

THE FURPHY

ARMADALE SUB-BRANCH OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

May 2025 Edition



**1 Commerce Ave, Armadale, WA 6112
PO Box 697, Armadale, WA 6992**

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email: secretary@armadalersl.com.au

Website: www.armadalersl.com.au

Social media: [Facebook](#)

General Meetings:

Second Sunday of the month at 1030hrs

Annual General Meeting:

Second Sunday of September

Committee Positions

Armadale Sub-Branch Committee	
President	Mr Mike Fairweather
Vice President	Vacant
Secretary	Ms Carol King
Treasurer	Mrs Cheryl Cowie
Warden	Mr Graeme Cowie
Warden	Mr Mick Quinn
Membership Officer	Mr Tom Rynn
Committee	Mr Bob Giles
Committee	Mr Keith Northcott
Advocate / Welfare Officer	Mr Brent Errington
Bar Manager	Mr Mike Fairweather

ADVOCATE / WELFARE

Brent Errington “Erro” is available as follows:

At the Armadale RSL Sub-Branch:

Monday: by appointment only

Thursday: between 0900 - 1400hrs

Weekday Contact Details:

Mobile: 0407 449 150

e-mail: welfare2@armadalersl.com.au

Diary Dates for May

<i>Day</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Time</i>
Sunday	4th	Social Committee Meeting	1100
Tuesday	6th	Management Committee Meeting	1100
Sunday	11th	General Meeting	1030



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi Members,

Thanks to everyone who helped us on 12th April for the Busy Bee especially Mazzegas for donating new landscape mix and pine bark for the garden. You all did a fabulous job.

We had a bit of bad luck a couple of days before ANZAC day when Till 2 died on us. The Executive had no option but to approve the \$3,050 cost for replacement as an emergency expense as we would not have been able to function on just the one Till on ANZAC day. We will report this expenditure at the May General Meeting.

My personal thanks for those members who kindly helped me out with school ANZAC speeches over the last couple of weeks. Mick Quinn, Ken Hepburn, Tom Rynn, Carol King and Graeme Cowie who all donated their time on behalf of the Sub-Branch to either lay a wreath, deliver a speech or attend as a guest (mostly all 3). Your commitment to the RSL and the community is sincerely appreciated.

Four of our local community businesses donated food for the overnight vigil – Dominos, Subway, Fat Bellies Fish and Chips and KFC, we are always extremely grateful for them supporting the Armadale Police Rangers and Armadale Scout Group on this special occasion. Please try to patronise those businesses who support our Sub-Branch.

There was an RAAF flyover at 0720 on ANZAC Day. For those who missed it, I'm sure you'll "hear" it in upcoming days. Should anyone not be coming into the club to watch the 8 second video just let the Secretary know and she will be able to e-mail you a copy.

Thanks everyone for their support and cheers for now,

Mike Fairweather

President

Returned Services League Armadale Sub-Branch

Ph: (08) 9497 1972. M: 0403 980 290

1 Commerce Avenue Armadale WA 6112 | PO Box 697 Armadale WA 6992

e-mail: president@armadalersl.com.au

Secretary's Notes

Hi Everyone,

We had a successful Busy Bee – Lois Davis, Stormy, Grame and Cheryl Cowie, Fiona Boyle, Mike Quinn, Steve Evans, Irene Craster, Mike Ferrari plus Brad, Blake and Kara Burgess joined me on the day, and Glen Palmer attended on 22nd April to pressure clean windows and the building – thanks everyone, your help is very much appreciated by us all.

We must also extend our appreciation to the volunteers who kindly manned the stalls on 21st 22nd and 23rd April. This is a very important fundraising initiative for us and takes lots of organising and assistance.

I will apologise in advance that the Furphy hasn't been published quite on time, however I was waiting for some photos to come through and with so many of our volunteers doing double and triple duty in the lead up to all things ANZAC, we've all been a bit stretched for time.



