



WOMEN VETERANS AUSTRALIA

EMPOWER ✦ SUPPORT ✦ CELEBRATE ✦ ADVOCATE

Annual Report

2024



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Reflecting on 2024

A Year of Progress for Women Veterans Australia

As we reflect on 2024, the Board of Women Veterans Australia would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the immense support we have received throughout the year. This support has been crucial in raising the profile of women veterans across Australia and advancing our mission to ensure their voices are heard in critical discussions on policy development and program delivery. We are deeply grateful for the continued partnership and commitment from our supporters, which has enabled us to make a meaningful impact on the lives of women veterans and contribute to the ongoing evolution of services and opportunities for them.

This year marked a significant moment with the release of the final report from the *Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide* in September. We recognise and honour the tireless efforts of the individuals who campaigned for the establishment of this Royal Commission, ensuring the lived experiences of our veteran community were brought to the forefront, regardless of their stage in the service continuum.

We also commend the Commissioners for their unwavering dedication to delivering a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at creating a more inclusive, supportive, and enduring system of veteran care. Their work will play a vital role in shaping the future of the veteran community, and we are optimistic about the positive change these recommendations will bring.

In 2024, Women Veterans Australia proudly launched our five-year strategy, which aims to address the experiences of women veterans in a holistic manner. This strategy outlines five key goals that will guide our work toward meaningful and sustained outcomes for women across the nation.

We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to actively contribute to the Department of Veterans Affairs Women's Forum and to participate in the



development of the DVA Gender Strategy. These engagements reflect our commitment to ensuring gender perspectives are embedded in policies and programs affecting the veteran community.

On a global scale, we continue to foster collaboration through our involvement with the Women Veterans Alliance, an initiative that unites like-minded organisations from the veteran and defence communities across the world. By sharing research and best practices, we aim to enhance the delivery of vital support services for women veterans.

As the year draws to a close, we remain steadfast in our dedication to advancing the recognition, support, and empowerment of women veterans. We sincerely thank everyone who has joined us on this journey and look forward to continuing this important work in 2025 and beyond.

*“To our fellow
servicewomen, no
matter when or how
you served, we see
you, we value you,
and we support
you.”*

Llani Kennealy

Llani (LJ) Kennealy

CHAIR



Goal Area 1 – The Phoenix Program



The Phoenix Program is an adaptive program for women veterans, focusing on multiple areas to support them regardless of where they are on their pathway. The program is informed by research to be responsive to the needs of women who serve.

Veterans' Health Week 2024

As part of Veterans' Health Week 2024, Women Veterans Australia (WVA) proudly hosted its inaugural **Phoenix Program** events in Canberra and the Gold Coast. Aligned with the 2024 theme, 'Keep Connected', these events, titled 'Beading and Banter' offered a welcoming space for women veterans from a diverse range of backgrounds. These events brought together currently serving members, recently transitioned veterans, and those with distinguished careers beyond their initial service, fostering meaningful connections and engagement.



“I thoroughly enjoyed what I produced... this was special. Next year I will make a bracelet.”



One attendee shared their appreciation for the uniqueness of the event, noting that it stood apart from similar events run by other ex-service organisations (ESOs), which often cater predominantly to male veterans. The attendee expressed that ‘Beading and Banter’ provided an inclusive and supportive environment tailored specifically for women veterans, highlighting the importance of such spaces for fostering connection and community.

Feedback from participants will play a crucial role in shaping future activities. This valuable input will be used to refine event times, expand to additional venues, and introduce virtual and recorded options where appropriate. By incorporating participant suggestions, we aim to enhance accessibility and ensure that our events continue to meet the needs and preferences of women veterans across the country.



Goal Area 2 – Research

Women Veterans Australia (WVA) is dedicated to ensuring that research on veterans meaningfully addresses the unique needs and experiences of women who serve. As part of our mission to provide unwavering support, comprehensive services, and strategic advocacy, one of our core goals is to drive research on women veterans' issues. We are committed to advocating for a gender-responsive approach that ensures the voices and experiences of women veterans are at the forefront of the policy development, program delivery, and future research.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has underscored the urgent need for contemporary, evidence-based research into the experiences of veterans. In response to this call, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has allocated significant funding to support this critical area of research. WVA is actively engaging with research institutions to advocate for the inclusion of a gendered perspective in these studies, ensuring that the unique experiences of women veterans are represented and addressed in future research and policy development.

