

Victorian Veterans Council

Annual report 2024–2025



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Chairperson's foreword

Commodore Greg Yorke, AM, CSC, RAN Retd
Chair



As Chair of the Victorian Veterans Council (VVC), I am pleased to present our annual report for 2024–25.

The year was a significant one for the VVC and Victoria's veteran community. The headline of course was the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (Royal Commission) handed down its final report in September 2024. The Australian Government then released its response in December 2024. These events marked the end of a challenging process for veterans and their families. The VVC commends all those who provided testimony and participated. We recognise everyone affected by the Royal Commission.

With the Australian Government having agreed in full or in principle to 104 of the Royal Commission's 122 recommendations, and the Parliament of Australia also passing the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025* on 13 February 2025, we see an opportunity for positive change in how we support our veterans and their families.

2024–25 was also a year for significant anniversaries. These mark occasions to pause and reflect on the service and participation of Victoria's veterans in war and peacekeeping operations in the service of our nation. They include:

- 20 September 2024, the 25th anniversary of the first Australian peacekeepers arriving in East Timor. This was part of INTERFET, the Australian-led international peacekeeping operation aiding East Timor to achieve independence. More than 5,000 Australian personnel saw service in East Timor
- 8 May 2025, the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (followed by the 80th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific Day on 15 August 2025)
- 25 June 2025, the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War. More than 18,000 Australian personnel served in this war.

Commemoration continues to be an important way for the VVC to raise the community's awareness of service. It allows us to recognise the sacrifice of veterans and their families. It also gives Victorians the opportunity to say thank you.

Launch of the VVC engagement strategy and December workshop

We launched our engagement strategy on 4 December 2024. The strategy builds on activities from the last few years including the Ex-Service Organisation (ESO) Summit and the 2022 Veteran Sector Study. We consulted with our stakeholders in developing the strategy.

It was a great pleasure to launch the strategy at a forum at the Shrine of Remembrance. The Minister for Veterans and representatives from ex-service organisations attended the forum. It allowed us to hear directly from ESOs and veteran groups on the issues that matter most to their communities. The discussion focused on challenges and priorities that participants raised. The 'VVC engagement strategy and workshop' section provides more on the event.

It was a valuable and open conversation. The VVC looks forwards to hosting more of these sessions in 2025–26 and beyond.

Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

On 9 September 2024, the Royal Commission provided its final report to the Governor-General, and it was tabled in Federal Parliament. The final report comprises 7 volumes. It makes 122 recommendations. The Australian Government provided its response on 2 December 2024. This included accepting 104 recommendations in full or in principle. The response also noted 17 recommendations for further consideration. It rejected just one recommendation in part.

The VVC is pleased to see engagement and participation across the sector following the Royal Commission. This includes many consultations, engagement workshops and co-design sessions held to support informing the Australian Government's implementation of the recommendations. There has been particular focus on recommendations 87 and 89. These call for a Veteran Wellbeing Agency and a national peak body for ex-service organisations.

The VVC met to consider the recommendations of the Royal Commission. We provided our advice to the Victorian Minister for Veterans on the Royal Commission. This included the recommendations relevant to Victoria and services provided at the state level.

The VVC looks forward to the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations delivering real improvements to the lives and wellbeing of our veterans and their families.

Supporting and honouring our veterans

One of the VVC's key deliverables each year is providing grants to the sector. We do this under the Victoria Remembers and the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund grant programs. Funding established under legislation supports these programs. They are an important way that Victoria supports the veteran and ex-service community.

This year the VVC provided just over \$1.5 million to 46 projects across these 2 programs. The grants supported a variety of welfare and commemorative projects.

We were impressed with the quality of the projects submitted under the Victoria Remembers program this year. However, not all available funding for this program was required. This meant we could allocate \$210,000 of additional funding to important welfare projects. We did this with the support of the Minister for Veterans under the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund grant program.

The VVC reviews and updates the guidelines for these programs. Some of the changes we made to the guidelines last year applied to the 2024–25 grant round. This included:

- focusing on the financial sustainability of funded projects
- giving priority to projects that helped create and expand collaborative partnerships in the sector
- prioritising projects that focus on supporting veterans whose service has negatively affected their mental health
- projects which reflect the diversity of Victoria's ex-service community, including LGBTIQ+ veterans and veterans with a disability.

A voice for veterans

On behalf of the VVC and the sector, I thank all members of the VVC for their work throughout the year. I appreciate their service and dedication to our programs and their advocacy for veterans.

Outgoing members Bruce Mildenhall and Jo-Anne O'Brien deserve special acknowledgement. Bruce first joined the VVC in 2018. He served 2 terms and chaired the VVC's Governance Sub-Committee. Jo-Anne was appointed in 2022. Their work with the VVC coincided with the 2022 ESO Summit and Veteran Sector Study and the Royal Commission. They lent valuable support to the VVC in our advice to the Victorian Government.