The Cloud 9 Band will be here on Mother's Day, we hope there is a decent attendance on the day to make them feel welcome. The kitchen won't be open, so members are very welcome to get a group of mates together and bring in their own snacks / nibbles to share.

That's about all from me for this edition.

Carol King

Sub-Branch Secretary

e-mail: secretary@armadalersl.com.au

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During the Vietnam War, 108 Australian soldiers stood against some 1,500 to 2,500 Vietnamese forces near the village of Long Tan



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Membership Update

As at 30th April, 2025:

Service Members:	128
Affiliate Members:	38
Social Members:	<u>64</u>
Total:	<u>230</u>

I have delisted 33 Service names as I have no record of payments for this year and beyond. 30th April was the cut-off date according to the Constitution.

Any Service Member who believes they should not have been delisted need to contact RSLWA or relay through me ASAP.

Names of course will be back on the Sub-Branch list when I receive information re payment.

RSLWA have only sent figures up to Dec 2024 and have advised that Membership Cards will be soon rolled out.

Members who believe they should not have been delisted need to contact RSLWA or relay through me ASAP

Any questions relating to membership can be asked via me.

Tom Rynn

Tel: 0439 934 285

e-mail: tomrynn@bigpond.com



A Ghurka poses with his Kukri before going out on a night patrol in 1944, San Clemente area



A-36 Mustang with diving brakes engaged



A Flight of No. 77 Squadron RAAF pose for a photograph in front of a P-40E at Livingstone Field (34 Mile Peg) Northern Territory Australia in January 1943



May Service Members:

Briggs	Mrs	Debra	02/05	Bushell	Mr	Leslie	17/05
Hennah	Mr	John	25/05	Jarratt	Mr	Adrian	13/05
McFarlane	Mr	John	05/05	Mulvaney	Mr	Anthony	10/05
Northcott	Mr	Keith	11/05	Smith	Mr	James	25/05

May Affiliate Members:

De Groot	Mr	Roland	01/05	Norton	Mrs	Pera	30/05
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May Social Members:

Davenport	Mr	Wayne	14/05	Kendell	Ms	Nita	17/05
Potter	Mr	Warren	06/05				

*If anyone has been missed off the list, please advise
Tom Rynn (Membership Officer)*

*These members may collect a free drink of their
choice during the month*

We hope you have a very special Birthday

Bar Manager's Report

G'day All,

It's been a bit difficult in the lead up to ANZAC Day and everything that goes with it, but we survived.

Thanks again to Fiona for coming in to help out while Jules was off on medical leave. We're very happy to have Jules back on deck.

Also I would to thank the ANZAC Day Staff - Fiona, Jules and Angel for doing a fabulous job as usual. The till takings amounted to around \$8,000 on the day which shows how busy the girls were. Thank you again to them and also to all our members who supported us on the day.

Bye for now,

Stormy





Survivors from the Bismarck are pulled aboard HMS Dorsetshire (40) on 27 May 1941.



Wreck of the German Battleship "Bismarck"







Then & Now: Arnhem Bridge A historic battleground of Operation Market Garden

CLOUD 9 DUO

At the Armadale RSL



Laurie Gransden and Gemma Cleary

Mothers Day - Sunday, 11th May
12:30pm

***Get a group of friends together and join us
for a great afternoon of musical
entertainment***

Free Entry

Snapshot 4: Australians in War and Conflict

We continue our shared learning by publishing another 6 articles following people's contributions to Australia's war and peacekeeping efforts. We continue to reflect on today's Australian Defence Force values of service, courage, respect, integrity and excellence.

We also continue to remember those who served and those who continue to serve and those who died as a result of their service.
Lest we forget.

19: Official war artists

Our history of war is shaped by the experiences of those who serve. Australia deploys artists to conflict zones to capture and retell the stories of the people there.

The Official War Art Scheme began during the First World War and continues to this day. Several of the nation's most well-known painters and cartoonists have been among the more than 60 official war artists.

