



THE BOSUN'S CALL

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



ACT EDITION MAY 2026

VOL: 31 NO: 04

ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY



VALE PETER COOKE-RUSSELL 1939 - 2026



Naval Association of Australia (ACT Section)

Founded 1 July 1944
Patron The Hon Sir William Deane AC KBE

Office Bearers 2026 - 2027

Executive Committee Members

President David Manolas
0427 504 564
stbdstayportgiveway@gmail.com

Secretary Darren Rush
0435 911 607
darren.rush@navalassoc.org.au

Treasurer Alaric O'Neill

Committee Members

Tiger Lyons
Pauline Gribble
Heather Milward

Social Sec Bev Joce

Bosun's Call Darren Rush
wem@navalassoc.org.au

Upcoming Events

12 May Last Post Ceremony Stoker Nevilee Andrew Kelly
HMAS Sydney (I), Indian Ocean

25 May Last Post Ceremony AB Russell Rockleigh Garner
HMAS Nizam, Australia

Meeting Dates & Locations

Tables are normally booked for drinks and lunch in the host club from 1200 prior to the meeting.

7 May	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	
	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>1100</i>
	<i>General Meeting</i>	<i>1330</i>
4 Jun	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	
	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>1100</i>
	<i>General Meeting</i>	<i>1330</i>
6 Aug	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	
	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>1100</i>
	<i>General Meeting</i>	<i>1330</i>
3 Sep	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	
	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>1100</i>
	<i>General Meeting</i>	<i>1330</i>
1 Oct	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	
	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>1100</i>
	<i>General Meeting</i>	<i>1330</i>
5 Nov	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	
	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>1100</i>
	<i>General Meeting</i>	<i>1330</i>

Social Program



Fish 'n Chips held at Snapper & Co.
(Club)
N. Alumba ACT 2600

21 May	Fish 'n Chips	1200
	<i>Canberra Yacht Club (Snapper & Co)</i>	
18 Jun	Fish 'n Chips	1200
	<i>Canberra Yacht Club (Snapper & Co)</i>	
2 Jul	Christmas in July	1200
	<i>Eastlakes Footy Club Gungahlin</i>	
16 Jul	Fish 'n Chips	1200
	<i>Canberra Yacht Club (Snapper & Co)</i>	
20 Aug	Fish 'n Chips	1200
	<i>Canberra Yacht Club (Snapper & Co)</i>	

Bev Joce
Social Secretary

Committee & General Meeting Minutes (ACT Section) - 2 April 2026

Attendees: David Manolas, Darren Rush, Alaric O'Neill, Peter Cooke-Russell, Dennis Lyons.

Apologies: Alex McGown & Peter Cooke-Russell.

Committee Meeting opened at 11:10

1. Secretary's Report

Defence Attache names received UK & Canadian High Commissions and offers of Honorary Membership sent.

Correspondence In

WA Section table top flag displays.

Australian War Widows.

Naval Historical Society.

National Secretary (NAA)

2. Treasurer's Report

Current finances are stable ("solvent").

Year-on-year financial position is stable.

4. Membership Report

Apologies

4. General Business

Letter to be sent to Suzanne Orr MLA (Minister for Seniors & Veterans) re: HMAS Canberra Memorial funding.

.Meeting closed at 11:50

General Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Committee, Graeme Quinn, Alan Masters, Pauline Gribble, Heather Milward, Tony Vickers & Stewart Gordon.

Visitors: Sue Lyons.

Apologies: Veronica Heard, Sue Wheeler, Kate Reid-Smith, Bev Joce & Joe Slaats.

Meeting opened at 13:05

Official consent obtained to record proceedings for minutes

1. Recital of the Odes

Naval Ode, Ode to the Naval Veteran, and the Ode of Remembrance.

2. Birthday Congratulations for April

Alaric O'Neill.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

Reference to minutes of March 2026 (published in February "Bosun's Call" Newsletter).

No questions or issues raised; motion to accept:

Mover: Alan

Seconder: Alaric

Passed by all in favour.

5. President's Report

Congratulations to Alaric O'Neill on receiving the Emergency Services Medal (ASM) for his contribution during the 2022 Bushfires.

Update on request for assistance with funding for H M A S Canberra Memorial (traffic control costs).

Reminder of schedule for ANZAC March and Tingara Association invited to join NAA contingent.

6. Vice President's Report

Apologies

7. Secretary's Report

Further to Honorary Members tabled at AGM, the names of the new UK & Canadian Defence Attaches have been received from their respective High Commissions and letters have been sent extending an invitation to Col Brown (Canada) and Air Cdre Warmerdam (UK).

Correspondence In

Offer to purchase from WA Section table top flag displays.

Invitation for NAA (ACT) President to attend ANZAC Service from Australian War Widows.

