

# Sunshine Coast Ex-Service and Serving Women's Association Inc.

## Joining Forces



### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the 23rd edition of *Joining Forces*.

The past six months have flown by and has included a significant milestone for the SCESWA .

After eighteen months of planning and negotiations, December 2025 saw the long awaited Plaque and Plinth placed in the Cotton Tree Memorial Garden, Maroochydore. This plinth is dedicated to the service of all women who served our nation in times of war, on overseas deployment, as Peace keepers and those who saw service in Australia.

On the Thursday 26th February 2026 a Dedication Service will be held at the site at 10.00am followed by a morning tea with finger food, tea and coffee at the lovely Lounge Seventy Two, Maroochy RSL Club. It is requested that all of our members attend this very important event. Invitations are currently being sent to all dignitaries, SCESWA members and guests. Additionally a copy of the invitation is included in this edition of *Joining Forces*.

The SCESWA Management Committee and members would like to sincerely thank the Maroochy RSL especially President, Peter Tsakissiris, Deputy President, Michael Howe, CEO, Jason Staines and the Board of the Maroochy RSL as without their support, advice and assistance on our behalf this would not have been possible.

I trust you enjoy this edition of *Joining Forces*.

With respect.

*Lorraine Houlihan*

**Jan 2026—June 2026**  
23rd Edition

Inc Assn IA 59129

ABN 15 390 668 848

<b>Bio Thelma Hughes</b>	<b>2-4</b>
<b>Christmas photos</b>	<b>5&amp;6</b>
<b>Plinth &amp; Plaque</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Plinth /Plaque Invite</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SCESWA Dates</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>WRAAC 75th</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>NAVY Dates</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Bribie &amp; Beerwah</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>New Members</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Committee Info</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>General Info</b>	<b>15</b>

### Editor's Note

This edition highlights a Biography of a World War 11 lady who served in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force 1943–1945. This biography was provided to *Joining Forces* by her daughter Mrs Di Purdy as Mrs Hughes is now deceased. We are thankful to her family for allowing us to publish their mother's military journey. I trust you enjoy her story

Cheers

*Lorraine*

# Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force

(WAAAF)

1943- 1945



## Thelma Hughes (Bennetts) “My Life AS A WAAAF”

My Sandgate days began on 15th March 1943, when I arrived to do my “Rookie” course along with about 19 other girls. We had already passed our Medical and Aptitude Tests and were now all ready and willing to do our bit for our country.

As we straggled around the Station in our ‘civvies’ we were greeted with cries of “you’ll be sorry”. But I never was, and that day began with best two years of my life. I must admit that we were in for a few mild shocks. Firstly, our introduction to the Palliasse—the large empty sack that we were instructed to fill with straw for our mattress. There were no sheets—just a pillow and three blankets. We soon learned the early morning art of making our bed—the palliasse to be neatly folded in three and topped with the blankets folded just so—with the stripes showing.

Then we did the rounds collecting our uniform issue as we went. First our kitbag which, along with one metal locker, would contain all our worldly possessions. Our uniform issue was quite adequate—everything labelled “WAAAF” for the use of”. There was black lace up shoes, cotton stockings, khaki skirts and shirts (which later we found would come up well with some cold starch and some soap to give them a shine. There was a beret and navy overalls (shapeless but fine for slipping over pyjamas for early cold morning parades). One fur felt hat with a RAAF badge that we wore with pride after a water soaking to give it just the right bash’. For winter there was a navy serge skirt and jacket, worn with a blue shirt and black tie and a jaunty peaked cap—very smart. Not so smart were the khaki shorts with hemline 4” above the knee. With my long legs I thought it looked ridiculous—who could imagine that now, 45 years later, they would be the very trendy fashion.

The highlight of the issue must have been our issue undies, two pair each of drab and navy bloomers, “WAAAF for the use of” - they were nicknamed ‘passion killers’.

We were shown to our living quarters—long open huts. But we did have beds and despite the lack of privacy, we lived there quite happily. The ablution block was a bit of a shock, with open cubicles with showers and washbasins along the opposite wall. However, we soon found that no one had the time to stand and stare at the various nude shapes and sizes.