For several weeks or months, artists are 'embedded' with the Australian armed forces. They use a range of media and styles to produce works that they believe best represent the conflict or operation. Their art also expresses their viewpoints and areas of interest in the subject. This might include battle paintings, portraits of individual servicemen and servicewomen, and sketches of military equipment like tanks and airplanes.

Frank Norton was one of only 2 artists commissioned to record the experiences of the Australians fighting in Korea. Over 17,000 Australians participated in the war between 1950 and 1953; 340 died and over 1,200 were wounded. Australia was a member of the United Nations force of 21 countries that defended South Korea from North Korea.

Frank had served as an official artist in the Second World War, documenting the activities of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

While in Korea, Frank was attached to the RAN. He was on 3 different Australian ships over 5 months in 1952, patrolling the Korean West Coast. Unlike during the Second World War, Frank did not observe any significant naval engagements. He did witness naval bombardments and airstrikes against enemy positions along the coast, and there was always a risk from airstrikes, enemy artillery, and mines.

Frank captured the Korean coast and its weather, the activities of the crews while on duty, and RAN and UN Forces ships in his artwork at the time. He was captivated by the size, might, and technological prowess of the navy ships.



Frank Norton, HMAS Bataan escaping from typhoon Karen, (1952, watercolour, carbon pencil, pen and ink on grey paper, 32.3 x 41.8 cm). Painted at sea in August 1952

The artist sometimes found it difficult to tolerate the cramped conditions on the ships, especially during hot and muggy weather. He drew a typhoon that he witnessed while at sea. Cloudy skies and torrential rain were also common themes in his artwork.

Frank's work expresses admiration for the crew and their daily routines. His portrayals of seamen included them maintaining the ship's engine,

moving mail between ships, and cleaning the decks. He also sketched moments of leisure, such as a sailor reading by himself on deck.

The Frank Norton collection from Korea includes more than 50 works that serve as a valuable representation of sailors' experiences during that time period. The artworks are held by the Australian War Memorial, which also manages the Official War Art Scheme.

20: Operation Sabre

Max Shean was a former engineering student in Perth whose service in the Royal Navy during the Second World War led him to command a mission, striking at a vulnerable nerve of the Japanese war effort.

The mission Max was tasked with made use of the unique capabilities of the X-class midget submarines. Fifteen metres long and diesel- powered, these were designed for operations in shallow waters.

The work was dangerous and Max, who by 1944 was commanding his own vessel, had his fair share of brushes with death.

That November, Max took command of a new midget submarine, XE-4. His wife Mary broke a bottle of Australian champagne over its bow to unofficially christen it Exiter. A month later, Max, his crew, and the submarine were en route to the Pacific. There, they were given responsibility for Operation Sabre.

At the time, Allied leaders were unable to intercept Japanese communications sent using the undersea cables that connected countries and continents. They had decided to destroy the cables connecting Saigon with Hong Kong and Singapore.

Their aim was to force the Japanese to use wireless communications systems, which the Allies could intercept. The operation was considered urgent because of the US' imminent use of nuclear weapons. 'The president wanted to know whether the Japanese were considering the terms of the surrender', Max recalled, *'He couldn't wait to know through the diplomatic channels'*.

Operation Sabre was a difficult mission from the start. The cables lay beneath waters controlled by the Japanese. Finding them would be

laborious. Sending divers into the murky depths with rudimentary equipment would make them vulnerable to the sea conditions and put them at significant risk of drowning. Cutting the cables, which were woven copper wire wrapped in layers of natural latex, rubber and steel as thick as a person's wrist, would not be easy.

Max and his crew prepared for the operation in Hervey Bay, Queensland. Max drew on his engineering background and designed a grapnel hook that could snag the cables off the seabed. Another colleague manufactured it. All were aware of the risks when 2 submariners died during the preparations.

Late in July, they were dispatched to the Indochina (or South China) Sea. On 30 July, Max and his crew began making their way to the mouth of the Mekong River in Vietnam. Using dead reckoning and occasional sightings of the nearby lighthouse to confirm their position, they began trawling the seabed.