Naval Historical Society advertising National Maritime Museum exhibitions.

Letter from National Secretary (NAA) regarding Grant opportunities.

8. Treasurer's Report

No significant updates, Section remains solvent.

9. Membership Report

Apologies

9. General Meeting Reports

Motion to accept reports:

Mover: Dennis

Seconder: Alaric

Carried.

10. General Business

International Fleet Review - although advised that the assembly of ships 21 March 2026 would not be considered a Fleet Review, an inspection was in fact conducted by the Governor-General so the title of Fleet Review stands.

Awaiting further clarification on the ESORT Peak Body with regards to what, where and how.

Defence Estate Review - concerns raised over the Memorial to Junior Recruits located at HMAS Leeuwin and how it will be affected by the sale of Defence property.

Temporary delegation of duties (Alex McGown - Vice President & Welfare) during his absence.

Meeting closed at: 13:35

Next Meeting: 7 May 2026.

In this issue

Page 3 April Committee Meeting Minutes

Page 3 April General Meeting Minutes

Page 4 VALE Peter Cooke-Russell

Page 6 ANZAC Message from CDF

Page 7 DVA - Improved Claim Process

Page 8 DVA Contact Information

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

May Birthday List

Alan Masters
Brian Warren
Dennis Lyons
Alex McGown
Stewart Gordon

VALE - Mr Peter Cooke-Russell

In my capacity as the National President of the Naval Association of Australia (NAA) it is my solemn duty to advise that our much loved and respected NAA colleague Mr Peter Cooke-Russell, 'Crossed the Bar' at his Canberra home on Wednesday 29 April 2026.

For all within the NAA he was an oracle on all matters pertaining to the history and functioning of our Association, and the history of our Parent Service, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). He was a most trusted friend and mentor to all within the NAA wherein he was an Icon of all that we espouse. Details of the Funeral Service here in Canberra will be advised in due course.

Some Background Career Information: The impetus of his service to the NAA is undoubtedly borne of his long-term service in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). His sense of allegiance to the Navy and those who have served, manifested itself so admirably within both entities.

All who shared and benefited from his camaraderie and advocacy work have found him to be someone of impeccable personal qualities, possessing a heightened sense of integrity, honesty, loyalty, trustworthiness and, that he gave of himself in a totally selfless and unconditional manner in all that he undertook in the service of others.



Peter Cooke-Russell (far right) at the Last Post Ceremony for Teddy Sheean (AWM 2020)

Mr Peter Cooke-Russell's Naval Career and NAA Service:

Peter was born in Neutral Bay, Sydney NSW on 21st February 1939, he joined the RAN on 25th January 1955. His naval training began at the RAN College in Flinders Naval Depot VIC 1955-56, then in 1957-58 in the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth UK and in 1981, he attended the joint Services Staff College in Canberra. Postings to sea included HM Australian Ships SWAN, WARRAMUNGA,

BARCOO, QUIBERON, PARRAMATTA, MELBOURNE, Commanding Officer of HMA Ships ATTACK, STUART, DIAMANTINA and COOK. Peter completed full-time service in February 1988. Then followed a myriad of RAN Reserve postings until he transferred to the RAN Retired List in 2001.

Peter's service in the NAA began in 1995, and thereafter he has provided exemplary service to the Association, Kindred Veteran Agencies and the editing of Historical Accounts prior to publication.

Positions he held included:

- Federal Secretary 1996-2002
- Secretary Joint Consultative Group Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) 1998-2000
- NAA ACT Section Newsletter 'The Bosuns Call' Editor 1996-2025
- Federal Public Officer 1999-2002
- NAA Representative to National Kindred Organization Committee (KOC) 1997-2014
- NAA National President's Representative to Battle of Australia National Commemorative Council 1999-2015
- Federal Membership Registrar 2002-2017
- National Secretary 2002-2008, 2016-2019
- National Public Officer 2002-2026
- National Vice-President 2008-2011
- NAA Representative to Veteran's Indemnity and Training Association (VITA) 2006
- VITA Secretary 2006-2026
- Vice President National KOC 2012-2014
- Secretary NAA White Ensign Management Committee 2006-2011
- Membership Registrar NAA ACT Section 2009-2010, 2016-2026
- Vice President NAA ACT Section 2007-2008, 2012 and 2013
- President NAA ACT Section 2009-2012 and 2014-2016
- NAA ACT Section Committee Member 2016-2026
- Vice President KOC Canberra 2020-2026

Key NAA Advocacy Achievements in which Peter had a pivotal role included:

- DVA's recognising the connection between the presence of Agent Orange matter resulting from the desalination process undertaken by HMA Ships anchored in Vung Tau Harbour during the Vietnam War and the onset of Cancer later in the lives of so many naval and other Veterans

