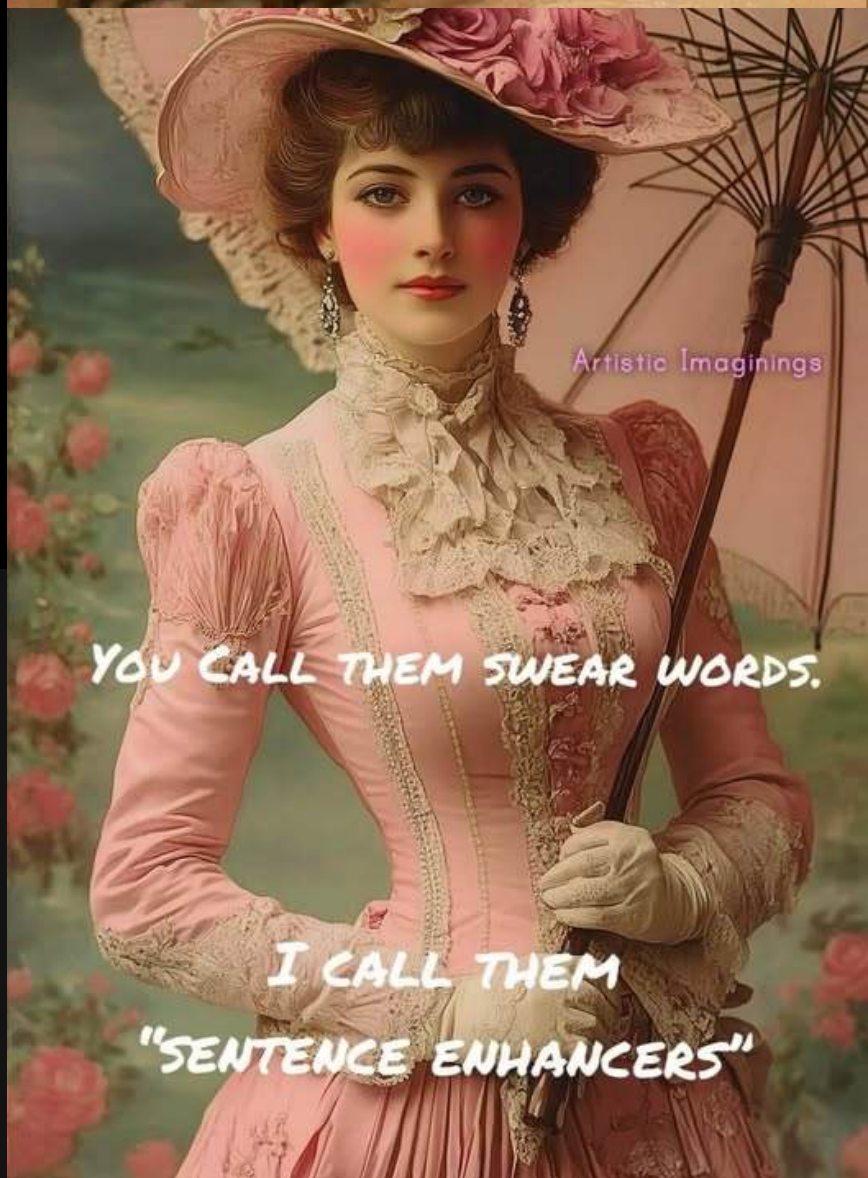


Dear Universe, When I asked if this day could possibly get any worse, it was a rhetorical question, not a challenge.

I GET MOST OF MY EXERCISE THESE DAYS FROM SHAKING MY HEAD IN DISBELIEF.

Just before I die, I am going to swallow a bag of popcorn kernels.

My cremation is going to be epic!



Artistic Imaginings

YOU CALL THEM SWEAR WORDS.

I CALL THEM "SENTENCE ENHANCERS"



It's membership renewal time at the Gympie RSL for our League Members. Life Members/Subscribers will need to collect their new coloured card.

From the 1st of December until the 28th of February, you can pay your renewal and/or collect your new card from Mary Street Reception

You can also renew at the Bar on Level 3 (just preferably not during lunch/dinner operations)

Your new card will ensure you can continue to receive your Mateship Meal offer and access to many other benefits of being a sub branch member including: assistance with pension & compensation claims, wellbeing support, social events, seasonal health & wellbeing programs, complementary tea & coffee daily, group exercise classes and more!