Crew members of HMAS Napier chalk a sign that reads 'under new management' on a Japanese midget submarine, Azuma Peninsula, Tokyo Bay, Japan, September 1945

It took almost 24 hours for the grapnel hook to snag on the first cable. Sub-Lieutenant Kenneth Briggs, an Australian in the Royal Navy, entered the water. *'I couldn't see much,'* he said later, *'It was in the mud. But I could feel it. I ducked back to the submarine and got the cutters, took it back and – snip, snip – I cut a piece out of the cable'.*

It took 2 hours to locate the second cable. The mud hampered Sub-Lieutenant Adam Bergius, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, and his cable cutter failed. Adam re-entered XE-4 to exchange it, took a short rest, and went back into the water. Eventually, he returned with a foot of the core copper wire in hand.

Operation Sabre successfully forced the Japanese to switch to radio communications that the Allies could now overhear. It gave them vital intelligence after the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The officer who debriefed Max marvelled at what they had done: *'It seems you've carried out the perfect operation'*. Others agreed. Max and the other crew were decorated for their gallantry, perseverance, and skill, though Max modestly downplayed Operation Sabre. As he put it, *'it was a bit easier than blowing up ships!'*

21: Indigenous Elders in the Defence Force

Today, each branch of the armed services benefits from the advice of appointed First Nations Elders – veterans of considerable experience and standing in their respective service and community. These First Nations Elders provide guidance on supportive initiatives and programs and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to promote their branch of the armed services. They are role models and mentors for those who will continue the long history of military service by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is particularly resonant, given the overt discrimination and exclusion from the armed services endured by Australia's First Nations people.

Some First Nations peoples were so determined to serve in the armed forces that they denied their cultural heritage when enlisting. Estimates suggest that around 1,000 First Nations people volunteered during the First World War and some 3,000 in the Second World War. After the enlistment restrictions against First Nations people were revoked, they continued to serve in the military, deploying to Korea, Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam and elsewhere.

The tradition of military service had a profound influence on Harry Allie's decision to enlist in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in 1966.

A Gudjala man born in Charters Towers, Queensland, Harry had uncles who served in the First and Second World Wars and an aunt who served in the Land Army. His younger brother also served in the Army and deployed to Vietnam.

With 23 years of service behind him, during which he rose to the rank of Warrant Officer, Harry became the inaugural Indigenous Elder of the Air Force in 2012. He spoke of the importance of tradition and the value of *'inspiring participants in your own way'*.

In 2022, Lunga Kitja woman Deborah Booker took over from Harry, having completed 13 years of service in the RAAF. Deborah has an extensive career working with First Nations recruitment and community organisations, including Exercise Kummundoo, an initiative of the RAAF. Exercise Kummundoo is focused on community engagement and works directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on targeted projects such as improving health and dental services and supporting people deployed in diverse environments.

As an Indigenous Elder, Deborah has stressed that her position is to share knowledge. *'I'm here as someone to lean on, someone to talk to, to give them the confidence, and be a mentor to them until they're ready to spread their wings... My past roles have taught me to listen, to gain knowledge from community, the Elders and the Air Force, and to show respect and empathy'*.

A similar ethos motivated Bundjalung man Roy Mundine, who completed a 36-year career in the Army and did tours of Malaya and Vietnam, where he was wounded and mentioned in dispatches for his leadership. Roy became Indigenous Elder of the Army in 2016. Coming from a family that encouraged discipline and relentless self-improvement, he has been passionate about the attractions of the Army and ensuring that First Nations recruits equip themselves for life.

He stated "I would say, if you are joining the Army, make sure you keep studying. An education is your pathway through life. It may be only a piece of paper, but there's other things you build on it".

