



AUSTRALIAN NURSES MEMORIAL CENTRE

SUMMER 2025 Newsletter

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF THE ANMC

31 October 2025

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who attended the morning tea hosted by Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria, at Government House. Your presence and support made this momentous occasion truly special as we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Australian Nurses Memorial Centre (ANMC).

In her address, the Governor honoured Australia's wartime nurses and reflected on the ANMC's enduring legacy of supporting nurses and midwives. We are deeply grateful to Her Excellency for her kind words and for her ongoing commitment to the ANMC's mission. The ANMC President, Dr Elizabeth Lavender, expressed sincere thanks to the Governor and the staff at Government House for their warm hospitality, acknowledging the privilege of continuing the important work laid out by the Centre's founders.

Around 120 guests, including family members of wartime nurses, alumni, life members, donors, and colleagues, gathered to celebrate this significant milestone. It was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect, reflect, and celebrate the Centre's rich history and ongoing contributions to the nursing and midwifery communities.

Thank you again to everyone for your continued support, and we look forward to the next chapter in the ANMC's journey.



Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC.
ANMC Board Members,
Family members of the Australian Army Nurses from the SS Vyner Brooke and AHS Centaur.





LAST POST SERVICE

Honouring Australian nurses

On 2 November, the ANMC were honoured to participate in the Last Post Service at the Shrine, commemorating Australian nurses who served from the Boer War to the present day. Dr Susan Lee laid the wreath, and ANMC President, Dr Elizabeth Lavender recited The Oath during this moving ceremony.

Members of the Heritage Committee, along with families, were also in attendance, marking a significant moment of remembrance and respect for the sacrifices made by the nurses. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the team at the Shrine of Remembrance for inviting us to be part of such a beautiful ceremony.



75th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ANMC

Monday, 17 November 2025

The 75th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Australian Nurses Memorial Centre (ANMC) was held in person at 5:30 pm, chaired by Dr. Elizabeth Lavender, President. The meeting was attended by 16 members, marking another significant moment in the Centre's ongoing journey.

It was a moment of mixed emotions as we farewelled Dr. Beverley Wood from the Board. Dr. Wood has been a dedicated member of the ANMC Board since 2018 and has made an outstanding contribution, particularly in her previous role as Chair of the Scholarship Committee. While Dr. Wood will not renominate for the Board, she will continue her valuable involvement with both the Heritage and Scholarship Committees.



We are grateful for her unwavering commitment and the incredible work she has done during her time on the Board. Her dedication and passion for the ANMC's mission have been truly remarkable, and although she is stepping down from her Board position, she will always remain an important part of the ANMC family. We thank Dr. Beverly Wood for her exceptional service and look forward to her continued involvement with the Centre.



REMEMBRANCE DAY

11 November 2025

On Remembrance Day 11 November 2025, Emeritus Professor Maxine Duke attended a commemorative ceremony at the Repatriation Hospital Heidelberg on behalf of the ANMC. Maxine had the honour of unveiling a plaque dedicated to nurses who served that will accompany the newly created 'Nurses Walk' that has been established at the hospital. The ceremony also marked the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Australian Nursing Corps and provided an opportunity to acknowledge the courage, service and sacrifice of nurses who cared for others in times of conflict, often at great personal risk. It was a respectful and significant occasion, reinforcing the enduring contribution of nurses to the community and the profession.



COMMEMORATION OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSES

Sunday, 21 September 2025

The Festal Choral Evensong at Christ Church South Yarra was a truly remarkable service, with a wonderful turnout to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the courageous Australian army nurses captured after the fall of Singapore. It was a deeply moving occasion, and an honour to be part of such a significant historical moment. The service captured the spirit of remembrance and gratitude, and we hope to continue honouring these brave nurses, ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten.

The choir's beautiful performance of the *Captives Hymn* and Ms. Emily Malone's heartfelt talk about the nurses' experiences of suffering, survival, and release added a powerful dimension to the service. Family, friends, and ANMC Directors lit candles in remembrance of the nurses lost, including those on the *Viner Brooke* and Radji Beach.

We offer sincere thanks to Rev. Josephine Quinlan for officiating, to Michael Fulcher and the choir for their moving musical contribution, and to Rev. John Balldock and Mr. Rob Malone for their vital roles in bringing this service to life. Special recognition goes to Mr. Malone for his dedication in coordinating the event and ensuring this important commemoration came to fruition.