Engagement With Research Institutions

In late 2024, WVA reinforced its commitment to veteran research through the establishment of key partnerships and continued advocacy efforts:

1. MIDDLE EAST AREA OF OPERATIONS (MEAO) SCOPING STUDY

WVA welcomed the partnership between the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation, RSL Australia, and Griffith University to conduct the MEAO Scoping Study. This important research aims to deepen our understanding of the long-term impacts of military deployments, with particular focus on veterans who served in the Middle East Area of Operations, as well as those deployed to Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands.

This study marks the first phase of a broader research initiative, which will explore the challenges identified and provide recommendations for national strategies to improve support services for veterans and their families. Through this collaboration, WVA is proud to contribute to advancing research that will help shape more effective policies and support systems for veterans.

2. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING: CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY & PRO PATRIA FOUNDATION

This partnership focuses on several key areas aimed at improving outcomes for veterans:

- Expanding pathways to higher education for veteran students
- Conducting coordinated research into veteran health and wellbeing
- Establishing a network of industry and innovation organizations
- Developing an independent knowledge and innovation hub to inform and advocate for veteran issues

WVA has formally engaged with these institutions to highlight the critical gap in Australian research that specifically addresses women veterans. We have strongly advocated for the inclusion of a gendered perspective in research design and for the collection of gender-disaggregated data to ensure that insights accurately reflect the distinct challenges and needs of women veterans.

Furthermore, we raised concerns about the common practice of grouping women veterans with families, which reinforces traditional stereotypes and risks overlooking vital insights into their unique experiences. By adopting a more nuanced approach, we can improve research outcomes, and, in turn, shape more effective policies and programs to support all veterans.

Strengthening National & International Research Networks

In 2024, WVA expanded its collaborations both nationally and internationally. We were honoured to be invited to join the newly established International Alliance of Women Veterans, a network that brings together advocates from



around the world who are addressing issues affecting women veterans. Led by the UK Women Veterans Transformation Program, this alliance connects representatives from various countries and organisations, working collectively to advance recognition, support, and empowerment of women veterans globally. Below, Table 1 illustrates the various nations who are part of this alliance.

Country	Representing
UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female Veterans Transformation Program, Office for Veterans Affairs
Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish Veterans Commissioner Lothian's Veterans Centre
Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Ireland Veteran Commissioner's Office Serving and Ex-Serving Women's Network Northern Island
Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female Veterans Alliance
Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arm Women Now
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military Women Health Advocate, Co-Director of the Transforming Military Cultures Network
USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women Veterans Alliance

Table 1: International Global Alliance Participating Nation

Through this network, WVA is dedicated to elevating the voices of women veterans and driving meaningful policy changes on a global scale. By collaborating with international advocates, we aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women veterans worldwide.

Shaping Support Services for Women Veterans

A key priority for WVA is ensuring that existing support services for veterans adequately address the needs of women veterans. This includes advocating

for gender-responsive research and ensuring that employer support services collect data that accurately reflects the diverse needs of all veterans.

WVA is actively engaged in NSW RSL Lifecare's research project, "*Shaping Support Services for Women Veterans*", which aims to:

- Explore how veteran wellbeing services can be tailored to better meet the needs of women veterans in Australia
- Amplify the voices of women veterans to inform the design of wellbeing support options in NSW
- Assess women veterans' experiences with veteran-specific services and identify their unmet needs
- Provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and service providers

Llani Kennealy, Chair of Women Veterans Australia (WVA), is a member of the Expert Advisory Group for this project and is actively involved in co-designing its approach to ensure that the experiences of women veterans are central to this critical research. Through this collaboration, WVA is working to create more inclusive and effective support systems for women veterans across Australia.