- The prolonged campaign to attain parity with Army for Medallion Recognition of Service by Naval Personnel serving at sea as part of the RAN's commitment to the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR)

National and NAA Awards Received:

- The Centenary Medal in 2001
- NAA Diploma of Merit 2009
- NAA Life Membership 2014
- NAA Meritorious Service Medal 2018

Editing Assistance Provided in the Publications of Naval History Books included:

- 2004-2006 In collaboration with NAA Member Mr Ken Cartwright, 'We Were Cadet Midshipman'
- 2020-2025 In collaboration with Mr Hector Donohue and Mike Turner, 'Australian Minesweepers at War' by H. Donohue and M. Turner and, United and Undaunted: the first 100 years: a history of diving in the Royal Australian Navy 1911-2011', by E.W. Linton and H. Donohue.



Peter Cooke-Russell (far right) at CN's Reception (ADFA 2023)

In addition to Peter's extensive contributions, he had fulfilled the duties of Editor of the indispensable monthly NAA ACT Newsletter, 'The Bosun's Call' from its inception in 1996. In compiling this informative newsletter, he would reach out to Department of Veterans' Affairs, Government and Ministerial Offices and overseas agencies for relevant information and 'articles of interest' to NAA Members and where possible, attain a wider distribution within the Ex-Services Organisation (ESO) readership, Veterans and Government officers.



Peter Cooke-Russell (second from right) at HMAS Canberra Memorial (ACT 2022)

Early in 2024, in addition to The ACT Section Bosun's Call Newsletter, a national publication known as the 'NAA National Bosun's Call' was added to his editorial responsibilities. This has been a very effective and timely means of conveying important and topical information nationally within the Association by hard-copy and electronically. This is particularly helpful where we find that not all members are able to attend meetings and therein it is their means of remaining in touch with Veteran Affairs Issues and 'their Association', the NAA. The effect it has on combatting the detrimental impact of isolation cannot be underestimated.

After 29 years as The Editor, Peter has facilitated a seamless hand-over in December 2025, to a very competent and eager replacement so that this link with our members can be maintained into the future. At a time when we hear so much spoken of veteran's welfare and wellbeing, here we speak not just of some pages taking the form of a newsletter but rather, a most effective means of kinship by which the NAA seeks to identify ourselves and is testament to our efforts to foster and sustain camaraderie with our members on a national basis. The positive effects achieved through Peter's diligence and resourcefulness in producing this newsletter arguably makes this one of his most profound and poignant achievements.

VALE our dearest friend and champion,

Yours aye,

David Manolas
National President



One hundred and eleven years ago, on April 25, 16,000 Australians and New Zealanders landed on the beaches of what we now call Anzac Cove.

For many of them, this was their first time away from home, a chance for a great adventure.

By the next morning, 2000 of them had been killed or injured. By the end of the Gallipoli campaign, more than 8000 Australians had been killed and almost 18,000 injured.

Like many Australian families, my family has a deep personal connection with Gallipoli, as both my wife and I have relatives who fought there.

Corporal Charles Fenton Robinson, my grandfather, landed at Anzac Cove as part of the afternoon wave with the rest of 14 Battalion. He would fight at Gallipoli until October, before going on to face the horrors of the Western Front. Despite being wounded, he would survive the war and return to his home and family.

Private John William Best, my wife's great-uncle, was less fortunate. Sadly, at just 18 years old, he would be among those killed in 1st Battalion during the August Offensive. With no known grave, he is among the more than 4900 servicemen who died in the Anzac area, or were buried at sea off Gallipoli, commemorated by the Lone Pine Memorial.

Private Best is one of more than 103,000 Australians who have given their lives in service to our nation. Sons and daughters, mothers and

fathers, partners and friends who never returned home.

Many more would suffer and sacrifice, and return home with scars and wounds – physical and mental – that would affect them long after their service.

Gallipoli stands tall in the Australian consciousness, alongside other names such as Villers-Bretonneux, Tobruk, Kokoda, the Coral Sea, Kapyong, Long Tan, Timor and Uruzgan.

And, today, the men and women of the Australian Defence Force continue to serve and protect our nation, both at home and abroad.

They serve as peacekeepers in the Middle East, South Sudan and Korea. They are deployed on operations from the Indo-Pacific to Europe. They support Australian communities during crises and natural disasters.

And, importantly, they are the stewards of the long and proud legacy that was born on the beaches of Türkiye 111 years ago.

Anzac Day is a time for all Australians to come together and reflect upon the memory and sacrifice of all those who have served our nation.

Together, we honour them.

We remember them.

Lest we forget.



20 April 2026

In just under 3 months the veterans' compensation system will be easier to navigate.

The current three Act system will be simplified so that all new compensation and rehabilitation claims lodged on or after Wednesday 1 July 2026 will be determined under a single ongoing Act – an improved version of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA).