In December, I welcomed the appointment of VVC member Brett West to the Deputy Chairperson role. Since his appointment in 2022, Brett has made a strong contribution to the work of the VVC. He has shared his strong insights and perspectives. He also supported the Funding Sub-Committee in its strategic approach to assessing and reviewing the VVC's grant programs. I thank Brett for his support and leadership in 2024–25.

The VVC welcomes 5 new members appointed in 2024–25. Emily O'Dwyer and Peter Swandale were nominated by Melbourne Legacy and RSL Victoria respectively. They were appointed in July. Michelle Campbell AM, Chris Gray and Helen 'Pippa' Morris were appointed in December.

The *Veterans Act 2005* limits the duration members can serve on the board. This ensures the VVC continues to be invigorated with fresh perspectives, ideas and skills. It also helps us reflect the Victorian veteran community.

It is of course equally important to maintain continuity and knowledge on the VVC.

I welcome the reappointment of Lucy Saaroni and John McNeill to the VVC for second terms.

Lucy and John chair VVC's Funding and Governance subcommittees respectively. Their reappointments maintains the leadership and important work of these committees.

I thank the Minister for Veterans, the Hon Natalie Suleyman MP, for her continuing support for Victoria's ex-service community and to the VVC. The VVC is also grateful for the support provided to it by the Office for Veterans within the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

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About the Victorian Veterans Council

The VVC is an independent statutory body established in August 2006 under the *Veterans Act 2005* (the Act).

The VVC plays an important role in supporting Victorian veterans and their families. The VVC reports to the Minister for Veterans on issues affecting the Victorian veteran community.

Under the Act, the VVC has specific responsibility for distributing the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund and the Victorian Veterans Fund. The VVC also assists the Victorian Government by providing:

- general advice to the Minister for Veterans on issues affecting Victoria's veterans, including the current and future needs of veterans and their families
- advice to the Victorian Government on matters relating to the regulation of patriotic funds
- advice on a range of government-led programs and initiatives.

The Office for Veterans in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing supports the VVC.

Toongabbie Cenotaph. Credit: Photograph by Cassandra Tolsma. Image supplied, Toongabbie Township Group.



Objectives and functions of the VVC

The objectives and functions of the VVC are detailed in ss. 5 and 6 of the Act.

The **objectives** of the VVC are to:

- promote the wellbeing of all members of the Victorian ex-service community
- promote the commemoration of those who have died in the performance of service or duty
- develop a better understanding among Victorians of the service and sacrifice of Victoria's veterans in war and peacekeeping operations, and the contributions of Victoria's ex-service community
- actively promote the significance of, and key values associated with, the spirit of Anzac
- promote cooperation and collaboration across organisations dealing with veterans' welfare and other ex-service community issues, including the Trustees of the Shrine of Remembrance.

The **functions** of the VVC are to:

- ensure the objectives of the VVC are met to the maximum extent practicable
- monitor and advise the Minister for Veterans on issues affecting Victoria's ex-service community
- investigate and report on any aspect of veterans' affairs referred by the minister
- consult with the ex-service community when developing advice for the minister
- support the welfare activities of ex-service organisations through the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund (in keeping with the *ANZAC Day Act 1958*)
- fund activities furthering its objectives through the Victorian Veterans Fund (under s 20 of the Act)
- advise the minister responsible for administering Part 4 of the Act or the Director of Consumer Affairs on matters in relation to regulating patriotic funds under Part 4 of the Act.

Members of the VVC



**Commodore Greg Yorke, AM, CSC, RAN Rtd
Chair**

Appointed 15 February 2022

Greg was appointed chair of VVC in February 2022. He was reappointed in February 2025. Greg is a retired member of the Royal Australian Navy. He served for nearly 50 years in the permanent Navy and as an active reserve. He brings a wealth of experience in the navy and the Department of Defence.

Greg joined the navy in January 1974, rising to the rank of Commodore in June 2016. He has worked as a principal warfare officer in the Executive Branch, having completed many sea postings including exchange in *HMS Liverpool* and his 2 most successful commands, *HMAS Gladstone*, a Fremantle class patrol boat, and *HMAS Arunta*, an Anzac class frigate.

He was awarded a Conspicuous Service Cross for his leadership role as Chief Staff Officer (Operations) Maritime Headquarters during Operation Falconer (Iraq 2) in 2003. He was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia in the 2022 Queen's Birthday Honours.

Greg also had a successful second career as a management consultant during a 10-year absence from the navy. He has been a non-executive director on the board of the Australian National Veterans Arts Museum since 2017.