ANMC SCHOLARSHIPS 2026

The scholarship application period, which closed on 31 August 2025, saw an impressive outpouring of talent, with a total of 117 applications received. Of these, 74 were for coursework programs, such as master's degrees, and 43 were for research-focused opportunities. This remarkable response reflects the growing interest in our scholarships and the calibre of candidates we attract. Each application underwent a thorough and rigorous review process, resulting in 25 applicants being selected for interviews, with 16 of them being exceptional PhD candidates. We are thrilled with the high level of excellence demonstrated across all applications.

A huge congratulations to the 18 successful candidates! We look forward to seeing the exciting work and groundbreaking research that will emerge from these bright minds in the coming years. A heartfelt thank you goes to our dedicated selection panel, whose expertise and swift work ensured a smooth and fair process. Special appreciation to the scholarship panel who went above and beyond to contribute to the review and shortlisting process. Their commitment, alongside the overall quality of applicants, truly highlights the success of this year's scholarship cycle.

FUNDRAISING FOR ANMC

You can contribute in two ways: Donate through the Container for Change Recycling Scheme or by purchasing the 'Sister in Captivity Book' by Colin Burgess.

1. Container for Change Recycling Scheme

The Container for Change is a program where 10 cents is paid for every empty drink container (like cans and bottles) returned. It's a great way to help the environment, and now, you can also help ANMC at the same time!

How you can get involved

- Register an account with Containers for Change in your area:

- **Queensland & WA residents:** Sign up for Containers for Change [here](#) to start recycling and earn refunds on your containers. Select either QLD or WA.

- **Victoria & Tasmania residents:** You can still make a difference by donating your containers. Simply download the Zone Operator App (scroll to the bottom of the page and choose Zone base on your location) to get started.



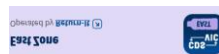


AUSTRALIAN NURSES MEMORIAL CENTRE

- Start collecting your drink containers and bottles at home or work.
- Drop them off at a local recycling station.
- Donate the refund to the ANMC by simply using our registered ID number when returning containers
- **ANMC Organisation Member Number** (*Queensland & Western Australia*)



CDS Vic is made up of 3 zones, North, East and West. Each zone is managed by a different operator



AUSTRALIAN NURSES MEMORIAL CENTRE

Education

We are currently registered as a donor partner in QLD, WA, TAS, VIC North. We are currently navigating the process of registering for the other regions.

(Purchasing a copy of *Sisters in Captivity* is much easier!)

Sisters in Captivity Book written by Colin Burgess

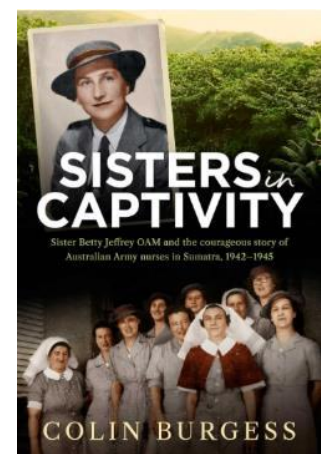
We are proud to share *Sisters in Captivity*, the incredible account of Sister Betty Jeffrey OAM and the Australian wartime nurses who survived the bombing of the SS Vyner Brooke in February 1942. After spending three years in Japanese prison camps in Sumatra, Betty's secret diary became the basis for the book *White Coolies*, which later inspired the film *Paradise Road*.

Purchasing a copy of this book will greatly support the ANMC, and we are pleased to acknowledge the author's contribution by ensuring that both the author and ANMC share in the success of preserving this vital history.

You can purchase the book from online stores:

- Amazon
- Booktopia
- Dymocks
- Angus & Robertson

Special thanks to the talented author, Collin Burgess, for his part in preserving this vital history. We are so grateful for your contribution, and we look forward to more amazing stories yet to come.





21 HEARTS

‘Vivian Bullwinkel and the Nurses of the Vyner Brooke Production’

Written by Jenny Davis

A powerful WWII true story honouring the courage, strength, and hope of Australian Army Nurses. The play focuses on Vivian Bullwinkel,

one of 65 nurses who survived a Japanese bombing while fleeing Singapore in 1942. After enduring horrific events on Banka Island, Vivian was the sole survivor of a massacre where 22 nurses were executed. The play highlights the nurses' resilience, humour, and bravery, while honouring their memory beyond the tragedy they faced.



Featuring six of WA's top actors, *21 Hearts* is a story of hope, courage, and the human spirit, reminding us of the futility of war. They will be going on tour in 2026 – don't miss this production, which will leave you laughing, crying, and deeply moved by the resilience and bravery of all those nurses.

