

VETERANS RETREATS OF WA INC

# MEENTHEENA

Address: 515 Rowley Road, Forrestdale WA 6112..

Website: [www.vrwa-meentheena.org](http://www.vrwa-meentheena.org)

Incorporated in Western Australia: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2010

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## Meentheena Newsletter December 2022



*During the Holiday Season more than ever, our thoughts turn gratefully to those who have made our progress possible. And in this spirit we sincerely say Thank You and Best Wishes for the holiday season and a Happy New Year!*

Welcome to the Veterans Retreats of W.A. Inc. (Meentheena) December newsletter. Well, what a year it has been! There was a steady stream of visitors throughout the cooler months. A very big thank you to all of our volunteers who either camp hosted or did maintenance work around the camp.

Our AGM was held at Cockburn RSL, 73 Frederick St Hamilton Hill WA on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at 11am. This was attended by 29 members and a new Committee was elected. We would like to thank everyone for their support & encourage you to attend future meetings with the same enthusiasm.

President: John Schnaars OAM

Vice President: Mark Newnham

Treasurer: Les McGoldrick (is very capable of looking after the finances & has done so admirably since 2015)

Secretary: Barb Whyte (is responsible for correspondence & keeping members up to date with camp events via the newsletter)

Committee: Warren Jacka, Barry Boyle, Peter Whyte, Terry Corkhill, Gary Fernihough, (Camp Host Co-ordinator)

Thank you to outgoing Committee and welcome to the new Committee.

We expect to keep our members up to date with newsletters letting you know the progress of the Association. If members have any interesting news or articles to share, please send to the Office of VRWA [veteransretreats.wa.inc@gmail.com](mailto:veteransretreats.wa.inc@gmail.com)

Depending on the outcome of negotiations with the Nyamal People (Native Title holders) a general meeting would be held to let members know the future of the camp. As we don't know what the future holds for the Retreat until we have been given more information, our camp will continue to function during 2023. At present there is no time frame for what is happening.

### **Camp Hosts**

**Gary Fernihough** is our co-ordinator for 2023. He thanked all the volunteers who gave up their time to carry out the camp duties required by camp hosts while at Meentheena.

At present Trevor Taylor

29<sup>th</sup> Dec. -12<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2023 –Mark Newnham

12<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2023 onwards- Trevor Taylor

If you can help us with hosting after the above dates, can you please book the dates you are available? Contact Gary Fernihough, [gary.fernihough@bigpond.com](mailto:gary.fernihough@bigpond.com)

### **Secretary's Report**

This year as Secretary, I have been presented with many challenges especially in computing skills. Thank you to all the 2022 committee, Derek Phillips (my mentor), & Bob Horgan for your guidance, support & patience in answering all my questions to get correct information, so that I could communicate with the members via the newsletters & phone. Thank you also to the members for your patience, understanding & feedback when I made mistakes sending emails.

### **President's Report**

Another year has slipped by in record time. Although there have been some problems getting camp hosts, our team has managed with many calls to everyone. On behalf of VRWA, I spent a lot of time talking with Nyamal people, but was not able to attend the meeting with Warren, Peter & Barb. Thank you to Barb for taking on the secretary's job, to all committee & members who at different times travelled to Meentheena for maintenance or establishment work over the past years. This has made it a special place to go & relax. My wife Jan & daughter are now Australian citizens who along with my family have supported me all the way. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas, a safe & Happy New Year. John Schnaars OAM.

Peter Fitzpatrick (our Patron) wishes all members a happy Christmas & a prosperous New Year.

## Derek Phillips

RAAFA has been providing "Above & Beyond" services since 1929. A not-for-profit organisation committed to creating communities open to all, it has become one of WA's largest & most trusted Retirement Living & Residential Care providers.

To find out more about how you too can support our veterans, and RAAFA's services go to <https://www.raafawa.org.au>



This article about Derek Phillips was published in the RAAFA magazine in November 2022. He has given permission to publish it here for members to read. He is truly an amazing man and a life member of VRWA.

Derek Phillips OAM spent 15 years in the Royal Australian Navy, but it is perhaps the voluntary work he undertook for various veteran causes in his later years that he found particularly rewarding.