The next month passed quickly—parades, marching and drill, injections (funny the WAAAF handled them better than the men of the RAAF who dropped like flies), lectures, hygiene, aircraft recognition and how to wear a gas mask. Then we were at

our Passing Out Parade—how proud we were, and how different to our motley group just one month ago.

We anxiously awaited our postings and sadly we parted from the friends we had made, some I haven't seen or heard from since. I was posted to Staff at Sandgate, so only had to change huts. For the next year or so I worked with Elma Riddle at WAAAF HQ in an office facing the Parade Ground and the sea—working with the WAAAF Officers, Flt/O Hooper and others, with the Drill Instructor's Office next door. Further along was the Service Police Office, the Padre (Rev. Dent) and yet further along the commanding Officer's Office, Signals, Switchboard and 3ED.

Elma Riddle and I were known as “Riddy” and “Benny” and we remained close friends until Elma died of cancer some years ago. We married Army mates and so our families have kept in touch ever since. I can still hear Riddy complaining “I joined the WAAAF to see the world, and what did I see? Blinkin' Sandgate!”. She had been born and raised at Wooloowin, (not far up the rail line).

Riddy typed Daily Routine Orders and such and I completed Personnel Forms, Identity Cards etc, for incoming WAAAF, and we watched many Rookies come and go. These were happy days and we made many lifelong friends. I also did Movement Orders and arranged travel for girls on Posting. One occasions I got my STTs (School of Technical Training) a little confused and sent one Aircraftwoman (ACW) to Canberra instead of Adelaide. It got easily sorted out with a few hasty signals but my Superior Officer S/O Elder said “Bennetts—of all the girls to send to the wrong place it had to be ACE Snitzerling”. She wasn't the brightest of ACWs and could sometimes be found down on the beach happily drilling armies of soldier crabs.

Somewhere along the way I obtained my Corporals Strips and later did an NCOs course. More drill and lectures—I learned to drill a squad—the chief aim as I remember was to give the right (or was it left?) order before the Squad marched over the wall into the sea. I don't think anyone ever lost a Squad that way though. I now had the privilege of doing nightly torch inspections with the Duty Officer to make sure all my ACWs were safely in bed. Also I could supervise the “panic” nights, the fun nights when we cleaned our huts for inspection (with lots of water and large brooms and squeegees).

About this time I was transferred over to 6 RD (Recruit Depot) Because I had previously worked for a solicitor, I was to make many wills for incoming RAAF—although anyone wishing a more complicated will was sent to a private solicitor.

By now I was married to an Army Sergeant, George Hughes, and later I obtained a posting to Williamtown, NSW, when my husband was sent to Singleton. I obtained my discharge in 1945.



I am not sure how many were at Sandgate at any one time, but it was a Recruiting Depot and an Embarkation Depot. There was a large staff of RAAF and WAAAF and equipment and stores, DMTs (drivers and mechanics), PO and canteen staff and more. Others were posted after the Rookie Course for a wide range of more specialised training in aircraft and other trade work to relieve the RAAF for other duties.

Our C/O, Wing Commander Sewell, was a great man who kept in touch with all the Station staff. He was a very fit man who jogged up and down the Parade Ground early mornings before his daily swim. On one occasion my superior, S/O Elder, decided it would be fun for her and me to jog in the opposite direction—which meant we had to salute each other every time we passed. The joke fell a bit flat however when we declined the C/O's invitation to swim also. I last saw W/Cdr Sewell at Bradfield Park, Sydney, when he saw my name on Discharge papers and sent for me to say goodbye.

The OIC WAAAF Flt/O Hooper looked a formidable Officer with an early eye (I swear she could see around corners to catch me with my shorts rolled up) as I frequently heard “Bennetts roll those shorts down”. She did a great job however and was respected by all. I was happy to catch up with her at a reunion in Melbourne in 1981.

