



Australian American Association Queensland Division, Brisbane

Newsletter Edition 28-A 15th May 2025

Address: PO Box 340 Sunnybank Qld 4109 Phone: 07 33441601

Email: admin@aaabrisbane.com Web: www.aaabrisbane.com



Patron: Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland.



The Flags of Our Two Nations.



The Flags of our two Nations flying proudly together for the 83rd Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea Commemoration, held at the Australian American War Memorial, Lyndon Baynes Johnson Place, Newstead Park, Brisbane, Australia on 3rd May 2025.

2025 - 2026 Board of Directors, Australian American Association, Brisbane:

- ❖ Mike Harris - President & Life Member,
- ❖ Tony Chau - 1st Vice President,
- ❖ Helen Stanley - 2nd Vice President,
- ❖ Alice Langford - Secretary,
- ❖ Dr Peter Glazebrook - Legal Advisor,
- ❖ Teresa Pokoj - Treasurer, Assistant Secretary & Life Member.

Report by the Association's President Mike Harris.

My report covers the Association's activities since the 27th Edition Newsletter was published in December 2024:

On Sunday 26th January 2025 following our monthly meeting, we held a most enjoyable Australia Day luncheon at Coopers Plains. 18 guests attended, and we had a good lunch with some fun games and an Australia Day Quiz was held with great prizes awarded.

On Saturday 1st February 2025 our Treasurer Teresa Pokoj was recognized by the presenting to her of an Award at the 2024 Moreton Volunteer Awards Ceremony, for "her selfless dedication and contribution in the field of volunteering". This is a great honour for Teresa, and I congratulate her for all of the work she has done over the years for our Australian American Association. In front of a crowd of 290 guests assembled, Teresa was one of a number of awardees who were presented with their Awards by the Hon Graham Perrett MP, Federal Member for Moreton.

On Sunday 9th February 2025 our Treasurer Teresa Pokoj and I attended a special service held in memory of the 21 Australian nurses murdered in 1942 in the Banka Island Massacre during WW2.

On Friday 21st February 2025 our Treasurer Teresa Pokoj and I attended the funeral service for our good friend Owen Grimes, who was Secretary of the Naval Association Qld.

On Friday 28th February 2025 our Treasurer Teresa Pokoj and I attended a Wreath Laying Service held in remembrance of the Sinking of the HMAS Perth and USS Houston in the Battle of Sunda Strait on 28th February 1942. I gave an 8-minute speech and Teresa laid a wreath at this service, held at Navy Jacks, Southbank.

Also, on Friday 28th February 2025 we held our monthly Meet & Greet evening in the Military Bar at the United Service Club with 10 members and friends attending. We all enjoyed a wonderful evening together.

On Tuesday 4th March 2025 our Vice President Tony Chau, Treasurer Teresa Pokoj and I attended a "Special Strategic Planning Meeting" for the Battle of the Coral Sea Event with the Commander of HMAS Moreton - CMDR Rosemary Apikotoa and her RAN Staff Officers.

On Thursday 27th March 2025 our Association's Treasurer Teresa Pokoj laid a wreath at the Commemoration of the Crew and the loss of the HMAS Yarra (II) on 4th March 1942.



Group of the family members of those sailors lost in the sinking of HMAS Yarra (II). They were joined by 2 RAN Officers from HMAS Moreton.

On Friday 25th April 2025 our Association's Treasurer Teresa Pokoj, Member Alan Moulton and I, attended the ANZAC Day March, held in Brisbane City as guests of the event organizer - the RSL SEQ. We viewed the two hour March, seated with the Queensland Governor, and the Queensland Premier and other dignitaries.



Australian American Association's Representatives, from left – member Alan Moulton, Treasurer Teresa Pokoj and President Mike Harris at the ANZAC Day March.

On Saturday 10th May 2025 our Association's Treasurer Teresa Pokoj and I, attended the Victory in Europe Service, held at the RSL SEQ HQ at New Farm where Teresa and I laid separate wreaths.