We look forward to seeing you in the club soon!

DEC 2024
THROUGH
FEB 2025

SUMMER



HEALTH & WELLBEING PROGRAM

MODEL HOBBY CLUB

Every Monday
from 12pm to 1pm

Veteran Centre,
44 Nash St

GYMPIE RSL CHOIR

Every Tuesday
from 5:30pm to 6:30pm

Veteran Centre,
44 Nash St

FIT TOGETHER

Every Wednesday
from 1pm to 2pm &
Saturday from 9am

Gympie Aquatic
Recreation Centre
Book online:
www.trybooking.com/COADM

CHAIR EXERCISE

Every Thursday
from 1pm to 2pm

Gympie Aquatic
Recreation Centre
Book online:
<https://www.trybooking.com/COACU>

SPLASH AEROBICS

Every Friday
from 1pm to 2pm

Gympie Aquatic
Recreation Centre
Book online:
<https://www.trybooking.com/COADE>

SWIMMING - GYMPIE

All day entry every
Wednesday,
Friday & Saturday

Gympie Aquatic
Recreation Centre
For Veterans & their
Partners/Carers Children
welcome upon application at
Veteran Centre

SWIMMING & GYM - GLENWOOD

All day entry every
Wednesday,
Friday & Sunday

Village Swim & Gym | 348 Arborfive
Rd For Veterans & their
Partners/Carers Children welcome
upon application at Vet Centre

10-MINUTE WINDOW

Fitness, Education, and
Community Activities
A holistic support
program for veterans

(Watch out for details,
coming soon!!!)

MYSTERY BUS TRIP

Wednesday
4 December 9am to
2:45pm | \$25pp

For Veterans & their
Partners/Carers
Book online: www.trybooking.com/CVKCP

For more information, call 5483 7707 or email reception@gympiersla.com.au



www.gympiersla.com.au/welfare





**FOR
VETERANS
& THEIR
PARTNERS/
CARERS***

Glenwood SWIMMING & GYM

**ALL DAY ENTRY EVERY WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY & SUNDAY
VILLAGE SWIM & GYM | 348 ARBORFIVE RD**

*Children of Veterans welcome upon application at Veteran Centre; must show DVA, RSL Membership &/or Veteran Centre Family Card upon entry

**For more information
call 5483 7707 or email
vadmin@gympiersla.com.au**

www.gympiersl.com.au/welfare



RSL
Gympie Sub Branch

10 MINUTE WINDOW

Fitness, Education, Community

The **10-Minute Window** Program is a 12-week pilot aimed at connecting and engaging younger veterans.

Through activities such as **surfing, MMA, and paintball**, participants can enjoy time with fellow veterans in a setting that's not only enjoyable but also helps build connections.

Every 4 weeks (on a Saturday morning), we will host one of these events followed by lunch at the RSL club, where a guest speaker/s will discuss important topics like **mental health, physical well-being, and financial management**.

CrossFit Membership: As part of the program, each participant will receive a membership to CrossFit Release, offering three coached sessions per week and 24/7 access to the gym, allowing for flexibility outside of scheduled classes.

These sessions are designed to improve physical fitness, build resilience, and foster a sense of achievement and confidence.

We'd love for you to join us in making this program a success!

To register your interest or if you require any further information please do not hesitate to reach out to David on **vso2@gympiersla.com.au** or phone the Veteran Centre on (07) 5483 7707.

10 MINUTE WINDOW

Fitness, Education, Community

A holistic support program for veterans



www.gympiersl.com.au/welfare/



RSL
Gympie Sub Branch



CYCLONE TRACY – A CHRISTMAS STORY

Submitted by: David Collins – A Gympie Sub Branch Member

It was 6.00 am and I had just started my shift as the Approach Controller at Darwin Airport. Darwin was an important aviation hub in Australia. It catered for General Aviation traffic, an Aero Club, domestic Regular Public Transport (RPT), International traffic and, of course, military traffic. In all, we handled 100,000 aviation movements per year, or an average of more than 270 movements per day. You really had to be on your game.