There are many things I've forgotten over the years, but Sandgate holds such memories of happy days and of friends we made. There is a special bond between ex-servicewomen all over—some of us still keep in contact, and others we catch up with at reunions. Other memories are of walks along the Esplanade to Sandgate, Shorncliffe and Brighton. We went by train and bus to Brisbane—remember too that the last train from Central Station left at 11.20pm. If we slept through Sandgate it was a midnight walk from Shorncliffe. Who would be brave enough to do that now.

- Thelma Hughes

This article is reproduced in full with the kind permission of Mrs Di Purdy, daughter of Thelma Hughes. The editor would like to express her thanks to Mrs Purdy for allowing the SCESWA to publish this feature of Thelma's life in the WAAAF.



# Sunshine Coast Ex-Service and Serving Women's Association

## Christmas Luncheon December 2025





## SCESWA Ex Service Women's Plinth and Plaque Installation at Cotton Tree Park, Maroochydore



Lorraine, Jan and Deirdre "supervising" the installation of the Plinth and Plaque.



## SUNSHINE COAST EX-SERVICE AND SERVING WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION INC

### Dedication of a Plaque and Plinth

It is with great pleasure  
that you are cordially invited to attend a Dedication Service to  
commemorate the installation of the Plaque and Plinth at Cotton Tree  
honouring all Australian Service women.



A Morning Tea will follow this special event acknowledging all past and present Servicewomen and also to thank those people who have supported and assisted our Association in achieving this Goal.

The location for the service is the First Ave end of the park on The Esplanade, Maroochydore/Cotton Tree and adjacent to the Naval Memorial

Date: 26 February 2026

Timing: 10.00am

The Morning Tea will be held in Lounge Seventy Two at the Maroochy RSL, Memorial Ave, at 10.30am, directly after the dedication.

RSVP 16 February 2026

The Secretary  
Jan Thorne  
Mob 0410448433  
[thornejl@hotmail.com](mailto:thornejl@hotmail.com)



Please advise if there are special dietary requirements

Association outfit and medals to be worn

As this is a very important and significant event in our calendar we would really appreciate as much support through attendance at this event as possible. Thanks from the Management Committee



## Meeting & Coffee and Chat Dates Feb—August 2026



**Thursday 5 Feb 2026—OGM—SCESWA— Maroochy RSL, Keith Payne Room 10.00am for 10.30am**



**Thursday 26 Feb 2026—Dedication of Plaque for Service Women commencing 10.00am, Cotton Tree Park, followed by Morning Tea, Coffee and Finger food at Lounge Seventy Two, Maroochy RSL**



**Coffee and Chat Thursday 5 March 2026—Kawana Surf Club, 99 Pacific Bvd, Buddina. 10.00am**



**Thursday 2 April 2026—OGM—SCESWA—Kawana Surf Club, 99 Pacific Bvd, Buddina. 10.00am for 10.30am start**



**Wednesday 6 May 2026—Coffee and Chat—Bus Trip to Government House, Lunch at Gaythorne RSL. (Flyer will all details coming soon) [Please note day and date change to fit in with Government House requirements.](#)**



**4 June 2026—SCESWA Annual Luncheon—Maroochy RSL Events Centre. 11.15am for 11.45am. ( Flyer with all details out in March)**



**2 July 2026—Coffee and Catch up—Maroochydore RSL**



**6 August 2026 - OGM and AGM—Kawana Surf Club 1.00am for 10.30 start**



# WRAAC CORPS DAY 2026

## OUR 75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



**SATURDAY 7<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2026**

**GEEBUNG RSL, 323 Newman Road, Geebung**

**MARCH** Assemble 10:00am corner of Collings & Jull Streets, Geebung  
Step off at 10:15am

**FUNCTION ROOM** Doors Open at 11:00am

**LUNCH** A served Buffet (hot & cold) and Dessert

\$45.00 WRAAC Association Member

\$55.00 WRAAC (Non-Association) Member

\$45.00 Carer



**MUST** be paid by the RSVP date

A complimentary "Drink Voucher" (Beer, Wine, Soft Drink) and a "Lucky Door" ticket is included  
Bar will be available plus Raffles

**RSVP** 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026



## WRAAC CORPS DAY 2026

I ..... & ..... will be attending the Corps Day 75<sup>th</sup> Celebration

### Payment Options:



By Internet Banking: WRAAC Assn Qld Inc BSB: 124074 Account No: 23017767

Payee Ref: Please quote your initial and surname/CDay Eg. ACitizen/CDay

**IMPORTANT** please text mob 0400 038 221 or email the secretary with details of your  
direct debit when done, so that your payment can be receipted correctly.