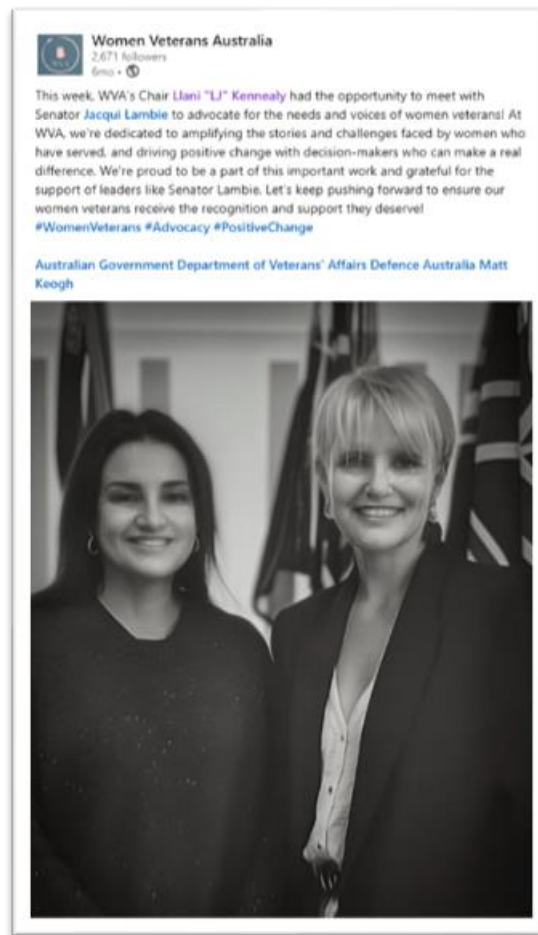
Goal Area 3 – Strategic Advocacy

In 2024, WVA has been a strong advocate across the spectrum of stakeholders working to support veterans. A key area of our advocacy has been for a seat at the new peak body for Employer Support Organisations (ESO), as recommended in Recommendation 89 from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. Securing this position will provide WVA with a vital platform to influence strategic decision-making and ensure a gendered approach to the development of all policies and programming.

Throughout the year, WVA has made significant strides in advocating for the inclusion of women veterans and advancing gender equality within the veteran support ecosystem. Our efforts include:

- Drafting correspondence to the Secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) outlining our expectations regarding the development of the gender equality strategy.
- Developing both strategic and operational relationships with ESO's to strengthen collaboration and ensure the needs of women veterans are addressed.
- Attended Queensland RSL and Legacy ESO Forum to engage with key stakeholders.
- Representing WVA at several meetings, continuing to support the Assistant Secretary responsible for developing the gender equality strategy.
- Participating in the DVA Women's Forum in May, followed by three subsequent online women's forum sessions. These sessions focused on topics such as the DVA Gender Equality Strategy, and the format and design of future women's forums.
- Providing ongoing representation of Women Veterans Australia on the RSL NSW/ Life Care research project.
- Published an article on the Government's response to the Royal Commission recommendations.

Through these efforts, WVA remains committed to advocating for women veterans and ensuring that their needs are consistently prioritized in policy development, research, and strategic decision-making.



*“If they don’t give you a seat at the table,
bring a folding chair”*

Shirley Chisholm

Goal Area 4 – Communications & Visibility

WOMEN VETERANS AUSTRALIA: OUR BRAND & SYMBOLISM

Women Veterans Australia developed its own distinct brand to foster a strong identity that reflects the unique experiences and contributions of women who have served. Historically, women veterans have been underrepresented, and our branding is a purposeful effort to increase visibility, recognition, and advocacy for their needs.

A central element of our brand is the dog tag, a universally recognised symbol of military service. For many veterans, dog tags symbolize more than just identification—they represent service, sacrifice, and camaraderie. By incorporating dog tags into our branding, WVA honors the shared experiences of women who have served, while reinforcing their rightful place in the broader veteran community.

Our brand embodies resilience, strength, and unwavering commitment of women veterans. It stands as a reminder that their service matters, their voices deserve to be heard, and their contributions should be celebrated. Through this distinct visual identity, WVA continues to advocate for and empower women veterans across Australia.

SOCIAL MEDIA & OUTREACH

Women Veterans Australia continues to use social media as its primary platform for outreach and communication. However, we are actively exploring alternative methods to engage women veterans, particularly older veterans who may not use social media—specifically Facebook and LinkedIn. As of 2024, WVA's social media followership includes 1,300 followers on Facebook and 2,568 followers on LinkedIn. These platforms serve as key channels to:

- **Celebrate** the contributions of women veterans
- **Promote visibility** and recognition of women veterans
- **Raise awareness** of available support services
- **Share opportunities**, both directly and indirectly related to WVA



WOMEN VETERANS AUSTRALIA: OUR BRAND & SYMBOLISM

In addition to regular and opportunistic posts, WVA ran several dedicated social media campaigns throughout 2024, including:

- **2024 ANZAC DAY Campaign** (April) – Highlighted the participation of women veterans in military operations, challenging misconceptions that they primarily serve in rear-echelon roles or only wear others' medals on ANZAC Day.



- **#DidYouKnow Campaign** (4 October 2023 – 18 December 2024) – A Wednesday series that raised awareness of the unique challenges, achievements, and experiences of women serving in the Australian Defence Force.



