



The Retired Ambulance Association Victoria Inc.

RAAV Wrap

May 2025 Vol. 5



President's introduction and welcome



At the instigation of AV Executive under Interim CEO Andrew CRISP, Joel MARLEY and his team at AV Community & Partner Engagement approached the Association in late 2024 to gain a better understanding of the history and purpose of TRAAVI.

The result of the initial discussions, Joel determined that TRAAVI's values were more aligned with People and Culture. As a result, we were introduced to Jesse MADDISON the newly appointed Executive Director of People and Culture.

Through the development of the MOU, we have worked closely with Jesse. His support, frank advice and guidance throughout these discussions has helped to rebuild and stabilise the relationship between TRAAVI and AV in the aftermath of COVID.

On Monday 19 May a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between The Retired Ambulance Association of Victoria Inc (TRAAVI) and Ambulance Victoria (AV) was signed by Steve MULLIGAN TRAAVI President and Anthony CARLYON Acting CEO of AV.

The MOU covers a period of four years, during which time AV contributes to the administration of the Association financially.

TRAAVI have approached both Monash University (Paramedic Health and Wellbeing Research Unit) and Phoenix Australia (Melbourne University) to conduct research/surveys to better understand and provide a "snapshot" of what physical, traumatic and mental health injuries have and are still effecting TRAAVI members. This now forms a key component within the MOU.

Deb STALLARD has been appointed as TRAAVI Welfare Co-ordinator. Several of the Volunteer Chaplains have joined TRAAVI. Many of whom have gladly accepted the role of Welfare Liaison and/or Chaplaincy within the District.

Gary Grant (former AV Senior Chaplain) continues in his role as Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy Advisor to the Association Committee.

AV People and Culture will consult with TRAAVI in relation to the RAFE Peer Support Program.

Graham DOUGLAS and our computer partners Computer Initiatives have over recent months updated our email system using the traavi.org.au domain. All District Co-ordinators and Welfare Liaisons have Association email addresses.

Key objectives being a simplified email address and importantly improving our cybersecurity. All TRAAVI business is now conducted using only the TRAAVI email domain.

For example, to email our Secretary or Treasurer it becomes secretary@traavi.org.au or treasurer@traavi.org.au

Our website remains as www.retiredambulancevictoria.org.au

Steve MULLIGAN.

M: 0418 331 984

E: president@traavi.org.au

Secretary's Report

It seems all too brief a time since we last put out our newsletter. I hope this correspondence finds you well after your Easter break. It's a time to reflect on family and friends and reflect on our goals for the coming months. Chris and I are hoping to head north to Queensland during the southern winter as so many Victorians do, whether that be for recreation, sporting engagements or just to relax in some better weather.

Graham Douglas has outlined the changes (below) which both our organisation and this newsletter has and is undergoing. We must be doing something right as we've not heard anything to the contrary.

Please, continue to enjoy our Association, but we welcome constructive criticism which may assist to make us even stronger for the future

I will endeavour to get out to some branch meeting, but as Graham has spoken of previously, some meetings schedules clash with each other which makes Committee representation difficult. I'll look at that for next year's events along with your coordinators.

As Steve has written about, we were able to secure a Memorandum of Understanding with AV. This is essential for our financial wellbeing and also, a key to us providing welfare and support for you, our members.

Jim Ballard

M: 0450 010 943

E: secretary@traavi.org.au

The Times Are A Changin'

Building on the foundations set by previous Executives & Committees of The Retired Ambulance Association of Victoria Inc. (the full name of the organisation as stipulated by Consumer Affairs Victoria) , has been evolving rapidly in the past 17 months.

With the aims of security, simplicity and accuracy Executive & the Committee of Management of The Retired Ambulance Association of Victoria Inc. have updated all administrative processes, documentation and the RAAVI website.

The prime driver for change is to allow us more time, as the Association grows, to focus on the aims of the organisation, put simply, the ongoing care & welfare of our members.

We have re-established close relationships with key industry organisations, namely AV & the VAU.

The Executive over recent months have negotiated and signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with Ambulance Victoria.

Studies investigating existing & emerging physical & mental health issues of retired officers and employees are to be established in partnership with Universities and mental health support organisations.

Partnerships with relevant service providers have been established, financial, legal, aged care, health & welfare advisors are listed on our website.

Free membership has been arranged (for TRAAVI members) to the BlueLight Card, which provides significant discounts on everyday purchases from widely known brands & supermarkets.

This fine Newsletter publication reports, amongst other news, on these changes as they evolve into the new iteration of the Association.

The Committee has unanimously approved formally renaming the Association publication "**The RAAVI Times**", or the short version.... **TRAAVI Times** reflecting our growth & transition to a new era for the RAAV(I).