The morning started with the usual flurry of charter flights to the stations and settlements. The charter companies were kept particularly busy with Christmas coming up. Companies such as Tiwi Air Charter, Arnhem Air Charter, Andiliakwa Air, NT Air Charter, Missionary Aviation were the lifeblood of the Territory. In addition, each station had a few aircraft and the mining companies set about their daily business by flying to their destinations. Aircraft from Fokker Friendships, Catalinas, and a polyglot of Janes Aviation Digest plied their way in and out of our airspace. It was an air traffic controller's challenge. And all done without the use of radar.

An analogy I used was that you were at a gathering and were introduced to six people who told you their names, where they'd been and where they were going. Then the lights went out and they all moved around the room. When the lights came on again, you had to name them, remember where they were, where they were meant to be going and how tall they all were. It was then a simple matter of moving them about so that they all arrived safe and sound at their destination. Piece of cake!

Meanwhile, back in Approach Control, things started to settle down when the charters all came back again. In addition, some of the RPT's were beginning to arrive and start up for their scheduled flights. MacRobertson Miller from Perth would be arriving and then departing for Gove. Ansett had also planned to arrive from Brisbane and depart for Gove, Connellan Airways were planning three flights from Darwin to Katherine, to Tennant Creek and to Groote Eylandt. Ansett and Trans Australia were operating Boeing 727's from Brisbane and Sydney and return. It was going to get busy!

Meanwhile, Darwin was on Cyclone Watch. A tropical cyclone named Tracy was tracking east to west about 100 nautical miles north of Darwin. It would impact the islands but, apart from high winds and heavy rain, Darwin was not in Her direct path.

One of our controllers, Flight Lieutenant Kev Wass, arrived to see if he could track the cyclone on our antiquated ground approach radar, the Gilfillan CP4. This was a 1950's air transportable radar system. It was "raw" radar and required a dark room to operate it. It was also very small (air transportable!) and very unsophisticated. Wassy searched for Tracy.

In the meantime, air traffic was increasing and my attention was 100% on the job. Then it was 1.00pm and the afternoon shift had arrived. You beauty! Off to the mess for a well-earned cold beer or two and get some stock in for our Christmas Eve party planned at our married quarters. Before I left the Approach Control Centre, Wassy said that Tracy was very "tight" and would wipe out anything in its path.

I got home about 2.00pm and showered and changed out of my uniform, stocked the fridge, turned the lights on the Christmas tree and our 2 children, Martin aged 8 and Brooke aged 6 arrived home from the on-base cinema. My gorgeous wife, Jan arrived home about three and we set about making our home a welcoming place for Santa.

Presents were placed under the tree, I put some music on the record player and Jan set about preparing nibbles and a feast for our dinner guests. By 6 o'clock, two of my air traffic mates arrived, Flying Officers Tom Doran and Perce Matthews. Shortly thereafter, our other guests arrived, Flying Officer Mick Castles, our SAR chopper pilot and his wife Di with their two toddlers.

Meanwhile, the Weather Bureau had upgraded our status from Cyclone Watch to Cyclone Alert. The party started to get into full swing. Jan was passing around hors d'oeuvre and we would soon be sitting down to a sumptuous meal. Lots of laughter, the kids were happy and enjoying themselves, everyone had a drink. Life was pretty good. Then the phone rang. It was Wassy. He was still glued to the radar set. "Mate, I think this cyclone could hit us. Activate your survival plan. I'm ringing everybody." And hung up.

I relayed this to everyone. Mick decided to leave and return to his married quarter. He and Di bundled their kids into their car and left. The party was over and we discussed what steps we would take in the event that this cyclone hit. Our children were sent to bed with reassuring words. Tom and Perce, both single, decided to stay. I filled the bath tub with water, as advised by the authorities and told everybody we would be going into the bathroom if the cyclone hit. It was the strongest room in our elevated house. Then the wind started and grew in intensity. It got louder and louder. It sounded like a jet engine running at full tilt in our bedroom.

We gathered our kids and went into the bathroom. It was imperative that everyone was kept calm and reassured. And reassured again and again. I wouldn't let anything happen to anybody. Stay with me and you'll be safe.