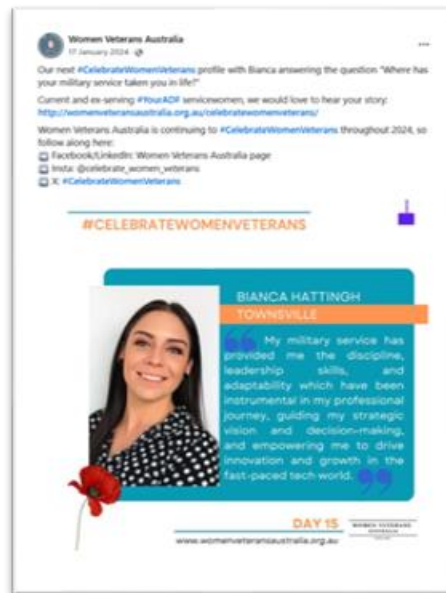
- **2024 REMEMBRANCE DAY #RememberHer Campaign** (October) – Commemorated women veterans who lost their lives serving Australia, ensuring their sacrifices are recognised and remembered.



- **#HelpIsHere Campaign** (Ongoing, launched 13 May 2024 – Q1 2025) – A Monday series focused on highlighting services, organisations, and charities that provide support to women veterans.



- **#EmpoweredNarratives Campaign** (Ongoing) – Showcases books and podcasts that amplify the voices of women veterans and share their stories.



MEDIA

- WVA actively advocated for greater media coverage of women veterans during ANZAC Day commemorative services by writing to Australian television networks, newspapers, and other media outlets. Qualitative anecdotal feedback from women veterans suggested a modest increase in representation during the 2024 commemorations.
- In April 2024, WVA Director Lyndsay Freeman was featured in an article in the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) magazine. This provided a significant opportunity to raise awareness of WVA's work and highlight the need for dedicated efforts to support women veterans within the broader Ex-Service Organisation (ESO) community.

MEDIA (CONT.)



- In December 2024, WVA published an article in the Defence Force Welfare Association magazine in response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The article specifically addressed RSL Australia's claim that they were best placed to respond to the Royal Commission on behalf of the Government. WVA strongly advocated for a more inclusive and representative approach, ensuring that any response to the Royal Commission reflects the diverse voices of the veteran community, including Women Veterans Australia.

Goal Area 5 – Governance & Fundraising

Women Veterans Australia (WVA) is fully compliant with all government regulations applicable to not-for-profit organizations.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS:

Throughout 2024, several changes were made to the Women Veterans Australia (WVA) Board:

- Lyndsay Freeman resigned as Chair, and Llani Kennealy was elected to the position.
- Kate Yaxley resigned as Vice Chair and transitioned into a Director role.
- Krystal Perkins resigned due to time constraints.
- Kate Robinson was appointed to the board.
- WVA has elected not to appoint a new Vice Chair currently.

THE CURRENT WVA BOARD IS OUTLINED IN THE TABLE BELOW:

Name	Position
Llani Kennealy	Chair
Kerry Parry	Treasurer
Claire Pearson	Secretary
Kate Yaxley	Director
Lyndsay Freeman	Director
Kate Robinson	Director

Table 2: WVA board members

AMBASSADORS

Our ambassadors continue to do an exceptional job of promoting the work of Women Veterans Australia, across many forums and at the state Level. Without their dedication and efforts, WVA's initiatives to increase the visibility and support for Women Veterans would be significantly impacted. Peta Irving, our Victorian Ambassador, has provided a 2024 ambassador's report which can be found on page 17.

Governance updates:

TREASURERS REPORT

The treasures report can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

KEY GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS UPDATES

On 22 August 2024, a Special General Meeting was held, during which members unanimously approved the following:

- The official change of the charity name from WVUA Limited to Women Veterans Australia Limited.
- The amendment of the company constitution, with the updated version being formally adopted. The new constitution is available on the WVA website.

Additionally, WVA has:

- Drafted a Volunteer Policy, which is currently under legal review to ensure alignment with best practices prior to formal adoption.
- Begun the process of obtaining Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status with the Australian Tax Office to enhance fundraising opportunities and donor engagement.

These governance improvements demonstrate WVA's ongoing commitment to transparency, accountability, and operational excellence in supporting women veterans.



Collaborations:

BOUGAINVILLEA LIFE COLLABORATION

In February 2024, Gunjan Allen, owner of the sustainable fashion brand Bougainvillea Life, approached WVA to propose a collaboration for their upcoming 'Poppy Collection'. This collection featured a range of women's dress styles incorporating Bougainvillea Life's signature poppy print.

Under the terms of agreement, WVA received 15% of the profits from each dress sold in exchange for promoting the collection. This included resharing social media posts and a video from the Chair discussing both WVA and the collection. The collaboration concluded in May 2024, raising a total of \$594.42.

Overall, this partnership was beneficial for WVA. Following a board review, it was agreed that any future collaborations should be strategically selected, ensuring they provide both financial and reputational benefits that reflect WVA's unique and valuable mission.