Lorraine Hatton, a Quandamooka Elder of the Noonuccal and Ngughi peoples, in south-east Queensland, became the Army's second Indigenous Elder in 2020. She also had strong family connections with the military. Her father and uncle served during the Second World War, and her community on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) has many people with links to the armed services.

Lorraine is acutely aware of the excitement of a career in the military, as well as the challenges that First Nations recruits have to overcome.

Leaving school having not completed her senior schooling (she completed Year 10), initially made her ineligible to join the Army. Undeterred, she joined the Army Reserve and got to know people in the Army's recruitment branch. With their encouragement, in 1986, she successfully renewed her application. *'Yeah, Lorraine – come on in!'*

Lorraine served for 20 years, deploying to Irian Jaya, Egypt (as part of the Multinational Force and Observers peacekeeping operation) and Afghanistan. She was the first Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander woman to reach the rank of Warrant Officer (Class Two). Between her 2007 discharge and appointment as Indigenous Elder, Lorraine worked for wider recognition of the service of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the military:

'Working as an Army Elder allows me to reconnect with my Army family and navigate between Army and First Nations communities ... I have met so many inspirational people in this role and established long-lasting relationships'.

The Navy appointed two Indigenous Elders, Phillip Bowie and Frances Visini, in August 2022. Phillip was born on Thursday Island, or Waiben, one of the inner islands of the Torres Strait. He enlisted in 1965 and trained at HMAS Leeuwin as a marine technician. He spent the next decade serving aboard HMA Ships Melbourne, Stalwart, Paluma, and Barbette.

'I am excited about sharing my experiences, and I can spin a good yarn about my time that may help the young recruits', Phillip said. 'I would like them to think of me as someone they can talk to if they find themselves in a difficult position or just need advice'.

At 17 years old, Frances, also from Thursday Island, joined the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) in 1970. She was inspired by another Torres Strait Islander woman who had joined the WRANS and the example of her uncle and her mother's cousin. She trained as an officers' steward and left the WRANS in 1972 to study to become a teacher.

'The main focus of our role is to support, mentor, guide, and inspire our First Nations recruits during their journey in the NIDP [National Indigenous Development Program],' Frances has said. *'We make sure their needs are culturally met and break down barriers where needed'.*



Uncle Harry Allie BEM and Auntie Deb Booker display their message sticks before the Air Force Elder handover ceremony at RAAF Base Glenbrook, NSW, 25 February 2022

22: Tunnel rats

Leading into Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese people had already fought for 2 decades against French efforts to reassert colonial control, expertly employing innovative guerrilla tactics.

By the time Australian troops arrived in Vietnam in 1965, they knew the war they were entering was not going to be like any that they had experienced before. When the US troops arrived, with their massive firepower advantage in artillery and aerial bombardment, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong continued the use of guerrilla tactics.

The NVA and Viet Cong avoided fixed battles. They did not assemble soldiers in one place in large numbers, operating instead in small groups that were constantly on the move. Using constant surprise to their advantage, they also engaged in sabotage and disguise.

To aid their movements, the NVA and Viet Cong also developed a sophisticated maze of tunnels. There were hundreds of tunnels dug in and around Vietnamese cities and villages, in a variety of depths, lengths, and complexities. These tunnels were used as escape routes and hiding places, to stash weapons and food. They served as cover for surprise attacks, allowing the NVA and Viet Cong to target Australian or US troops and melt away, seemingly without a trace.

The US troops responded by launching Operation Crimp and brought in Australian soldiers of the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR). Their task was to search the Cù Chi district, north of Saigon, where a combination of intelligence and aerial surveillance suggested that the Viet Cong were using tunnels as accommodation and staging points for attacks.

An extensive US bombing campaign had decimated the landscape and revealed a few well-disguised tunnel entrances. These tunnels had been excavated almost 20 years before, during the earliest fighting against the French, and had been expanded and enlarged ever since.

Dug by hand into hard clay, they were equipped with vents for air and wells for water and were hardy enough to withstand bombardment. A labyrinth of multiple entrances and winding passages, the tunnels were also highly dangerous: booby-trapped against intruders, with secret chambers, they provided protection against tear gas, smoke, and explosives.

