

DEFENCE WIDOWS GROUP – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019.

We have had another successful year and continue to meet bi-monthly with a small committee of five meeting informally prior to those meetings to decide on recommendations to be put to the members. Attendance at the bi-monthly meetings has dropped however, in many cases due to age and health. We will be seeking an alternate venue for next year as the ten steps to the meeting room at Raiders, Weston, is causing a problem for those with mobility issues.

The Canberra Times continues to be monitored for service deaths but as many people now do not have listed telephone numbers we are increasingly sending information packages through funeral directors to those newly bereaved. This lack of personal contact, when many are grateful to speak with an empathetic person, is resulting in fewer ladies joining the Group.

We have held four informal lunches this year – two on each side of the city. The lunches have been well attended and friendly and loose coin collections at these lunches raised \$475 for Kookaburra Kids. We are most grateful that the DFWA committee kindly agreed to meet this dollar for dollar and a cheque for \$950 has been forwarded to Kookaburra Kids.

The Autobiography Group continues to flourish and usually meets each month to exchange ideas and hear of progress being made. Eight of our members attended the Honouring Women United by Defence Service dinner at Parliament House in August and I laid the DWG wreath at the Last Post Ceremony at the AWM prior to the dinner.

Our Annual Spring Lunch was held at the Yowani Country Club in September and we were delighted to have our new Patron, Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley, as our Guest Speaker. Mrs Hurley shared with us glimpses of her life story from meeting her husband to her current role as wife of the Governor General. Mrs Hurley also sang her own composition 'Defence Widows'. We were also entertained by fifteen members of the Australian Military Wives Choir. My thanks go to Kerry Mellor for representing Les so ably and also to Paul Jones for attending. We were also pleased to have in attendance Ms Liz Cosson (DVA), representatives of the three service chiefs and Warrant Officers from the Army and Air Force.

Our Last Post Ceremony was held on 31 October. This year an uncle of a stalwart DWG member, Dawn Laing, was featured and Dawn's family attendees included a grandson who had travelled from Queensland and others from Sydney. It was a very special occasion for the relatives to meet and share stories of what they knew of Private Allen Powell, who is buried in Kanchanaburie War Cemetery in Thailand.

On behalf of the DWG I thank the DFWA Committee for their support during the year.

Christine Lamb