With this edition we say farewell to the "**RAAV Wrap**" Newsletter.

The newsletter will be rebirthed as "**TRAAVI Times**" with the next edition.

Graham Douglas

Vice President.

M: 0450 319 111

E: vicepresident@traavi.org.au

New Members

We welcome all 18 new members to TRAAVI, we hope you enjoy all the friendship and camaraderie which our association is known for.

Departed Colleagues.

Please take a moment pause to reflect on those Members and Colleagues who have recently passed

Welfare

A warm hello and WOW...winter on its way!

Just a few words from Welfare and a thank you to a brilliant group of Co-Ordinator's who head our wonderful get-together groups.

They stand to organise lunches & day trips to keep us all together. Whether you get to attend or are just kept in touch with, these co-ordinators extend a welcome hand and will go above & beyond to make your care known.

I'm also honoured to be in touch with our amazing volunteer Chaplains all over our state. They are approachable, damn good listeners, and their "point of base" is to be there for us. If you need someone to talk to, have problems heard or a second opinion they are there.

As our lives change, so do situations and the chance to keep in touch is so important. Feel free to reach out. Know you are respected and cared for.

Also, your opinion counts...feel free to keep in touch!

Deb Stallard

M: 0425 707 736

E: welfare@traavi.org.au

How first responders are coping with PTSD and mental health tolls that come with saving lives



[Photo: After more than three decades volunteering as a lifesaver, Garry Meredith knows firsthand the toll saving lives can take.](#)

Drownings, fatal car crashes, and suicides are tragic events most of us hope never to have to encounter.

But for our first responders, attending life and death situations is a daily reality. Garry Meredith knows firsthand the toll saving lives can take on the mental health of emergency service workers.

"I always thought I'm one of the lucky ones because it didn't affect me ... and then, in the end, it did," he said.

Mr Meredith has spent more than three decades volunteering as a lifesaver, including time as a crew member onboard a jet boat and rescue helicopter on the far north coast of New South Wales.

"My first experience was an unconscious fellow at Shelly Beach [in Ballina] floating face down in the back of the break," he said.

"In the helicopter we were going to road crashes and body recoveries ... But I think what got to me the most was the suicides and shark attacks and probably resuscitation on kids.

"I didn't know much about PTSD until I was basically diagnosed with it."

Key points:

- 10 per cent of emergency service employees have probable PTSD compared to 4 per cent of the general population.
- Around one-fifth of emergency service workers have high levels of psychological stress
- An inquiry finds rural and regional first responders face additional pressures, such as working alone and shift fatigue

HIGH PREVALENCE OF PTSD AMONG FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr Meredith's experience is by no means an isolated one.

A recent parliamentary inquiry into the mental health of first responders found 10 per cent of employees have probable PTSD, compared to the general population which is estimated to be 4 per cent.

The Beyond Blue report cited in the inquiry also found more than a fifth of emergency service workers have high levels of psychological stress — almost three times the national average.

"What we do is not a normal job," firefighter Pat Jones wrote in his submission to the inquiry.

"We are there to help those Australians who are having the worst or last days of their life, and we do it because we care."

According to figures from the National Coronial Information System in 2015, one first responder takes his or her life every six weeks.



[Photo: A recent parliamentary inquiry into the mental health of first responders found 10 per cent of employees have probable PTSD.](#)

The actual number is estimated to be much higher, given that figure does not include part-time or volunteer emergency service workers, nor those who have retired or have been medically discharged.

The inquiry also found rural and regional first responders faced additional pressures not

experienced by their metropolitan counterparts.

These pressures include lower staffing levels, fatigue caused by shift work, community connections to patients or victims, working alone, and having less access to mental health services.

The inquiry made 14 recommendations including extensive data collection on the number of mental health injuries and suicide of first responders, as well as a national action plan on first responder mental health.

PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT A REGIONAL SOLUTION

Terry Mortimer has been a first responder for more than 40 years, with experience as a pilot and crew member onboard a rescue helicopter, as well as a lifesaver and firefighter.

He said one of the hardest parts of the job was dealing with failure.



"There's a lot of success, but there's a lot of failure too," he said.

[Photo: Former rescue helicopter pilot Terry Mortimer started a local catch-up for first responders in the Northern Rivers. \(Contributed\)](#)

"But it's not failure due to want, it's failure due to the extent of their injuries."

After dealing with his own struggles and witnessing those of colleagues and friends, Mr Mortimer decided to start an informal support group for first responders in the Northern Rivers.

He said the group met once or twice a month over a pub meal to catch up and check in with each other's wellbeing.