While US preferences were generally to make the tunnels unviable, the Australian military engineers of 1RAR decided to search and map them. The perilous nature of the task was immediately apparent when an NVA or Viet Cong soldier killed 2 Australians and wounded 2 more. Nonetheless, the Australians pressed on, entering these narrow, claustrophobic spaces

with little more than a flashlight, knife, and a piece of string to find their way back.

The deadly realities of the tunnel systems continued to take their toll, but the Australians, undeterred, still entered the tunnels to complete the mission. They uncovered stores of ammunition, radio equipment, medicines, and food. They also acquired valuable military intelligence and came to understand the utility of the tunnels in the Viet Cong guerrilla war strategy. The Australians who served acquired a nickname – 'tunnel rats', Sapper Bob O'Conner recalled:

No one is going to force you to do this kind of stuff... so, if it's not for you, ask for a transfer. But if you decide to stay, though, you've got to believe – and, I mean, really believe – that you're already dead. Tunnel rat casualty rates are ridiculously high, so it's not too hard to believe. Once you accept you're a dead man walking, the job gets much easier. It even becomes a challenge'.

The Cù Chi tunnels were among the most expansive discovered in Vietnam, with more than 100 km of passages. They remained in use throughout the war, allowing the NVA and Viet Cong to resupply units and move and conceal people through dangerous areas. Today, they are a tourist attraction giving visitors an insight into the experiences of the 'tunnel rats' – from the moment they enter the dark, cramped passageways into the earth – and the courage that was necessary to enter them.

The entrance to the tunnels was so narrow it was hard to imagine it was intended for people at all. There was a straight drop then it doubled back up, like the U-bend under a sink. The tunnel turned again to go along under the surface and became a little wider, but there still wasn't room enough to turn around.

It was terrifying down there, armed only with a bayonet to probe for booby traps and a pistol to defend yourself. Already feeling claustrophobic behind a gas mask, the sensation was multiplied 100 times over in the constrictions of that, dark netherworld. Added to that, the knowledge that around any corner you could find yourself face to face with cornered foe or any other of a dozen forms of death.



An Australian soldier exiting a Viet Cong tunnel during Operation Enoggera, Vietnam, 25 June 1966

23: Clearance divers

Late in 1966, Minister for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Fred Chaney rebuked naval authorities for offering the services of a naval clearance diving team (CDT) to the US in South Vietnam. The team, on a tour of South Vietnam in May that year, had cheerfully and professionally neutralised a threat posed by sea mines and sunken ammunition in Nha Be and the port of Saigon. *'In future,'* Chaney wrote, *'CDT 1 is not to carry out any tasks outside Australia except where those tasks have been approved'.*

The Minister's annoyance stemmed from his concern about possible government embarrassment; it had nothing to do with the merits of the team's actions. The US authorities, who had been unable to deal with the matter themselves, had admired the CDT's initiative and expertise, and Australian naval commanders had noted the vulnerability that the team had exposed and temporarily rectified.

The following February, then, with the Minister's approval, the Navy dispatched to South Vietnam a newly formed clearance diving team, Clearance Diving Team 3 (CDT 3). CDT 3's main task was to defeat enemy efforts to sink or disable shipping and ship handling facilities along Vietnam's long coastline and many waterways.

The most common threat came from mines. Generally home-made, they were built from unexploded US bombs, artillery duds, and raw materials. The mines were laid by lines suspended in the water or, far more commonly, delivered by swimmers working under the cover of darkness, who would attach the mines to ship hulls and anchorage cables.

Tony Ey, who went to Vietnam as part of CDT 3 in 1970, when he was 22 years old, recalled that finding these mines and removing them was difficult and hazardous:

'On board the vessel, it's not so bad, but when you get underwater, and search the hull, the visibility is zero. The water is dirty. Quite often, it's the middle of the night, a torch isn't going to do you much good anyway, so you have no choice but to use the ten eyes on the end of each finger. And that's the way we were taught. You just feel. You progressively search the ship the best way you can'.