The wind got louder and our house began to rock and the rain lashed down. A branch was blown off a tree and smashed through the bedroom louvres of our daughter's bedroom. Louvres on the opposite side of the house could not withstand the pressure and they blew out.

We could hear roofing iron being ripped from our house then the ceiling collapsed. I pulled a mattress from our bedroom and covered everybody as rain pelted us.

We could hear houses around us being ripped apart, debris hitting our home, walls collapsing and being tossed asunder. The wind was relentless. All the time, I had to keep a brave face for my wife and children. We began shouting jokes and going through “remember when” episodes of our lives. Then the wind stopped. The rain didn’t but it eased. It was the eye of the cyclone passing over us. Tom and Perce decided to make a run for it to the Officers’ Mess. It was a pre-WW II building, constructed from poured concrete. Although it carried battle scars from strafing by the Japanese in February 1942, it was solid.

We wished them luck and they departed, leaving us, our family unit to compose ourselves and get ready for the second part of the cyclone. Although we had no electricity, I raided the fridge for snacks and soft drinks for all. Might as well keep the party going. We sang songs. Then She hit again. This time without warning. We took the full brunt instantly. The house rocked and we thought of, but didn’t mention, our friends. How were they fairing? Were they surviving? I hope we all get out of this. What will the morning bring?

A couple of hours later, it was all over. An eerie silence fell on us as we slowly stirred and hugged each other. “It’s over” I said. “How was that!?! You sure were brave and you’ll have stories to tell your cousins when you see them.”

It was time to take stock. No electricity, no water, no Christmas pressies under the tree. No roof. I ventured outside and could see nothing but destruction all around. Some of our neighbours had nothing but floorboards left of their houses. But we were all alive and unscathed.

It was time to get to work. I told my wife and kids that I would be needed at work, because the only way we were going to get back on our feet was through aircraft and they need air traffic controllers. I made my way to Base Ops. There were about thirty people already there, some in a daze but most wondering what to do. They were in shock. My Senior ATC Officer, Brian Farrow, was there and caught my eye.

“Go out and do a runway inspection. Use the jeep out the front and report back to me as soon as you can.” There were no communications – no telephony, no sigs, no telexes, no radio aerials – nothing! We were on our own and nobody knew.

The runway was covered in debris. Bits of buildings, trees, sheet iron – it was completely unserviceable. The general aviation tarmac was littered with aircraft tossed into each other. Not one aircraft even looked like it could fly. The cyclone had gathered them all up and thrown them together in a heap in a corner of the tarmac. That included a Tiger Moth which I had a share in. Completely destroyed.

Arriving back at Base Ops, I relayed my findings to my SATCO. "There are some Sergeants out there" he said. "Find someone from Transport and we'll see if we can get the runway cleared." I soon found a Sergeant from transport and told him to come with me to the airfield. Once I showed him our problem, he knew what he had to do. I asked him for a timeline and he looked at me and shrugged. "I don't even know what equipment I have at the moment. Can you drop me at Transport Maintenance? I'll see if we can get your runway cleared by tonight" I thanked him.

I knew that there was a HF set in our DC3 but hopes were dashed when I sighted our old Gooney - back broken and on its side, HF antennae gone. Meanwhile, other air traffic controllers had been busy. Although the Airport Fire and Rescue Service had blown away, their observation tower still stood. The control tower had its windows blown out and nothing in there worked. Graeme Long arrived from his tower inspection to let us know that nothing worked or was salvageable. The dynes (air speed indicator) was jammed on 140 Knots! That's about 280 km/h!

There was nothing further I could do, so I went home. Jan had moved the family into the house next door. Our neighbours were on Christmas leave down south and their house was in (not much) better shape than ours. We ate what we could find for dinner and put the kids to bed in dry beds. Then it rained and we took advantage of the moment. Stripped to our underwear, we had an outdoor shower. It sure made us feel better. In the meantime, we had no running water or power and not much likelihood of getting either for a long time.

Next morning I went back to Base Ops, took the jeep out to the airfield and the men had performed miracles. At least the 2-mile-long runway was clear. Just as I was about to return to Base Ops, I heard a jet aircraft overhead. I couldn't see it because of dense cloud cover, so I called up on the jeep radio, which was on tower frequency.