"I have been involved in several service organisations for many years, in particular in veterans' health and suicide prevention strategies," says Derek, who lived at Erskine Grove

for over 20 years, before moving to McNamara Lodge at Meadow Springs just over 6 months ago.

"RAAFA was extremely helpful in assisting us to set up the retreat; I've been several times and am very proud of what we achieved."

Born on 8 June 1937 in Plymouth England, Derek was just two years old when WWII began.

He was evacuated to Dartmoor with his older sister for three years during the war, in which time his father, who was a member of the British Navy, was serving in Madagascar.

After his dad returned home in 1945, the family moved to Cornwall and Derek attended grammar school in Penzance after winning a highly sought-after scholarship.

But even after doing well in his exams, 16-year-old Derek was keen to follow in his father's footsteps, joining the British Royal Navy himself at 16 years old, after which he was sent to Portsmouth and then on to Weatherby near York for training, and then on to HMS Drake Barracks in Plymouth.

"Soon after however, my parents decided to emigrate to Australia and, although I was locked into the Navy, I could apply for a transfer, which I did. I was then accepted into the Australian Navy and was sent 'down under' on a troop ship from Liverpool.

"I spent my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday on the ship as we sailed towards the southern hemisphere which took six weeks, and I ended up in Hong Kong where I eventually was able to get on HMS Defender and sail into Sydney on 28 October 1954.

"I'll never forget entering Sydney Harbour that sunny day; I was so struck by how beautiful the city was."

Derek subsequently went on to travel all around the world with the Navy during a 15-year career, which saw him involved in the Vietnam war and the Malayan campaign, and also spend time in New Guinea and the naval base on Manus Island.

However, when his son was born with disabilities, Derek opted for a voluntary discharge, and went on to buy a restaurant in Fremantle where he built up a thriving business.

"For me personally, Remembrance Day isn't quite as significant as ANZAC Day," says Derek, who was based at Lewin Barracks in Fremantle for the last two years of his naval career.

"I remember the tradition of Remembrance Day quite vividly as a child in England, and I can clearly remember Plymouth being bombed during the early 1940s and being taken down to the air raid shelter with my family, where we would often have to stay throughout the night.

"Remembrance Day really does give us an opportunity to acknowledge the courage and sacrifice of those who served their country. By remembering all who served, we can recognise the sacrifices that were made so that we can live in peace."

Like other RAAFA facilities and estates, McNamara Lodge held a Remembrance Day ceremony on 11 November, at 11.00am.

"I was honoured to be the founding secretary and treasurer of the veterans retreat we started out at Marble Bar, which is today known as Meentheena Veterans Retreat, a place where veterans can go to camp, fish, spend time in nature and generally destress.

"I know how important good mental health is to those who have served in the Australian military forces, as well as in other peace-keeping roles like the police, fire and rescue, ambulance officers and state emergency service volunteers.

### **Very Important.**

Membership fees (\$25) per annum are now due for the 2023 year and your continued support by renewing will be very much appreciated.

There is no need for existing members to fill out a membership form when renewing their membership for 2022.

You can direct credit to our bank account referencing your name:

**Australian Military Bank BSB: 642170 A/C: 100269533.**

Otherwise, payment can be made via a cheque to '**Veterans Retreat**'

Please forward your cheque to:

**The Office of VRWA**

**515 Rowley Road**

**Forrestdale WA 6112**

Please ensure a return name and address is on the reverse side of the envelope.

Please note that email is our preferred method of communication.

If your details have changed, please notify us so we can keep your records up to date and keep you in the loop.

If there is a spouse/partner or friend wishing to join, a membership form will need to be completed. It can be sent via post to the office address (as above) or via email to:

[veteransretreats.wa.inc@gmail.com](mailto:veteransretreats.wa.inc@gmail.com)

The new membership form can be downloaded from the website:

[www.vrwa-meentheena.org](http://www.vrwa-meentheena.org)

A little bit of wisdom to finish the year 2022.

The best times in our lives were not about what we had, but who we were with.

You can drink a drink but can't food a food!

Best wishes always,

Barb Whyte