**Brett West
Deputy Chair**

Appointed 20 September 2022

Brett is a Yamatji man from Western Australia and veteran of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). He served 30 years with the Royal Australian Air Force. This included operational service and tours in South East Asia and the Middle East.

Brett's roles in the ADF were in ordnance safety, training, maintenance and explosive ordnance disposal. He also held roles relating to policies and programs for Indigenous recruitment and retention, community engagement and mentoring.

Since leaving the ADF in 2017, Brett has worked with the Victorian Government's Department of Education in roles focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training, and with the Department of Premier and Cabinet working with Traditional Owner groups throughout Victoria. He is currently working with the Victorian Public Sector Commission.

Brett was appointed as a member of the VVC in September 2022 and later appointed as the Deputy Chair in December 2024. Brett is also a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans and Services Association.



Michelle Campbell AM

Appointed 10 December 2024

Michelle was studying at Monash University when a khaki-coloured recruiting tent intrigued her. She enlisted in the Army Reserve and trained as a logistician, then an officer, while completing her degree. Fast forward 3 decades, she has held appointments as a Brigadier – Deputy Commander of the 2nd (Australian) Division and Commander 4th Brigade (Victoria and Tasmania). She was recognised for her exceptional service to the Australian Army in the King's Birthday Honours 2025 and appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

Michelle deployed to the Afghanistan war in 2014. She received the NATO Meritorious Service Medal for her leadership and exceptional contribution. Closer to home, Michelle has served Victorian communities in 3 ADF bushfire assistance operations.

Michelle is dedicated to an impartial and respectful approach. This includes preserving our monuments, commemorating service and rewarding and recognising our veterans.

Michelle's numerous qualifications support her senior executive leadership expertise in strategy and complex project portfolio management. She consults to a variety of multinational, state and federal government clients across multiple sectors.



Chris Gray

Appointed 10 December 2024

Chris grew up in country Victoria. His working life began with a formal trade qualification in carpentry and joinery with the Australian Defence Force. He spent 17 years with the regular Army. During this time, he managed construction and humanitarian aid projects in Australia and overseas. Chris transitioned into the Army Reserve for a further 10 years before being discharged in 2018.

Chris is currently a member of the Executive Leadership Team at Vasey RSL Care. He heads up the Veteran Services Department. This includes managing programs that address veteran homelessness and provide affordable housing for veterans and their families.

Chris has been a member of the Box Hill RSL since 2010. He served on the committee from 2019–2021 and has once again joined the committee in 2024. Chris is also a member of the Austin Health Board Consumer Advisory Committee. In this role, he provides strategic advice to the Austin Health Board.

Chris keeps fit by walking, riding and going for the occasional swim. He is a strong advocate of exercise as a way to provide social networks and improve physical and mental health.



Robin Hunt

Appointed 3 October 2023

Robin was conscripted into the Australian Army in 1969 and, following officer training at Scheyville, was commissioned as an artillery officer. He saw active service in South Vietnam in 1970–71 with the 4th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery. After completing his full-time national service obligation, Robin was allocated to the Army Reserve.

Following his army service, Robin then held various management positions at RMIT University. He completed a fellowship in public administration and a degree in business administration. Robin's public sector career has involved roles supporting Victorian Government TAFE boards and senior roles with the then Australian Government Department of Industry, and in support of various ministerial councils.

Robin left the public service to pursue business opportunities, chairing a charitable foundation and serving on the committee of a charitable trust. He was at one time elected vice-president of Philanthropy Australia. Robin also acted as a trustee for several Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade loan funds that assist overseas students. He has served on the board of a Victorian public hospital.

Robin is retired and devotes his time to pursuing many varied interests (especially military history) and in support of his family.



John McNeill

Appointed 3 November 2021

John has had extensive involvement in veterans family advocacy and support for the past 10 years as a qualified advocate. He served as a rifleman with the First Battalion and served in East Timor in 2007. John was appointed to the VVC in November 2021 and reappointed in December 2024.

John has battled his own medical constraints post service and now supports others needing assistance throughout Australia to help them transition after service.

John holds positions on state and national boards such as the Deputy Commissioner's Forum and the Operational Working Party. He is also a Level 3 Compensation Advocate with the Victorian Veterans Advocacy Centre.

John's extensive involvement extends further by being the director of a social enterprise – Aussie Veterans Pty Ltd – established in Melbourne in 2017.



Helen 'Pippa' Morris

Appointed 10 December 2024

Pippa served in the Royal Australian Navy during the 1970s before being forcibly discharged (medical) under Defence's historic anti-LGBTIQA+ policies.