As part of the transition from 3 Acts to one, the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related claims) Act 1988 (DRCA) will close to new compensation and rehabilitation claims on Tuesday 30 June 2026.

Veterans can be assured that under 'grandparenting' arrangements payments already being received before 1 July 2026 will continue uninterrupted and be indexed as normal.

There is an exception for [clients receiving DRCA incapacity payments](#), who will transition to the more generous MRCA incapacity payments from 1 July 2026.

The move to the improved MRCA as the single ongoing Act will also see eligibility for various entitlements that had operated differently across the 3 Acts standardised from 1 July.

As part of this transition [clients with open VEA and DRCA rehabilitation plans](#) will move to the MRCA from 1 July 2026, while students receiving [support under the VEA will transfer to the MRCA education scheme](#).

While DVA cannot provide individualised claims advice, a range of resources are available on the DVA website to help the veteran community understand the changes from 1 July.

This includes:

- more than 20 fact sheets and summaries for particular groups, including VEA veterans and their partners, DRCA veterans, and the children of veterans
- scenarios that demonstrate how the improved MRCA may impact individual circumstances
- frequently asked questions

Help is also available to make a claim. You can:

- use MyService to lodge your claim
- request an online or in person meeting with a Claims Lodgement Assistant
- request a 1-1 appointment with a Veteran Support Officer
- visit a DVA office or VAN location in your state or territory
- find a free, trained and qualified advocate near you via the DVA Advocacy Register at <https://www.advocateregister.org.au>.

The Making a Claim guide is available on DVA's website at www.dva.gov.au/claimguide.

You can also call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or email primary.claims@dva.gov.au.



Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs

DVA Contact Numbers

Provider invoicing & billing enquiries: 1300 550 017

Provider enquiries: 1800 550 457

Transport bookings: 1800 550 455

Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre (VAPAC): 1800 552 580

Hearing or speech impairment assistance

If you are deaf, or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service (NRS):

Talk To You (TTY) users phone 1800 555 677 then ask for 1800 838 372

Speak and Listen users phone 1800 555 727 then ask for 1800 838 372

Internet relay users connect to the NRS then ask for 1800 838 372

Information on health services may be obtained from DVA. The contact numbers for health care pro-viders requiring further information or prior financial authorisation for all States and Territories are listed below:

TELEPHONE: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

INTERNATIONAL CALLERS: +61 2 6289 1133

POSTAL ADDRESS FOR ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES:

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Health Approvals & Home Care Section

GPO Box 9998

BRISBANE QLD 4001

DVA WEBSITE: <http://www.dva.gov.au/providers/allied-healthprofessionals>

DVA EMAIL: For prior financial authorisation: health.approval@dva.gov.au

The appropriate prior approval request form can be found at: <https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/servicesrequiring-prior-approval>

CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT

For information about claims for payment visit: www.dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim

CLAIM ENQUIRIES: 1300 550 017 (Option 2 Allied Health)

Claims will take a variety of times to complete based on whether or not the claim is prioritised for allocation to a decision maker and the complexity of the claim itself. For example, if the service of the individual crosses two or more Acts or contains a lot of health conditions and injuries or both. This results in some claims being decided faster than the average time, while some claims take longer.

For any condition, to make the claiming process smoother, follow these 3 steps:

- Step 1: Get your medical practitioner to con-firm your diagnosis.
- Step 2: Supply the documents you need to;
- Step 3: Check if you are already eligible for free health care and treatment.

CLAIMS PROGRESS

As at 31 October 2025, DVA had 89,597 claims on hand, comprised of 22,820 unallocated claims and 66,777 claims being processed.

In the financial year to date (FYTD) (1 July 2025 to 31 October 2025):

DVA received 39,032 claims

DVA made 36,099 determinations

For all claims on hand including older claims being processed the average TTTP for MRCA IL was 333 days, up from 304 days in the previous FYTD. The median TTTP was 271 days.

There have already been some significant improvements in processing timeframes for new IL claims received and determined within the last 12 months.

For claims received within the last 12 months, the average TTTP for MRCA IL was 110 days. The median TTTP was 96 days.

OPEN ARMS

Veterans & Families Counselling

Open Arms provides mental health and wellbeing support to anyone who has served at least one day of continuous fulltime service in the ADF and their immediate families.

1800 011 046

SAFE ZONE SUPPORT

Free and anonymous counselling line for all current and ex-serving ADF personnel, veterans and their families. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

1800 142 072

DEFENCE FAMILY HELPLINE

Available 24/7 or online at www.defence.gov.au/members-families/defence-helpline.asp. Staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

1800 628 036

DEFENCE ALL HOURS SUPPORT LINE

24/7 confidential telephone service for Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families to facilitate access to ADF or civilian mental health services.

1800 628 036