At the Victory in Europe Service, Teresa laid a wreath in remembrance of her 30 family members who died during the 1939 Nazi and Russian invasions of Poland in WW2 [her Great-Grandparents, Grandfather, Uncles, Aunts and Cousins] and also, to remember those members of her family in the Ukraine, who are now suffering the 2022 Russian invasion, and who have not been heard from since the start of this invasion.



From left:- President of the American Legion - Jerry Bongard, and Veterans de l'Armée Française d'Australie Member Joseph Nouné and President Frank Lamy, who attended the Victory in Europe Service



Our Association's President Mike Harris and Treasurer Teresa Pokoj laying a wreath at the US Memorial Day Service .

On Sunday 25th May 2025 our Association's Treasurer Teresa Pokoj, Board Member Dr Peter Glazebrook and I, attended the US Memorial Day Service organized by the American Legion, which was held at Tarakan House Murrumba Downs. Teresa and I laid a wreath. [please Note - US Memorial Day is similar to Remembrance Day which is commemorated in other parts of the Western World, including Australia.



President of the American Legion - Jerry Bongard addressing the guests who attended the Memorial Day Service.



The National League of Families POW/MIA Flag was displayed at the service. The Flag symbolizes support and care for the soldiers, airmen, and sailors who served the United States in the Vietnam War, especially those who endured capture by the enemy.

83rd Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea, held in Brisbane.

Our 83rd Anniversary of the Battle of Coral Sea Wreath-laying Commemoration, was held at the Australian American War Memorial, *Lyndon Baynes Johnson Place* Newstead Park Brisbane Australia, on Saturday 3rd May 2025.

I truly thank our Association's Patron - Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland, the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, and Aide-de-Camp Major Brook Hastie, Australian Army, for attending this service.

As well, many thanks to the 280 guests, including the 60 wreath-layers, the representatives of government, relevant veterans associations and all other guests who attended our Service to remember those who fought and those who died, in this epic battle, from 4th to 8th May 1942, that saved Australia from invasion. Guests also attended, to lay wreaths to remember relatives, friends and loved ones, who served in all Allied theatres of war.

Attendance at event of a Very Special Guest:

We were again most honoured and blessed to have seated among us, a "Very Special Guest" and a Living legend - the 103-year-old Royal Australian Navy Veteran Mr Bill White - the last-living RAN survivor, who served as a telegraphist on board the Australian Navy Cruiser HMAS Hobart, during the Battle of the Coral Sea. Bill's presence at our Commemoration Service made the event so much more hallowed. Bill received great applause and recognition by all 280 guests who attended. *[Please refer to page 6 of this Newsletter, to read Bill's personal account of the Battle].*

Also, recognized at the event was US Vietnam War Veteran - Mr Rob White, a Spanish resident, who has now joined us on this occasion - for the past 4 years. He comes on a mission to lay a wreath in memory of his uncle - John Shin, who served on the USS Phelps - DD 360 (a Porter Class Destroyer) which participated in the Battle of the Coral Sea. USS Phelps received 12 Battle Stars for her World War 2 service.

My apologies to those of our honoured guests, whom I haven't mentioned in my report.

A gracious thank you to our dedicated Commemoration Service 'Master of Ceremony', Former Senator the Hon Santo Santoro, Life Member of the Australian American Association, Brisbane.

Further gracing our Commemoration Service were:

- The Hon Christine Elder - Consul General of the United States of America,
- The Hon Ishikawa Katsutoshi - Consul General of Japan and his wife Mayumi,
- The Hon Reatau Rau - Consul General of Papua New Guinea.
- Deputy Commissioner Tara Hatzismalis, Dept of Veterans Affairs - representing the Prime Minister,
- The Hon Tim Nicholls MP - representing the Queensland Premier,
- Councilor Julia Dixon - representing the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, and
- Detective Inspector John Misom - representing the Qld Police Commissioner.
- Captain Sean Lewis - Representing the Commander of United States Navy 7th Fleet.
- Representatives of the three Branches of our Australian Defence Force:-
 - Commander Rowena Gaffney RAN,
 - Group Captain Dennis Tan - RAAF Base Amberley, and
 - Brigadier Richard Peace, Commander of 11 Brigade, Australian Army & RSM WO1 Scott Elvery.