Pippa has a strong connection to the veteran community. In addition to her own service, several generations of her family have served in the military. She is a member of the RSL and the Naval Association of Australia. She is currently the President of the Ballan RSL Sub-Branch. She was also a founding member of the Discharged LGBTI Veterans Association. Through her involvement with the Australian Navy Cadets from 1972 to 2025, she had a long connection with the ADF's youth development arm.

Pippa has a strong history of veterans' advocacy and engagement with the Department of Veterans' Affairs. She also has significant lived experience of service-related injuries.

Pippa holds numerous qualifications and has more than 30 years' work experience in the community services, mental health and vocational education sectors. She also has qualifications and experience in business management, strategic planning and governance. Pippa is an affiliate member of the Governance Institute of Australia.



Emily O'Dwyer

Appointed 23 July 2024

Emily is the Community Services Manager at Melbourne Legacy. She has been a vital part of the organisation for over 7 years. With more than 14 years of experience in the social care sector, Emily brings extensive expertise and deep empathy to her work supporting the families of veterans.

Emily holds a Bachelor in Counselling, an Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management and a Graduate Certificate in Career Development and Career Counselling.

Throughout her career, Emily has held specialist practitioner roles, including Child Protection Practitioner, Homeless Youth Specialist Practitioner and Family Violence Specialist Practitioner. Her professional journey is grounded in both frontline experience and strategic service delivery, with a consistent focus on trauma-informed, holistic and client-centred care.

Emily's academic and practical background reflects a strong commitment to empowering individuals and communities through evidence-based practice and compassionate engagement.

At Melbourne Legacy, Emily works closely with families facing complex challenges. These include mental health issues, substance use, intergenerational trauma, family violence and homelessness. Her approach is informed not only by her professional training but also by her lived experience. This enriches her capacity for empathy, advocacy and authentic support.

Emily is dedicated to improving the wellbeing of veterans and their families, particularly during critical periods of transition.



Lucy Saaroni

Appointed 8 February 2022

Lucy is a risk management professional and a veteran with a passion for community resilience building. Lucy was appointed to the VVC in February 2022 and reappointed in February 2025.

As a public affairs officer with the Australian Army, Lucy has deployed on warlike military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Lucy has also supported politico-military missions in the Gulf States and North West Africa.

Working in the Office of the Defence Attaché at the Australian Embassy in France between 2008 and 2013, Lucy had the privilege of supporting large-scale multinational military commemorative ceremonies. This included the reburial of 250 Australian and British World War I soldiers at the Fromelles Military Cemetery and planning the Anzac Centenary Commemorations in France.

In 2018, Lucy was awarded the Australia Day Medallion for service to Defence and Indigenous Communities.

Lucy has qualifications and extensive experience in risk management, strategic communications and community engagement. This includes senior advisory and executive management roles in local and state government.



Peter Swandale

Appointed 23 July 2024

Peter was appointed to the VVC in July 2024. He brings over 43 years military service and lived experience in both the Army as well as the Australian Public Service.

Peter joined the Australian Army Reserves in November 1981 as a transport driver. He transferred to the Australian Regular Army in May 1984. He served in different Corps including RACT, RASVY and RASIGS with multiple operational service. Peter transferred back to the Australian Army Reserves in 2012. He currently holds a position of Warrant Officer Class One within Land Combat College.

For more than 10 years, Peter has supported the Returned and Services League in Victoria. He has held many positions including Chair of the Bendigo Military Museum Sub-Committee, Senior Vice-President and President of the Bendigo District RSL Sub-Branch. Peter is currently on the State Executive Board within the Returned and Services League Victorian Branch.

Peter also had a 10-year stint within the Department of Defence – Australian Public Service as both a trainer and Quality Manager for the Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation.

Outgoing members

Bruce Mildenhall, Member from 7 August 2018 to 4 October 2024

Jo-Anne O'Brien, Member from 17 May 2022 to 16 May 2025

Highlights of the year

VVC engagement strategy and workshop

The VVC launched its engagement strategy with an engagement workshop held at the Shrine of Remembrance on 4 December 2024. The workshop brought together members of the ex-service community to discuss issues of importance. The Minister for Veterans, the Hon Natalie Suleyman MP addressed the forum. Members of the VVC facilitated a wide-ranging discussion that explored themes of sector best practice and veteran advocacy.

Forum participants led the key topics of discussion, including:

- improving collaboration and engagement between ex-service organisations
- how the sector can collectively define, measure and report on its successes
- better promotion of existing services for veterans and integrating with support frameworks and services outside of the veteran sector
- strategic planning at the sector level to address issues of service availability
- funding for veteran supports in rural and regional areas
- equitable funding for veterans services relative to other schemes like the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- the need for flexible veteran employment programs and opportunities for veterans transitioning from full-time service. These should include part-time, contract and casual options.