If you're in Victoria, you can catch the *21 Hearts* in Ballarat with two sessions available: on 10th July 2026, *11am and 7pm*. Tickets are on sale now! Click here to get your tickets:

[21 Hearts Ballarat](#)

21 Hearts National Tour 2026 -

Date	Location
4 July	Renmark (SA)
10 July	Ballarat (VIC)
15 July	Albury (NSW)
18 July	Bathurst (NSW)
22 July	ESK (QLD)
25 July	Caloundra (QLD)

Some members of the ANMC have purchased tickets and will be travelling to Ballarat for the 11am performance on Friday 10th July. Vline train departs Melbourne every 35 minutes. Relax on the train for the hour and a half journey to Ballarat. Enjoy the performance, (bring tissues) then join us for lunch before the journey back to Melbourne. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Liz in the office.



Courage be my Friend by Jenny Davis

"The nation has recently honoured Vivian Bullwinkel by erecting a statue of her at the Australian War Memorial, and now THEATRE 180 is similarly honouring her life and legacy in this new play and book. The courage, perseverance, selflessness and sisterhood displayed by Vivian and all of the nurses involved in this truly amazing, emotional story should be long remembered. I do wish Jenny Davis all the very best in bringing this story to younger readers. It is a particularly sensitive tale of women involved in an appalling, brutal war, but it is also one of their indomitable spirit when they had to endure more than three years of starvation, illness, disease and the declining health and even death of their nursing colleagues under the callous watch of an uncaring enemy". **Colin Burgess, author of 'Sisters in Captivity', published in 2023 by Simon and Schuster.**



WELCOME OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER

It is a great pleasure that we welcome distinguished Adjunct Associate Professor Judith Reeves to the Board.

Judy Reeves is the Director of Nursing Education and Professional Development at Alfred Health and has held this Nursing Executive position at Alfred Health since October 2019. She was previously the Director of Nursing at Sandringham Hospital and the Clinical Service Director for Paediatrics, Alfred Health for 10 years. During this time, she spent a year as the acting Director of the Alfred Foundation. Her longstanding interests include leadership, staff development, team dynamics in health settings, leading change in clinical practice and developing philanthropic scholarships to advance nursing practice. Judy is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Adjunct Associate Professor at Deakin, Monash and La Trobe universities.



ANMC office will be closed for the Christmas and New Year from 23 December to 5th January 2026. During this time, emails and calls will not be monitored. We look forward to connecting with you in the new year. Thank you for your support throughout 2025. Wishing you a safe and joyful holiday season!



‘OUR NURSES’ POEM written by EDWINA SMITH

Edwina Smith, born in Broken Hill in 1961, grew up in Geelong, Victoria. She trained as a nurse at The Geelong Hospital (1979-1982) before working in various roles in Canberra, Sydney, and later, specialising in Maternal/Child Health and Lactation Consulting. Her experiences living on farms and her deep connection with nature have inspired her poetry, some of which can be found online.

The idea for the poem ‘Our Nurses’ came unexpectedly to Edwina and was a departure from her usual writing style. The poem pays tribute to the courage and resilience of Australian nurses, particularly those involved in the Bangka Island Massacre during WWII. Through her research, Edwina learned of the unimaginable suffering these nurses endured and how the full story had been suppressed for years. She felt compelled to give these women, particularly Vivian Bullwinkel, a voice and to honour their sacrifices. The poem reflects both the high standard of nursing care and the tragic events faced by these women during the war.

Nursing those in need
A job that few can do
Sitting by a lamp
To share a yarn or two
Soothing fevered brows
Caring for the sick
A newborn’s lusty cry
Make our nurses tick

Our nurses do us proud
Since Australia came to be
Serving both in peacetime
Or in wars across the sea
Diligent on duty
In many fields of care
Earning great respect
No matter when, or where

Then came another war
Different from the last
Battles edging closer
Advancing way too fast
An unfamiliar foe
Lethal with a gun
Unfurling flags of terror
That showed a Rising Sun

Danger all around
No longer safe to stay
Aboard the Vyner Brooke
They tried to sail away
Bombs fell, the vessel sank
But hope was just in reach
Those that could, hoped they would
Land on Radji beach

An Island paradise?
Perhaps in better times
Now a sickening scene
Of heinous, wicked crimes
A tyranny of horror
Waiting to unfold
What our nurses suffered
Was never fully told

Courage to the end
Stoic and strong willed
Forced into the water
Machine gunned, and were killed
When all the firing ceased
No one would survive
Except for one alone
Who was very much alive

Sand wore her heavy steps
A weary, wounded tread
Across a beach of sorrow
Her fellow sisters dead
Waves then gently lapped
Where their bodies lay
Washed away the blood
And swept them all away

Many years have passed
Since these dreadful crimes
It’s now a tranquil beach
A reminder of those times
Their resting place unknown
Somewhere out to sea
We’ll not forget our nurses
Wherever they may be.