I am most grateful for the assistance of CMDR Rosemarie Apikotoa RAN (HMAS Moreton's. Commander), the Catafalque Party and RAN Band Queensland, and the Quintet Band from the US Navy 7th Fleet, for providing musical support for the event. Also, Pastor Jenny Schleusener RAN Chaplain, RAN Chief Bandmaster Simon Potter and Andrew Stapleton Chief Petty Officer Ceremonial Advisor HMAS Moreton, for their magnificent support in making the service a most exceptional and moving event.

As well, my complements to the two Popular Australian Recording Artists - Bernadette Gill and Johnny Greenwood. Bernadette sang "I Am Australian" and Johnny sang "Jack Hagan" which incorporated "The Road to Gundagai".

Our Association was most honoured to receive on the 4th May 2025, the following “Presidential Message” from Donald J Trump, President of the United States of America:-



Presidential Message on the 83rd Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea.

The White House May 4, 2025.

Today, I extend my heartfelt greetings to the people of Australia as we commemorate the 83rd anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea, a pivotal moment in the fight against tyranny and a defining chapter in the enduring alliance between our two nations.

At the height of World War II, American and Australian forces fought for 4 grueling days against enemy naval and air forces in the Coral Sea. Through their heroic bravery, their unwavering resolve, and the grace of Almighty God, our Allied forces halted at great cost a major enemy advancement for the first time in the Pacific Theatre and sank an enemy aircraft carrier for the first time- marking a significant turning point in the war and paving the way for the enemy's eventual defeat.

As we commemorate this historic battle, we also remember the 656 Allied service members who gave their lives for our liberty. The courage of those fallen heroes not only changed the course of the war but also forged a glorious bond between the United States and Australia that endures to this day—a friendship that remains foundational to Indo-Pacific security and prosperity.

Today, we honor the fearless determination of those who fought at the Coral Sea, and we solemnly remember those who laid down their lives to secure the future of freedom. Their sacrifice will forever be etched in our hearts, and our nations remain eternally grateful.

Donald J Trump.

President of the United States of America.



The following is Mr Bill White's personal account of the Battle of the Coral Sea, which has been extracted from the Royal Australian Navy's Website at:

<https://www.navy.gov.au/biography/able-seaman-bill-white>



Able Seaman Bill White

"The HMAS Hobart sailed with HMAS Australia and USS Chicago to join the main Task Force 73 under command of RADM Fletcher in the Coral Sea. Hobart took part in the western 'extension' of the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942. One of the covering force for the United States aircraft carriers. Bill later reflected on the battle: "We experienced significant exposure to the relentless and determined attack by the Japanese with limited allied air support; once again we came through with flying colours".

"I did observe a lot during this period, and in subsequent times I also reflected on why we were such an effective team. I have no doubt that our Captain must take a great deal of the credit, our ship was a floating fortress, manoeuvred by a skilled navigator and this, combined with our significant exposure to combat, moulded our ships company into a very effective force. The men held Captain Howden in high regard and he in turn looked after his men. This was very evident when we disembarked in Brisbane after the Battle of the Coral Sea, we celebrated our survival and comradeship - and Captain Howden".

A Brief Account of the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway:

Two of the most significant naval actions in the Pacific Theatre of World War 2, were the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway. The Coral Sea Battle fought from the 4th to 8th May 1942, was the first major action by opposing aircraft carriers, which exchanged aerial attacks without being in sight of each other's ships. Both sides scored heavily, with the American and Australian force losing more ships and the Japanese more aircraft.