On one occasion, the team located a partially detonated mine that was still attached to a ship. The team tried to pull the mine off using a rope, but the rope snapped. Tony dove into the water to try again.

'I could only partially see the mine when I had my dive-mask on and my nose virtually pressed against it. I could see that the arming and time switches still had their pins inserted... With much effort, I pulled the mine off the fender. I caused quite a bit of unrest on the patrol boat when I swam back to it, with the mine in my hands!'



Members of Clearance Diving Team 3 (CDT3) working in the waters of Da Nang, Vietnam, April 1971

The constant proof of CDT 3's value saw them called on for missions further afield. Soon, CDT 3 was working on land, defusing and disposing of bombs and ordnances, and they came to support offensive operations by destroying riverine barriers, bunkers, and booby traps.

The official historian of the RAN's involvement in Vietnam, Jeffrey Grey, wrote that the work was '*difficult, often dangerous, and frequently disagreeable*'. The personnel of CDT 3 did the job with diligence and skill.

The outlook necessary for a person to dive into the darkness, on their own, and swim up to explosives that might detonate at any moment, is unique. For the team, it is a viewpoint summarised in its motto: 'United and undaunted'.

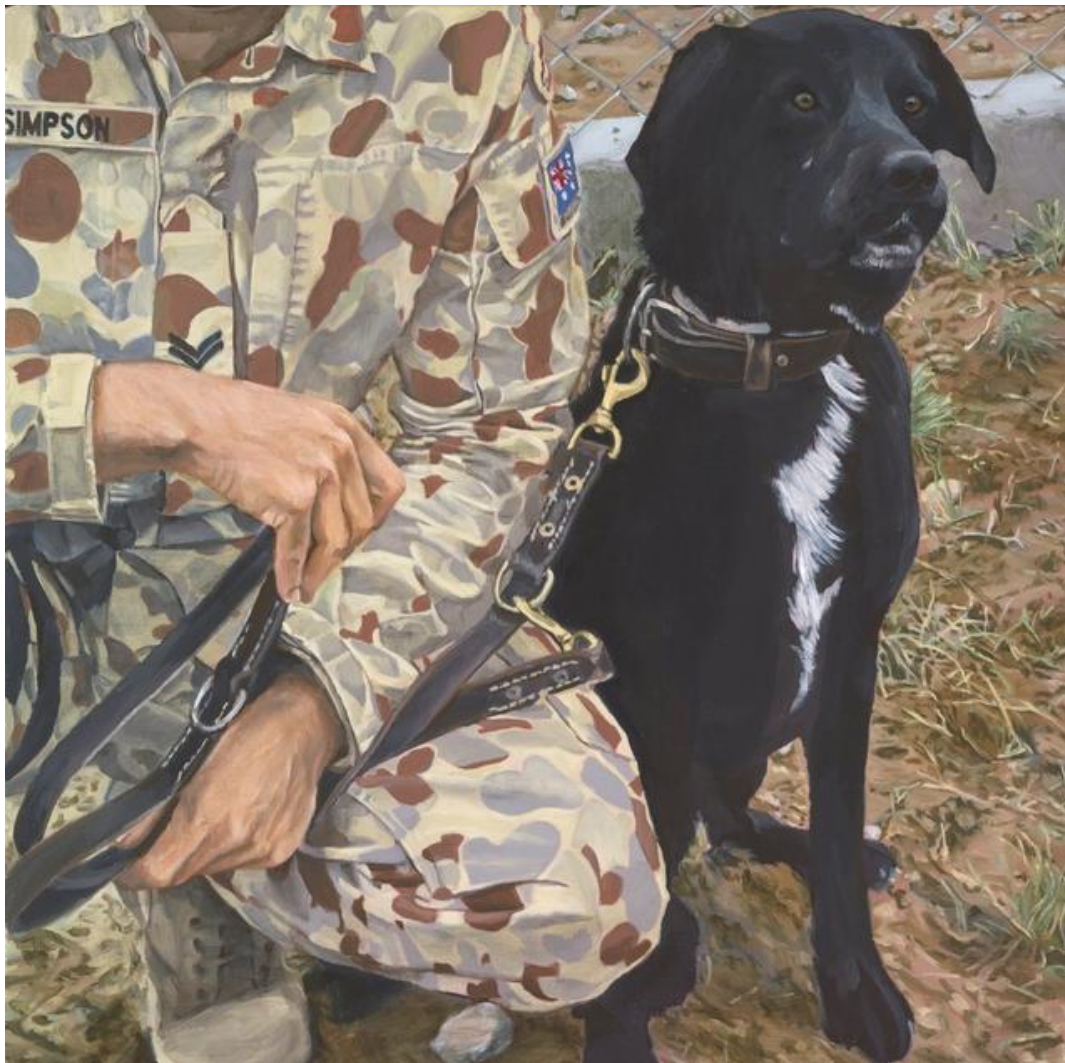
24: Man's best friend

Dogs have often played an important role in Australia's armed forces. Military working dogs are chosen when they are just puppies. To be selected, the young dogs need to show that they are fast, agile, focused and can follow directions. Over time, many different dog breeds have worked with Australia's military.

These special dogs work side by side with their handlers in Australia and overseas.

The dog's keen hearing and sense of smell make them perfect at their jobs. They are effective security guards, and their exceptional abilities help to detect explosives. They can help prevent dangerous situations by alerting their handler to the presence of enemies.

The Special Operations Military Working Dogs have been credited with saving many lives.



*Lyndell Brown and Charles Green, EDD Sarbi in Afghanistan, (2010, oil on linen, 31 x 31 cm).
Painted in Melbourne in 2010*