"What we're trying to do here is show people it's OK to be injured," he said.

"If they're suffering because there are different things that trigger them, even for anxiety and depression and things like that, there is a way out.

"I've found a lot of people only need somebody to say 'hey, it's OK'."

THE NEED TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS

Today is international PTSD awareness day.

It's a cause close to the heart of paramedic and musician Brendan Smoother who knows the importance of raising public awareness around the realities and mental health aspect of emergency service.

"If the broader public is aware of it, then it brings it out in the open and people don't have to feel ashamed about it," he said.

Mr Smoother said his songs like 'Paramedic Suicide' and 'Behind the Seen' were prompted by a growing awareness of colleagues who had been lost to suicide or damaged beyond the point of being able to return to work.

"We're exposed to trauma situations and not just the physical trauma that we do see, but there's all the emotional baggage that comes with that ... and it's prolonged and protracted over many, many years," he said.

"People probably don't think about it in their everyday lives until it's brought to their attention



Source Reference: ABC Northern NSW

IF YOU OR ANYONE YOU KNOW NEEDS HELP:

- [beyondblue](#) on 1300 22 4636
- [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14
- [Headspace](#) on 1800 650 890
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) on 1300 659 467

Just another perspective in this journey. Don't forget that if you're feeling triggered TRAAVI can provide assistance through our Chaplaincy and Welfare programmes, information available on our website. Ed

Wounded Heroes Australia.

Wounded Heroes Australia (WHA) are a small, registered charity that supports Veterans and their families during crisis situations. Such as those facing, financial crisis, suicidal ideations and or domestic violence.

Though their 24/7 crisis helpline they deliver critical resources and guidance in times of need.

One of their annual fund raising activities is a 24-hour CrossFit fundraising event called 24 Hours of Heroes which commences the day after ANAZC Day. (26 & 27 April).

This has become an Australia wide event, each Team has up to 6 members. Includes teams of Police, ADF &/or Fire first responders along with of solo participants.

Following a review of this fundraising effort, WHA made the following commitment;

“of providing 20% of the funds raised during this event as a donation to selected first responders such as to Police, Ambulance and Fire selected services around Australia. Including to State based Ambulance Legacy around Australia. To specifically donate to charities/not for profit associations supporting emergency services.”

Following the WHA approach our discussions continue with the Melbourne based representative.

WHA has an Affiliation Program linked to one of their fund raising programs “Coffee4Heroes”.

The concept is WHA provides a link to woundedherose.org.au/shop which then enables supporters to purchase WHA specially blended coffee beans, pods and pods from Queensland coffee roaster ‘the coffee commune’ under Phillip De Della. 100 percent of proceeds go directly to WHA.

In return WHA offer a small return “donation” to their coffee affiliates. We will keep you informed on the progress of these discussions

Regional Reports

Metro South

Had our March luncheon at our usual Steeples Restaurant with 32 attending it made this an enjoyable day.

Acknowledged awards were given to Julianne Casey and Bruce Westerland for their 10 year membership.

Also, a warm welcome was given to two new members namely Clive Butler and David Reinhard who shared stories from his early days at Moorabbin Branch.

Also, the day gave Joan (Chaplain) the opportunity to have partner John join us along with catching up with committee member Les Wood who looks after our merchandise.

Bryan Cass.



Ballarat & Central West District

The Central West – Ballarat lunch was held on Monday March 17, at the Golf House Hotel in Ballarat North.

There were 13 members and partners, along with two visiting members making for 22 happy diners.

Three members were presented with Length of Membership pins and Life Membership Certificates:

Les Hotchin	10 years
Peter Skinner	10 years
Peter Skinner	Life Membership
Michael Wilson	Life Membership



Gippsland East District

The East Gippsland district had its first luncheon for the year held at the Bairnsdale RSL last Wednesday



A small but dare I say very select group gathered at Bairnsdale RSL and enjoyed great company, lots of good humour and of course the odd reminiscence or two.

Please find attached a photo to mark the occasion

Kind regards,

Steve Wood
Gippsland East District

Central & South Gippsland District

Neil and Anne are presently travelling overseas so Jim Ballard assisted by coordinating the meeting.

Gippsland Central & South held a meeting on May 22nd at the Morwell RSL. There were 24 in attendance with two newcomers made welcome being Rob Geerling and Peter Shearer, we hope you enjoyed your day guys and we hope to catch up at future meetings.



Glen Dowlan
Life Member



Former Gippsland Coordinator
Neil Hall - Life Member



Leo Carwright
45 years
Ambulance Service Medals

A great day was had with the presentation of Life Memberships to Glen Dowlan and Neil Hall by Acting Area Manager Warrick Bone. Warrick also had a special presentation on behalf of Ambulance Victoria, that being, Service Medals for Leo Cartwright which were well deserved. Congratulations to all recipients

Frank Abela highlighted some initiatives in his welfare liaison portfolio which are designed to assist anyone needing assistance.