"Aircraft overhead Darwin, state your callsign and your intentions. This airfield is closed."
"Hello Darwin Tower. This is Qantas Echo Bravo. We coming to take the Qantas staff home."
"Qantas Echo Bravo, this Darwin Tower is operating from a jeep. We have no nav aids, no lighting, no fire service. How do you intend to land?"
"We'll pick up the coast on our weather radar, let down over the sea and turn back for a straight in visual approach to Runway 11"
"Roger. There are no taxiways available. There is rubbish on the airfield. Let me know when you are on final approach with the runway in sight."

I sped back to Base Ops and advised the SATCO. He told me to hold the aircraft in the runup area to runway 11 after landing. "How does the Qantas staff know he's coming? If they have a comms link to Sydney, I want it."

Just then, the Officer Commanding RAAF Darwin arrived.

"Collins, there's a WA State Ship west of Charles Point, heading this way. He'll be here in about an hour and a half. Go and pick up Don Sanders, the state manager of the ABC. Take him down to the wharf and commandeer that ship. We need his radio room. Here, take a pistol" He handed me a service pistol in its canvas holster.

SATCO gave me instructions to Don's house at Myilly Point. I was to leave the jeep with another air trafficker. I grabbed a Kombi van with a rotating beacon on the roof and set off to pick up my passenger, who lived, coincidentally, next door to the Qantas manager. On the way to the wharf, I took a detour around the suburbs of Fannie Bay and Ludmilla so that Don could get a picture of the destruction.

We arrived at the wharf to watch the state ship begin its berthing procedures. There were no stevedoring services and the captain did a pretty good job of coming alongside. The gangplank was lowered and sailors scurried down to tie up their ship. The captain advanced down the steps towards us. "She's all yours. Whatever you want." He stated with a sweep of his hand. He then led Don to the radio room where Don broadcast to the world about our cyclone and the destruction.

His job done, we both thanked Captain Marsh and I took Don back to Base Ops, where he recounted his story to the Group Captain. Meantime, another aircraft had landed. This time it was the Acting Prime Minister, Jim Cairns. He had one simple instruction - evacuate the city! When he left, he had on board my Darling wife and kids, amongst others. It was an 11 seater VIP aircraft with 20 on board!

Qantas left after gathering up its 7 employees and left with 145 on board. The next few weeks saw a procession that must have resembled the Berlin airlift. A continuous conga line of aircraft bringing in supplies and taking people out. There were some staggering stories. Aircraft from all nations joined the support line. Singapore, Indonesia, US, New Zealand. The two domestic carriers joined in. One Trans Australia called up at 35 miles, callsign TBG. I asked his backload ability.

"Were Tango Bravo Golf. The Big Gun. I can take 142 passengers backload."

He seemed quite pleased with himself. When he left, he had 212 on board.

There are many, many more similar stories about Cyclone Tracy.