Engagement with the ex-service community

Throughout the year, the VVC continued its engagement with the veteran community and Victorian ex-service organisations.

The VVC receives regular updates from the Returned and Services League of Australia (Victorian Branch) (RSL Victoria) and Melbourne Legacy through their representatives on the VVC.

In 2024–25, the VVC also met with stakeholders and attended meetings and events. This included:

- taking part in the Department of Veterans' Affairs Deputy Commissioner's Consultative Forums throughout the year
- attending regular Austin Health Veterans Consultative Group meetings
- Veterans, First Responders and Families Expo Ballarat – 19 November 2024
- Australians with Serbs Association – Stamps Presentation and Documentary Trailer Launch – 23 November 2024
- VVC engagement workshop – 4 December 2024
- Path of the Horse – 24 January 2025
- Ballarat Region Veteran Networking Session – February 2025
- Australian Catholic University's Veterans House opening – 9 April 2025
- co-design discovery sessions for a New Agency focusing on veteran wellbeing – 30 April 2025
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Veteran Employment Workshop – 2 May 2025
- Keilor East RSL Expo – 24 May 2025.

The VVC also met with and heard presentations from:

- Nicole Rich, Director, Consumer Affairs Victoria, on Patriotic Funds, an opportunity for the VVC to engage with Consumer Affairs Victoria on the regulation and administration of patriotic funds
- Catherine Carrigan, Deputy Chair of the Shrine of Remembrance Trustees and Dean Lee, Chief Executive Officer, Shrine of Remembrance.

Commemoration and Anzac Day services

The VVC is proud to support the Victorian community to commemorate Anzac Day and other significant anniversaries.

This year, VVC members attended services, commemorations and events across Victoria. These included:

- Toongabbie Cenotaph Dedication – 7 July 2024
- Remember Prisoners of War Service – 12 July 2024
- State Remembrance Service at Springvale War Cemetery – 10 November 2024
- Melbourne Legacy's – Remembrance Service High Tea – 17 November 2024
- 21st Anniversary Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial Service Ballarat – 9 February 2025
- National Servicemen's Day – 9 February 2025
- Darwin Defenders 1942-45 Service – 19 February 2025
- Launch of 'A Memory in Light' exhibition – 28 March 2025
- 2025 Anniversary of Anzac Day State Luncheon – 9 April 2025
- RSL Victoria's ANZAC Church Service, St Paul's Cathedral – 13 April 2025
- Anzac Day Dawn Service at the Shrine of Remembrance – 25 April 2025
- Mt Macedon Dawn Service – 25 April 2025
- The Museum of Chinese History's Anzac Day exhibition – 25 April 2025
- Melbourne Legacy – Anzac Service for Students – 28 April 2025
- Limelight Touring Company's The Shohorn Sonata – 29 April 2025
- Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Service – 31 May 2025
- D-Day Service – Shrine of Remembrance – 6 June 2025.

Anzac Day Proceeds Fund highlights

Through the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund, the VVC provides grants to support the welfare activities of Victoria's ex-service organisations. The 'Anzac Day Proceeds Fund' section of this report provides a complete list of grants awarded in 2024–25.

Recent initiatives and activities funded or delivered in 2024–25 include:

- \$150,000 for Adventure Works Australia Ltd to deliver its Navigate – Veterans' Journey Outdoor Adventure Therapy program. The Navigate program is based on research and developed in collaboration with the veteran community. It enables participants to explore their own transition journey from military service to civilian life, their mental health and wellbeing, within the frame of an outdoor adventure therapy experience.
- \$100,000 for Aussie Veterans Pty Ltd to deliver its Aussie Veterans Socials program. The program gives veterans and their families the chance to engage with the community and participate in activities. It provides a place where they feel welcome and can build friendships.
- \$85,000 for Melbourne Legacy to deliver its Youth Camps Program. Youth Camps provide a safe and supportive environment where participants can build friendships, develop leadership skills and enjoy much-needed respite from the challenges they face due to their parents' military service. The grant also supports Melbourne Legacy to expand its program to include Family Camps with both joint and separate activities. This helps parents and children build skills together while also enjoying some respite apart.

- \$142,993 for Soldier On to deliver its Empower-Her: Holistic Wellbeing Program for Contemporary Female Veterans. The program has more than 1,540 participants in Victoria. It is designed for contemporary female veterans balancing the dual roles of post-service life and family responsibilities. It addresses the complex interplay between military service, parenting challenges and mental health needs. The program provides culturally sensitive and trauma-informed care.
- \$50,000 for Path of the Horse Ltd for its program of Equine Assisted Therapy for Veterans and their Families. Path of the Horse has firsthand military experience. The grant supports its delivery of one-on-one, family and group-based therapy sessions and group programs covering self-regulation, mindfulness, understanding trauma and more.
- \$30,000 for Save Our Services Australia / Veterans for Fishing for its program for veterans fostering mental health and wellbeing through fishing. Veterans for Fishing's mission is to empower veterans by taking them outdoors to engage in the therapeutic activity of fishing in the Australian countryside. They use angling to provide veterans with a supportive community. The program builds lasting connections through regular family fishing and wellbeing events.