Grants

VETERANS HEALTH WEEK

As part of Veterans' Health Week 2024, WVA successfully secured funding through the DVA Grants Program. The funding was allocated to support activities aligned with our Phoenix Program, further enhancing health and wellbeing initiatives for women veterans.

Membership

WVA does not actively promote membership, as our primary goal is to remain inclusive and accessible to all women veterans. However, we deeply appreciate the support of our members and welcome those who wish to engage with the organisation.



APPENDIX 1

Treasurers Report

FOR AGM YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

This year, WVA raised funds through Sarah Watson, who completed the New York Marathon generating \$14,767.07 in donations. Additionally, we collected \$190 in membership fees.

The primary expense was insurance, totaling \$3,380.76, resulting in a net profit of \$11,510.82.

At the year-end, WVA had \$14,116.55 in the bank. Overall, it has been a highly successful year in terms of income, with low expenses. The current funds will be used to support the Phoenix Program Micro-Grants program in early 2025.

Yours sincerely



Kerry Parry

TREASURER



Balance Sheet

WVUA LIMITED
As at 30 June 2024

30 JUNE 2024

Assets	
Bank	
WVUA LTD DEBIT CARD	682.95
WVUA SAVINGS ACCOUNT	13,433.60
Total Bank	14,116.55
Total Assets	14,116.55
Net Assets	
	14,116.55
Equity	
Current Year Earnings	11,510.82
Owner A Share Capital	70.00
Retained Earnings	2,535.73
Total Equity	14,116.55



Profit and Loss

WVUA LIMITED
For the year ended 30 June 2024

2024

Trading Income

Donation not for profit	14,767.07
Grant DVA	720.00
Interest Income	114.60
Membership - PayPal account	190.00
Total Trading Income	15,791.67

Gross Profit

15,791.67

Operating Expenses

Consulting & Accounting	145.64
Functions	322.00
Insurance	3,380.76
Paypal fees	12.60
Subscriptions	419.85
Total Operating Expenses	4,280.85

Net Profit

11,510.82



APPENDIX 2

Ambassadors Report

PETA IRVING – VICTORIAN AMBASSADOR

As the Victorian Ambassador for Women Veterans Australia (WVA), I represent, promote, and educate Victorians about the role and benefits the WVA provides for the female veteran community. My role involves not only raising awareness about the unique challenges faced by women veterans but also advocating for their needs and ensuring they receive the support and recognition they deserve. I also research government and commercial companies and sites in Victoria for any grant opportunities for WVA and forward them to the committee.

This year I represented WVA on the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Deputy Commissioner Victoria Ex-Service Organisation (ESO) forums held quarterly. I also attended functions throughout the year representing WVA and myself being a female veteran. At any opportunity, I am happy to promote the WVA and in 2025 I hope to have one of the committee members (and myself) present at the DVA ESO forum and hold a function to present WVA to other female veterans in Victoria.

The pleasure I get out of being an ambassador for WVA gives me opportunities to meet with other veterans and share experiences. I also listen to and ask questions trying to find out any needs or gaps in veterans services in Victoria. I especially like that I can put in as little or more time depending on my schedule as I have a chronic illness that sometimes limits my mobility as well as babysitting duties as a great aunt when I can.

I would like to encourage other women to consider taking on a role as an Ambassador for Women Veterans Australia, a key element of improving services for women veterans is ensuring that their voices are heard and that they are visible. Representation as a WVA State Ambassador is an opportunity to support this important work.



A summary of my representation this year includes:

13 February 2024	DVA ESO Forum (Zoom)
9 April 2024	DVA Consultation
20 April 2024	ANZAC March Altona RSL
7 May 2024	DVA ESO Forum (Zoom)
20 June 2024	Launch "Of Service" by Jenani Therone Shrine of Remembrance
13 August 2024	DVA ESO Forum (Zoom)
22 August 2024	WVA AGM (Zoom)
8 October 2024	DVA ESO Forum (Zoom)
11 December 2024	WVA AGM (Zoom)

References:

<https://www.dva.gov.au/about/overview/consultations-and-grants/how-we-consult-ex-service-community/state-and-territory-forums/victoria>

<https://jenanitherone.com.au/essays/of-service/>

MORE INFORMATION

If you would like further information about the work of Women Veterans Australia, or would like to contribute, please reach out.



wva-support@womenveteransaustralia.org.au



www.womenveteransaustralia.org.au



Women Veterans Australia



Women Veterans Australia

"As women veterans, our shared stories enrich our service and deepen the community's understanding of our of our unique contributions. By recognising and sharing these experiences, we lift each other up and highlight our value as individuals."



Women Veterans Australia

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