In Person: at the General Meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2025

### Do you have any **Special Dietary needs?**

Please ensure you advise the secretary by email: [secretarywraac\\_qld@outlook.com](mailto:secretarywraac_qld@outlook.com)  
by RSVP 23 January 2026

**Meetings are Essential to the Association**  
**A Quorum is Essential to a Meeting**  
**Your Attendance is Essential to a Quorum**

**Calendar of Events 2026— subject to changes**

Date	Event	Notes
Feb	Service @ Jack Southbank	Honouring HMAS Voyager (II) Lost Crew
8 Feb	Navy Women Qld AGM & OGM Geebung RSL	Geebung RSL - First meeting for 2025
19 Feb	NAA(Q) State Council meeting	Delegates attend
23 Feb	Navy Week	HMAS Moreton - TBC
26 Feb	Service @ Jack Southbank	RAN Navy Week Hosted by HMAS Moreton:
Feb	Voyager (II)	St Mary's - Kangaroo Point
1 Mar	HMAS Perth and the USS Houston were lost during the Battle of Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942	
8 Mar	Navy Women Qld - Geebung RSL	
7-8 Mar	NAA State Conference –	Delegates attend – everyone invited
21 Mar	CESWA Tri-Service Luncheon Geebung RSL	Singing Competition
27 Mar	Service @ Jack Southbank	HMAS Yarra (ii) - Focus – Rankin & Taylor
<b>3 Apr</b>	<b>Good Friday</b>	<b>Happy Easter</b>
12 Apr	Navy Women Qld OGM Geebung RSL	Easter Bonnet
25 Apr	ANZAC Day 0600 Service at St John's Church <b>Northgate</b> Corvettes Assoc Service <b>Newstead</b> 0930 Parade in <b>Brisbane City</b>	Formal Uniform
May	Victory in Europe Service 08May1945	South-Eastern District RSL New Farm
17 May	Navy Women Qld	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday due to Mother's Day date
28 May	Service @ Jack Southbank	ANMEF 1914 - Navy & Military Expedition
4 Jun	Sunshine Coast Ex-Service and Serving Women's Assoc Inc Luncheon Maroochydore	Civilian dress with name tags
14 Jun	Navy Women Qld OGM Geebung RSL	
25 Jun	Service @ Jack Southbank	Timor Leste Ships
4-5 Jul	Reserve Forces Day Wondai	
19 Jul	Navy Women Qld - Geebung RSL	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday due to Geebung bookings
30 Jul	Service @ Jack Southbank	Gulf War 1 & 2
26 Jul	Korean Veterans Day	
9 Aug	Navy Women Qld GM Geebung RSL	
Aug	Victory in Pacific Day 15Aug1945	South-Eastern District RSL New Farm
18 Aug	Vietnam Veterans Day	
27 Aug	Service @ Jack Southbank	Seafarers
3 Sep	Battle of Australia Commemoration	
9 Sep	CESWA Commemoration to Service Women of Aust	Women's Memorial Pine Rivers Kallangur <b>Formal Uniform</b>
13 Sep	Navy Women Qld - Geebung RSL	
<b>19 Sep</b>	<b>NAA Golden Rivet 2025</b>	<b>CSI Ipswich – Hosted by NAA State Black Shirts</b>
24 Sep	Service @ Jack Southbank	Vietnam HMAS Vendetta
11 Oct	Navy Women Qld OGM Geebung RSL	Breast Cancer Fundraising <b>WEAR PINK</b>
October	Hervey Bay Birthday weekend	
29 Oct	Service @ Jack Southbank	HMAS Sydney II –
7 Nov	Navy Women Annual Reunion Luncheon	Geebung RSL Club
	Navy Women Qld OGM	
11 Nov	Remembrance Day Service	
19 Nov	NAA(Q) State Council meeting	
<b>26 Nov</b>	<b>Service @ Jack Southbank</b>	<b>Navy Women – All Navy Women</b>
5 Dec	International Volunteers Day	Thank you to our Volunteers
	<b>Navy Women Qld GM Geebung RSL</b>	<b>Xmas Party</b>
	<b>Summer Break</b>	