Victoria Remembers Grant Program highlights

Through the Victoria Remembers Grant Program, the VVC supports community projects that promote a better understanding of the service and sacrifice of Victoria's veterans in war and peacekeeping operations. It also commemorates those who have died in the performance of service or duty. The 'Victorian Veterans Fund' section of this report provides a complete list of grants awarded in 2024–25.

Promoting education and understanding

The Victoria Remembers Grant Program supports projects that educate about and enhance understanding of the participation of Victorians in war and peacekeeping operations. Projects that were funded or completed this year included:

- \$30,000 for RSL Victoria for its program to attract more families and underrepresented veterans to ANZAC Day. The project encourages families with children to attend the Melbourne ANZAC Day commemorations and march
- \$24,900 for Woodend RSL to create a commemorative mural that highlights and commemorates the service of local veterans in a prominent location in the Woodend community
- \$30,000 to the Shrine of Remembrance for the Eucalypts of Hodogaya: Design of Yokohama War Cemetery project. This delivered an exhibition commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The exhibition explored the work of the Anzac Agency of the Imperial War Graves Commission, based in Melbourne, which established the Yokohama War Cemetery
- \$30,000 for Kerang Neighbourhood House for its project Faces of Valor: Honouring Veterans' Legacy. This project aims to pay tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of veterans through an immersive portrait exhibition.

Supporting commemoration and remembrance

The Victoria Remembers Grant Program supports the community to recognise the service and sacrifice of Victoria's veterans. This year, services and commemorative events awarded funding through the program included:

- ARVN Rangers Association of Victoria – Thank You Vietnam Veterans
- Borough of Queenscliffe Anzac Day commemorations
- Commemoration Service for the 83rd Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin
- Flemington/Kensington RSL Sub-Branch – 110th Anniversary, ANZAC Day
- Hawthorn RSL Sub-Branch Anzac and Remembrance Day commemorations
- Melbourne Legacy's 92nd Melbourne Legacy ANZAC Commemoration Ceremony for Students
- 2025 Mt Macedon Anzac Day Dawn Service
- School Anzac services supported by the Rotary Clubs of Boronia, Glen Waverley and Manningham City
- Seymour RSL Sub-Branch – ANZAC Day 2025.

Corporate governance

Council meetings

The Act requires that the VVC meets at least 8 times each year. The VVC held 8 meetings between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025.

Committee structure

The VVC has 2 permanent committees to help fulfil its functions under the Act.

Funding Sub-Committee

The Funding Sub-Committee develops and reviews the grant guidelines for the Victorian Veterans Fund and the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund.

The VVC provides these guidelines for approval by the Minister for Veterans. The Funding Sub-Committee assesses applications for both funds. It makes recommendations to the VVC for grants to be awarded.

Lucy Saaroni chaired the Funding Sub-Committee in 2024–25. Robin Hunt, Helen ‘Pippa’ Morris and Brett West were also members of the subcommittee.

The Funding Sub-Committee met twice during the year to assess grant applications and to review the guidelines for the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund and Victoria Remembers Grant Program.

Governance Sub-Committee

The Governance Sub-Committee ensures the VVC complies with all financial and legal requirements under the Act and any other relevant legislation. The subcommittee also governs the 6 patriotic funds for which the VVC is trustee. It develops the VVC annual report.

Bruce Mildenhall chaired the Governance Sub-Committee until 4 October 2024. John McNeill chaired the Governance Sub-Committee from 23 October 2024. Emily O’Dwyer, Peter Swandale, Michelle Campbell and Chris Gray were also members of the subcommittee during the year.

The Governance Sub-Committee met twice during the year to oversee administering the patriotic funds for which the VVC is trustee. This included engaging with stakeholders to establish and update memorandums of understanding for the disbursement of funds. In 2024–25, the Governance Sub-Committee also reviewed its Charter and the VVC Risk Register.

Secretariat support

The Office for Veterans in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing provided secretariat support to the VVC and its subcommittees.

Audited financial records

The VVC financial results are aggregated into the department’s financial statements, pursuant to a determination made by the Minister for Finance under s. 53(1)(b) of the *Financial Management Act 1994*. Visit the department’s website for [financial statements](#).¹

On 6 September 2018 the VVC applied to the Minister for Finance seeking a full exemption from the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance under the Financial Management Act. On 1 October 2018 the Minister for Finance approved this application, exempting the VVC on an ongoing basis from complying with requirements of the Standing Directions.