One military dog was Kuga, a Belgian Malinois. During a special operation in Afghanistan, Kuga was sent to scout the area. Kuga warned his handler of enemy presence nearby. He moved down a bank and started to swim across the river to investigate further. As he was swimming, he was injured by machine-gun fire. Despite his injuries, he continued to the other side of the bank.

Kuga then charged towards the shooter, distracting him from the Australian troops. When Kuga was reunited with his handler, he was given emergency first aid. He was evacuated by helicopter to receive treatment in Afghanistan, Germany and Australia.

In 2018, Kuga was awarded the PDSA Dickin Medal for extraordinary determination and bravery. He was the first Australian dog to be awarded the Dickin Medal. Kuga's extraordinary actions in the face of danger potentially saved lives that day.

In 2008, another military working dog, named Sarbi, who was trained as an Explosive Detection Dog, used her powerful sense of smell to sniff out improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other explosives in war zones. During her second tour to Afghanistan, Sarbi and her handler Sergeant David Simpson were involved in an ambush – the same action for which Mark Donaldson was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia.

As bullets flew past them, David moved quickly around the vehicles, firing his weapon and avoiding enemy fire, when suddenly he heard a 'boom'. Shrapnel from an exploding rocket-propelled grenade hit him in the back of the leg, breaking the metal clip attaching Sarbi to his body armour. Startled by a burst of machine-gun fire, Sarbi ran away. David searched for her for 10 days without success and feared he might never see her again.

But 14 months later, in October 2009, Sarbi, now dirty and much heavier, was found by an American soldier and returned to the base in Tarin Kot. She was completely healthy and her presence back at the base lifted the morale of the service men and women immediately. Sarbi was reunited with David in Afghanistan in April 2010. The following year, she received the RSPCA Australian Purple Cross for exceptional courage and outstanding service to humans. Sarbi is now retired and living with David and his wife at their home.

Sculptures and memorials around Australia honour the special work of military working dogs.



RETURNED SERVICES LEAGUE ARMADALE SUB-BRANCH

Your RSL