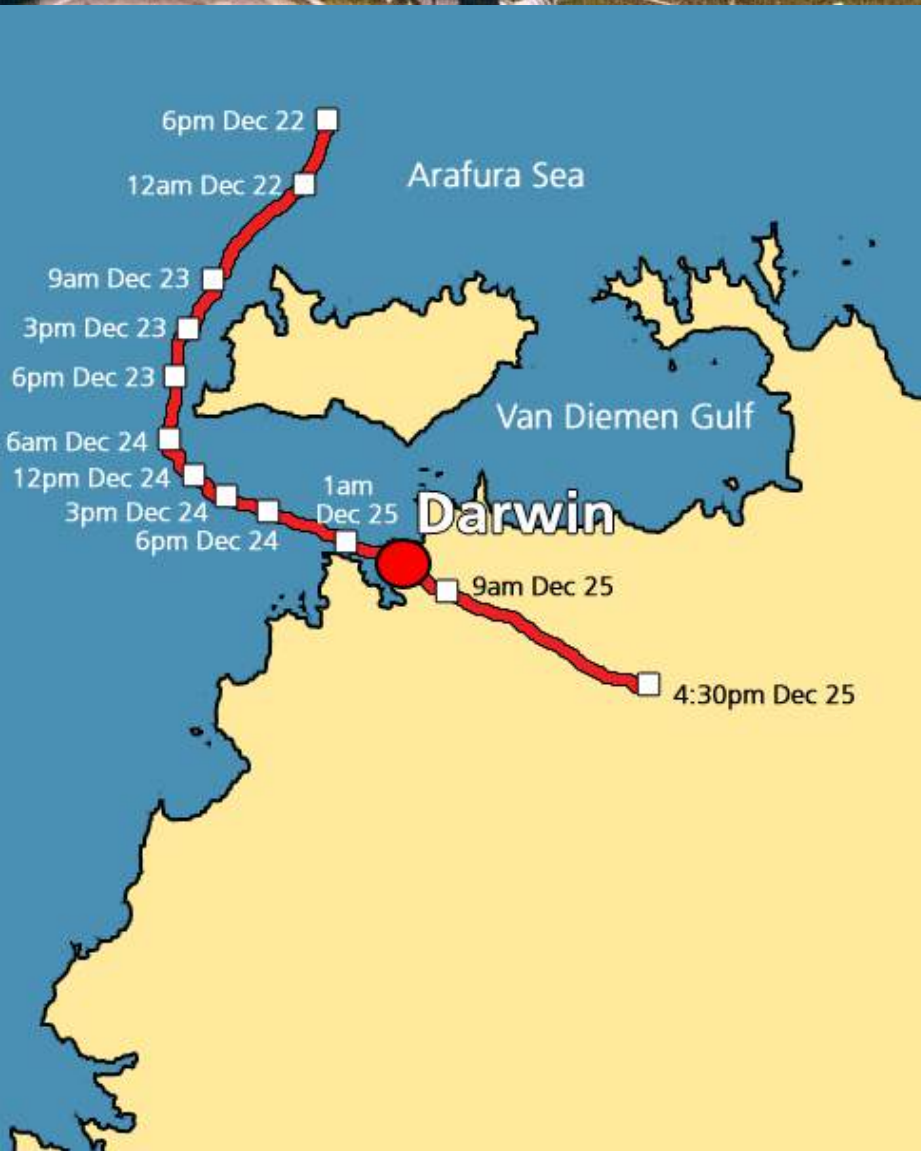
When I left Darwin on a C130 on ANZAC Day 1975, I had a lifetime of memories with me. The friends I had then, I have now. When Jan and I have lunch with them three or four times a year, they are happy occasions.

We have so many memories to share.

David Collins

A Sub Branch Member

Cyclone TRACY.



FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN SEASON IN OUR REGION IN JANUARY

Given the importance of a good diet what will follow each month in 2025, is a list of fruit and vegetables which are in season in our region.

Fruits

Apricots	Mangoes
Avocados	Melons
Bananas	Nectarines
Blackberries	Oranges: Valencia
Blueberries	Passionfruit
Raspberries	Peaches
Strawberries	Pears: Williams
Cherries	Pears: Paradise
Grapes	Pineapple
Limes	Plums
Lychees	Rambutans

Vegetables

Asparagus	Onions
Beans: Green	Okra
Beans: Flat	Peas
Beans: Butter	Potatoes
Capsicums	Radish
Celery	Sweetcorn
Cucumbers	Spinach
Eggplant	Tomatoes
Lettuce	Zucchini
Mushrooms	

Here is a bit of decadence and boy, do we need that in our lives occasionally. If you have a favourite recipe you'd like to share, using fruits or/and vegetables that are in season in any given month please let us know by the 15th of the month.

Ingredients

4 eggs, lightly whisked
3/4 cup milk
Pinch ground cinnamon
6-8 slices good quality fruit bread
2 firm mangoes
1 tbsp brown sugar
Butter, for cooking



Method

Combine in a mixing bowl the eggs lightly whisked followed by the milk and cinnamon, whisk together until well mixed.

Heat up a heavy base fry pan on medium heat, add a knob of butter and allow to melt. Dip the fruit bread slices one at a time into the egg and milk mixer then place on the fry pan. Allow to cook until golden marks develop, flip over, and cook the other side. Remove from the fry pan and repeat the process until all slices have been cooked, add an extra knob of butter in between each slice if needed.