Jim Ballard addressed the group and was pleased to announce that our MoU had been signed as we forge a closer tie with Ambulance Victoria.

We look forward to a large turnout for our next meeting which is planned for the Inverloch Esplanade Hotel on 21st August.

Kind regards, Jim Ballard, for

Neil Akers
PO Box 3414, GMC, Vic 3841
M: 0407 351 626
E: gippscands.admin@traavi.org.au

Geelong & Surf Coast District

Geelong held its tri monthly luncheon at the Geelong RSL on Wed 14th May around, 16 folk attended and we welcomed two new members ex Paramedics from NSW, as well as the TRAAVI President and Secretary, not a bad turn out in the approaching cold weather.

One of our long standing ex Ambo's Ben Wright is soon to celebrate his 70th anniversary being part of the Ambulance community both active and retired for such a long time,

"Well Done, Ben"



Some future activities are proposed for our group I am trying to organise a bus trip to the Ambulance Museum and we have tentatively booked 17th June for this trip as well as a trip to the Werribee open plains zoo for later in the year, hopefully these will be well patronised.

The trip to the museum is open to family and friends that may wish to attend as well as well as the broader Ambo community. To this end I have published the dates with the TRAAVI Secretary so others in our District may like to join us.

A couple of our group was unable to attend due to ill health and one of our ladies recently had her driver's license modified so she could not get there. Our welfare officer has since contacted them with offers of support so we hope they a back with us soon.

Anyone outside of our group that may wish to contact me, feel free to do so through the TRAAVI email address.

Kind Regards to all
Stephen McFadyen
District Coordinator
Email geelongandsc.admin@traavi.org.au

Trip to Ambulance Historical Society Museum in Bayswater.

Proposed dates are

- Monday 16 June or Tuesday 17 June.

Transport Option

- 24 seat bus. Total cost is \$1430
- With a full bus (24 people) cost is \$60 per person.
- With less people increases the per person costs

Lunch Options

- Bayswater Hotel
- Lunch cost not included

Pick up & Drop off.

- Harvey Norman Corio Carpark.

If you know of other friends or family members who would like to have the opportunity to see the Museum, they are also welcome to join us.

Please respond to me no later than 1st June

Steve McFadyen

Mobile 0438 007 037

Email geelongandsc.admin@traavi.org.au

South West District

Hi Jim,

Our first meeting for 2025 took place on Monday 3rd March, at Thomson's Tavern in Hamilton.

12 members attended, along with our AV Chaplain, Lynne Carter. There were 6 apologies. I was extremely pleased with the numbers! A fantastic effort guys/gals!

A great time was had by all. Great company, food and conversation.

I initially notified members that I would be leaving the South West. As the time has come to move closer to family. I did call for a volunteer to take over the position of SW Convenor.

The good news is that I have decided to remain in Mortlake and have moved to a new residence instead.

I informed members that RAAV were using an electronic diary to inform members of future meetings. I will continue to email members regarding our meetings, as this will act as a reminder.

Our next meeting will be held on Monday, 2nd June at Rafferty's Tavern, Warrnambool.

Rhonda Oliver

Central Victoria District

The Central Victoria lunch was held on Tuesday May 13, at the Bendigo RSL in Long Gully.

Today we saw an increase in numbers to nearly 50 due to retired members from the former Peninsula Ambulance Service being in attendance.

Peter Briscoe, a former MICA Officer who worked on the first MICA Unit based at the Frankston HQ of Peninsula Ambulance Service way back in December 1973.

Peter has been unwell and was pleased at this chance for a “catch up” with some old work colleagues.

Also in attendance was our President Steve Mulligan and committee Secretary Jim Ballard.

It was a great turn out which I’m sure Peter would have appreciated. I would like to thank everyone who attended and look forward to the next lunch which will be on August 12, 2025.

We are still looking for a coordinator for this group as Peter’s health prohibits his ongoing in this capacity.

While we still have committee representation it is desirable that we are able to place a local into this position to support the longevity of the group.

The task is not onerous and will take up minimal amount of your time. Please give it some thought and let our Secretary Jim Ballard know or any other committee member

Interim Coordinator
John Head



Peter Briscoe (on right)
with his mate Tony Veitch

Annual Membership fees are due and payable in early July. A reminder invoice will be issued in early June but only to those Members who required to pay.



All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor

J. Ballard
PO Box 83 Dromana, Victoria 3936
Email secretary@traavi.org.au