¹ <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/annual-reports>

Anzac Day Proceeds Fund

The Anzac Day Proceeds Fund receives contributions from sporting events held on Anzac Day across Victoria. These are collected by Sport and Recreation Victoria in the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. This is in keeping with s. 4A of the ANZAC Day Act.

In 2024–25, grants totalling \$1,019,562 from the fund were approved for 18 projects. The total awarded in 2024–25 includes \$210,000 that was transferred from the Victorian Veterans Fund. This funds additional projects to support the welfare and wellbeing of veterans. Table 1 sets out the grant recipients.

Table 1: Anzac Day Proceeds Fund 2024–25 approved grants

Organisation	Project	Amount
Adventure Works Australia Ltd	Navigate – Veterans' Journey Outdoor Adventure Therapy	\$150,000
Aussie Veterans Pty Ltd	Aussie Veterans Socials	\$100,000
Australian National Veterans Arts Museum (ANVAM)	Open Studio Facilitated Arts Engagement at The V Centre	\$50,000
Ballarat Veterans Assistance Centre (BVAC)	Welfare Support	\$10,800
Carry On (Victoria)	Welfare Support for Veterans and their Families in Need	\$90,000
Flemington / Kensington RSL Sub-Branch	Veterans' Health and Wellbeing	\$20,000
Frontline Yoga	Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Trauma Recovery for Frontline Workers & Yoga	\$50,000
Gisborne RSL Sub-Branch Inc	Gisborne RSL Members Welfare Functions	\$20,000
Macedon Ranges Legacy Group of Bendigo Legacy Incorporated	Wellbeing Events for Aging Legacy Widows	\$6,930
Melbourne Legacy	Melbourne Legacy's Youth Camps Program	\$85,000
Path of the Horse Ltd	Equine Assisted Therapy for Veterans and their Families	\$50,000
Returned & Services League of Australia Victorian Branch	Financial Assistance for Veterans and their Families	\$75,000
Save Our Services Australia/ Veterans for Fishing	Veterans for Fishing, Fostering Mental Health and Wellbeing Through Fishing	\$30,000
Soldier On	Empower-Her – Holistic Wellbeing Program for Contemporary Female Veterans	\$142,993
Vasey RSL Care	Adventure and Connection for Veterans' Wellbeing	\$100,000
Veteran Gaming Australia	Social Connection & Promoting Positive Health for Veterans and their Families	\$20,000
Vietnam Veterans Federation Vic Branch Inc	VVF Vic Branch Inc Welfare	\$10,000
Wimmera Veterans Centre	Veterans Valued	\$8,839
Total Anzac Day Proceeds Fund		\$1,019,562

Victorian Veterans Fund

The Victorian Veterans Fund was established under the Veterans Act. Revenue for the Veterans Fund for one financial year comes from the Victorian Government's Community Support Fund and is equal to one day's revenue of the Community Support Fund.

Grants of up to \$30,000 (excluding GST) are available for projects honouring or commemorating veterans' service or educating Victorians about veterans' contributions. In 2024–25 grants totalling \$487,599.22 were approved for 28 projects. Funds were distributed under the Victoria Remembers Grant Program. Table 2 details the grant recipients.

In 2024–25, funding of \$210,000 that was not required to fund projects under the Victoria Remembers Grant Program was transferred from the Victorian Veterans Fund to the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund to allow the VVC to award additional grants under that program.

Table 2: Victorian Veterans Fund 2024–25 approved grants

Organisation	Project	Amount
Ararat Legacy Inc	2025 Project Remembrance – Legacy in Schools Program	\$4,551
ARVN Rangers Association of Victoria	Thank You Vietnam Veterans	\$28,000
Australian Vietnamese Women's Association	Thrive	\$20,000
Borough of Queenscliffe	Anzac Day Commemorative Services	\$24,622.28
Darwin Defenders 1942-45 Melbourne Branch AUSPICE: Sir Edward Weary Dunlop Medical Research Foundation	Commemoration Service for the 83rd Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin	\$5,455
Flemington / Kensington RSL Sub-Branch	110th Anniversary, ANZAC Day	\$10,000
Hawthorn RSL Sub-Branch	Remembrance Day 2025	\$10,000
Hawthorn RSL Sub-Branch	ANZAC Day 2025	\$14,072
Kerang Neighbourhood House	Faces of Valor: Honouring Veterans' Legacy	\$30,000
Kilmore Wallan RSL Sub-Branch	Kilmore & Wallan District School Education Program	\$4,137.94
Lang Lang RSL Sub-Branch AUSPICE: Returned & Services League of Australian Victorian Branch	New Lectern	\$1,000
Limelight Touring Company AUSPICE: Auspicious Arts Projects Inc.	Shoehorn Sonata	\$13,700
Melbourne Legacy	92nd Melbourne Legacy ANZAC Commemoration Ceremony for Students	\$30,000
Monash Men's Shed Incorporated	We Remember	\$2,890