Slice cheeks off the mango seeds and slice into wedges, remove the skin. Clean the fry pan and melt 2 knobs of butter, once they are melted add the brown sugar and stir through. Once the sugar has dissolved and is starting to caramelize add in the mango wedges, swirl the pan to coat the mango with the sauce. Once the mangoes develop a lovely golden-brown colour, gently flip them over to caramelize the other side. Remove from the heat.

To serve stack 1-2 slices of French toast onto each plate, add the caramelized mango wedges on top followed by a good sprinkle of toasted sliced almonds, a dusting of icing sugar and a drizzle of maple syrup.

STOP SAYING ALL THIS TO MEN

"Boys don't cry"

"Keep it to yourself"

"Show strength"

"Stop showing emotions"

"Crying means you are weak"

"Man up"

"Be a man"



This contributes to so much stigma around male mental health.

Let's encourage men to speak up and speak out about their emotions!

(OR ANYONE, IN ANY WAY, FOR THAT MATTER)

Saying anything that is less than empathetic and supportive to anyone in difficulty is completely unhelpful or worse! Help not judgement, understanding not condemnation. There is no shame in needing help.





RIFLEMEN'S LUNCH

All Corps and services are welcome!

1ST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT MOOLOOLABA SLSC

Gympie RSL Sub Branch's Veteran Centre provides a free bus for this event each month.

**Please RSVP by text message to
Wuzzy (0437 552 965)**

The Learner Dance Group Inc

Long Flat Hall - Gympie

Contact Bruce - 0427 967 568



**Dancing every
Saturday Night**

\$10 entry

7:30pm start

BYO Supper

1st & 5th of the month is mix of Old Time & New Vogue

2nd & 4th Saturday of the month is - Old time.

3rd Saturday is - New Vogue.

BEATING THE BLUES

This skills-based program can help you understand the situations and thinking patterns that can contribute to depression, and learn strategies and techniques to help manage symptoms.

DOING ANGER DIFFERENTLY

This program will help develop a better understanding of anger, recognise the impact that anger can have on you and your relationships and make practical changes.

MANAGING PAIN

An educational and skills based program which assists participants to develop an understanding of pain and focus on strategies to improve their experience of pain.

STEPPING OUT

This program is for ADF members and their partners who are about to, or have recently separated from the military.

SLEEPING BETTER

Sleeping Better is an educational and skills-based group program to help manage disturbed sleep.

PARENTING PROGRAMS

Parenting programs are tailored to the needs of attending veteran families, to help build strong and positive relationships between parents and their families.

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

(COUPLES ONLY GROUP PROGRAM)

Building Better Relationships can help you rediscover what's important in your relationship, and help strengthen and rebuild the relationship with your partner.

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

This program will help you better understand anxiety, and link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour when you are experiencing anxiety.

RECOVERY FROM TRAUMA

This program will help you to understand the possible impact of trauma, and teaches you strategies and skills to help you to manage its impact on you and your family.

RELAXATION & STRESS MANAGEMENT

This program provides skills and tools to help you identify and manage stress, and develop relaxation and mindfulness skills that can assist in everyday life.

To register your interest or for the most up to date information visit the Open Arms Website <https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/programs-workshops/upcoming> or Scan the QR Code



**JEFF
WINTERBURN**



VETERAN CENTRE *Chaplain*

Jeff is a Veteran and Non-Denominational Chaplain available to the Veterans of the Gympie RSL.

Please contact Jeff if you would like to engage his service.

JEFF | 0437 678 981

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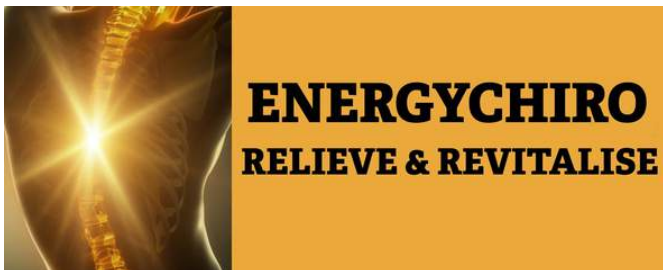


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55 Plaza Pde, Maroochydore

Phone number: +61 0490 051 055

Email: admin@energychiro.com.au

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Contact Us ▶

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✉ admin@adaptivebodiesalliedhealth.com

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great health provider
that works with
veterans
specifically?**

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RSL
Gympie Sub Branch

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