Allied strategies considered their forces victorious because this marked the first withdrawal of the Japanese forces and caused the enemy to cancel plans for the capture of the strategically located Port Moresby in New Guinea. It is believed however, that this was only a temporary suspension of their objective, until the Battle of Midway greatly diminished their ability to initiate further plans to seize the Port.

Even as the Battle of the Coral Sea raged, the Japanese were compiling plans for the invasion of the island of Midway and committed 165 warships to the attack. But because US intelligence experts has earlier broken the Japanese code, the American defenders were aware of the invasion plan and were ready with available ships. As a result, the Battle of Midway was one of the most decisive actions in the Pacific War. In the Battle of Midway, fought from 4th to 7th June 1942 [six months after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and one month after the Battle of the Coral Sea] the Americans lost 307 men, 132 aircraft, and one aircraft carrier. The Japanese toll included 3500 dead, 275 aircraft and four aircraft carriers, lessening their ability to initiate major naval actions in the future.



During the Battle of the Coral Sea, the US Fleet Carrier - USS Lexington was severely damaged by two enemy torpedoes and three aerial bombs. The Carrier was afterwards despatched by American torpedos from the USS Phelps - DD 360, to prevent it from falling into enemy hands.

Acknowledging the following generous donations received:

Many thanks to the following persons for their most generous donations, which have greatly helped us meet the costs of providing Morning Tea at our Battle of the Coral Sea Commemoration Service:

1. The two Anonymous persons - for Cash Donations.
2. The Hon Christine Elder US Consul General - for Cash Donation.
3. Captain Kasper Kuiper Chairman of the Qld Maritime Museum and AAA Brisbane Honorary Member - for Cash Donation.
4. The Hon Santo Santoro Former Senator and AAA Brisbane Life Member - for Cash Donation.
5. The Hon Teresa Gambaro Former MP and Member of the House of Representatives - for Cash Donation.
6. Norman Love AAA Brisbane Member - for Cash Donation.
7. Alan Moulton AAA Brisbane Member - for Cash Donation.
8. Rob McLear AAA Brisbane Member - for Cash Donation.
9. Clifton Hefner Former AAA Brisbane President & Member - for Cash Donation.
10. Mark Neylan AAA Brisbane Member - for Cash Donation.
11. Emilia Seibold AAA Brisbane Member - Cash Donation.
12. Lori Cartagena AAA Brisbane Member - for Cash Donation.
13. Dr Betty Lee, AAA Brisbane Member - for Cash Donation.
14. Dr Peter Glazebrook, AAA Brisbane Board Member - for Cash Donation.
15. Wendy Siebrecht, Naval Association of Australia - for Donation of Trays of Cakes.
16. Alice Langford, – AAA Brisbane Secretary - for Donation of Sandwiches & Wraps.
17. Teresa Pokoj AAA Brisbane Treasurer & Life Member - for Donation of Banana Cake & Date Cakes & Biscuits.
18. Mike Harris AAA Brisbane President & Life Member - for Cash Donation.

I express my gratitude to our Association's Patron - Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland and all the other honoured guests who attended our 2025 Battle of the Coral Sea Commemoration Service.

I now request that you mark in your diary the date for our next "Battle of the Coral Sea Service" which will be held on Saturday 9th May 2026 at Newstead Park, Brisbane.



LEST WE FORGET

Let us honour the past, celebrate our shared-values and look towards a future of peace and co-operation. As well, let us commemorate and honour the memory of those who fought, suffered and sacrificed their lives during the Battle of the Coral Sea, so that we may enjoy our present liberty and freedom.

Please refer to the additional Newsletters - Supplementary Editions 25-B and 25-C containing photographs from the 83rd Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea Service, held on Saturday 3rd May 2025.

Yours Fraternally,
Mike Harris,

*President & Life Member [Editor of Newsletters],
Australian American Association,
Queensland Division, Brisbane,
Australia.*



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