Organisation	Project	Amount
Mt Macedon ANZAC Day Dawn Service Incorporated	2025 Mount Macedon ANZAC Day Dawn Service	\$29,309
Returned & Services League of Australia Victorian Branch	Program to attract more families & underrepresented veterans to ANZAC Day	\$30,000
Rotary Club of Boronia	ANZAC Service for Grade 5/6 Students of the Knox Council Area	\$3,120
Rotary Club of Glen Waverly	ANZAC Service for Schools 2024	\$6,072
Rotary Club of Manningham City Inc	Schools ANZAC Service for April 2025	\$6,020
Seymour RSL Sub-Branch	ANZAC day 2025	\$10,000
Shrine of Remembrance	Eucalypts of Hodogaya: Design of Yokohama War Cemetery (working title)	\$30,000
Tawasul Foundation	Bridging Cultures, Honouring Veterans: A Digital Initiative	\$28,500
This Story Australia Ltd	"Bombers in Service: Stories of Essendon Veterans"	\$29,500
Vasey RSL Care	Honouring their Service: Memorials to Veterans, to Mrs Vasey and War Widows	\$30,000
Vietnamese Community in Australia – Victoria Chapter	Honouring and Recognising the Contribution of Vietnam Veterans	\$26,000
Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA)	Victoria Remembers its Central Victorian Vietnam Veterans	\$29,750
Wodonga RSL Sub-Branch	Remembering the Sacrifice	\$6,000
Woodend RSL Sub-Branch Incorporated	Woodend RSL Commemorative Mural	\$24,900
Total Victorian Veterans Fund		\$487,599.22

Patriotic funds

The VVC, in partnership with Consumer Affairs Victoria as the regulator of patriotic funds, advises ex-service organisations on how patriotic funds can be raised and appropriately used, including transfer and winding-up arrangements.

Part 4, s. 26 of the Act sets out circumstances requiring the Minister for Consumer Affairs to consult with the VVC and the VVC to provide the Minister with advice. In 2024–25, the VVC provided advice to the Minister for Consumer Affairs on one occasion under these provisions.

The VVC is also the trustee for 6 patriotic funds that are administered under Part 4 of the Act. These include:

The Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women Scholarship Fund – Albert Coates Memorial Trust

This fund, in association with the Albert Coates Memorial Trust, funds scholarships awarded to students who are studying to become paramedics, nurses or doctors in emergency care at Victorian universities. In 2024–25, the VVC provided \$38,106 to the Albert Coates Memorial Trust to allocate scholarships for tertiary studies in emergency care.

The Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women Scholarship Fund No. 1 – Nurses Memorial Centre

This fund was first established in August 2006. It supports scholarship grants awarded each year to students undertaking postgraduate studies caring for older people or palliative care at a recognised university. The VVC administers the funds, which are provided to the Australian Nurses Memorial Centre as the facilitator of the scholarships. In 2024–25, the VVC provided \$38,106 to the centre for these scholarships.

The War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association Scholarship Fund

This fund supports scholarships awarded by Federation University Australia (FedUni) to students undertaking study in a health-related discipline. In 2024–25, the VVC worked with the FedUni Foundation to establish a new scholarship agreement to promote the longevity of the awards. The VVC provided \$2,500 for these scholarships.

The Victorian Blinded Soldiers' Welfare Patriotic Fund

This fund was established in April 2013 from funds provided by the Blinded Soldiers' Association and a letter bequest from the estate of the late Lucy Adamson. It provides welfare assistance to visually impaired veterans and their dependants. It also assists former ADF members who have visual impairment due to their service. In 2024–25 the VVC provided \$8,000 to Vision Australia to support its veteran clients.

The Extremely Disabled Association Patriotic Fund

This fund supported the now discontinued Victorian Veteran Community Story Writing and Art Competition, which Austin Health's Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital facilitated. In 2024–25, the VVC continued to explore options for how this fund can continue to support the ex-service community and achieve the objects for which the fund was established.

Australian United Ex-Services Association Patriotic Fund

This fund was established in 2015 to help fund postgraduate study in the field of veterans' health. A memorandum of understanding with Austin Health was signed in February 2016 to deliver the scholarships for training postgraduate students in cognitive processing therapy including a year of supervision. In 2024–25, the VVC explored ways this fund can continue to support the objects for which it was established.