First Tuesday of each month  
 Second Monday of each month  
 Second Wednesday of each month  
 Third Tuesday of each month  
 Fourth Monday of each month  
 Last Thursday of each month

Western Suburbs Lunch  
 Caboolture Ex-Servicewomen's Lunch  
 Glasshouse Country Women United by Defence  
 Gold Coast Brunch  
 Bribie Island Lunch Bribie Island RSL Social Cafe  
 Jack Memorial Ship Inn, South Bank

## **Glasshouse Country Women United by Defence - Monthly luncheon**

We have a new home for our lunches at Camp SMEAC Inc, 2315 Steve Irwin Way, Landsborough, turn off opposite the Go Kart Track.

Camp SMEAC is run by Veterans helping Veterans.

Usually held on the 2nd Wednesday each month at 11.00am.

Contact Fran Sinclair on 0416 013 987 for all information . All welcome.



## **Bribie Island Ex-Service Women's Monthly Luncheon**

The Luncheon for the Bribie Island Ex-Service Women is held on the 4th Monday of the month at the Bribie Island RSL, 99 Toorbul Street, Bribie Island.

Contact Anita Cooper on 0402 246 408 for any further info. All welcome.



### **SCESWA Management Committee Meeting Dates**

**19 Feb 2026**

**16 July 2026**

**19 March 2026**

**20 August 2026**

**16 April 2026**

**17 September 2026**

**21 May 2026**

**15 October 2026**

**18 June 2026**

**19 November 2026**

## INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS

**Kaye Morgan—Navy**

**Stella McNamara—Navy**

**Catherine (Sandy) Whyte—Navy**

**Nichole Hood—RAAF**



## **POPPY SERVICE**



Remember to notify your local RSL Sub Branch if you would like to have a Poppy Service or alternatively ensure you advise your family of your wishes.

## **Facebook – Combined Ex Service and Serving Women Australia**

The *Combined Ex-Service and Serving Women Australia* is a very informative site on Facebook for ex-servicewomen and is independently administered by ex-service women. Ex service women from all over Australia have registered and make frequent posts providing interesting information, military photos and fun ditties.

To join, simply answer two questions relating to your service, and once the Administrator approves your request you will have unlimited access to other Combined Ex-Service Women Australia's members posts, photos and importantly all events that are coming up for numerous Associations throughout Australia.

Whilst this Facebook site is **not part of our Association**, the committee ensures that all events relating to the SCESWA are recorded on this site.

## CURRENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR 2025—26

### Executive

**President:** Lorraine Houlihan, Phone: 0408 126 710, Email: [president.sceswa@gmail.com](mailto:president.sceswa@gmail.com)

**Vice President:** Deirdre Elliott, Phone: 0408 222 592, Email: [deirdre\\_colin@bigpond.com](mailto:deirdre_colin@bigpond.com)

**Secretary:** Jan Thorne, Phone: 0410 448 433, Email: [thornejl@hotmail.com](mailto:thornejl@hotmail.com)

**Asst Secretary:** Chris Birch, Phone 0403 905 023, Email: [christinebirch52@gmail.com](mailto:christinebirch52@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Judi Taylor, Phone: 0430 597 836, Email: [judimtaylor@gmail.com](mailto:judimtaylor@gmail.com)

### Committee members

**Health & Well-Being:** Jan Thorne, Phone: 0410 448 433, Email: [thornejl@hotmail.com](mailto:thornejl@hotmail.com)

**Events Co-ordinator:** Deirdre Elliott, Phone: 0408 222 592, Email: [deirdre\\_colin@bigpond.com](mailto:deirdre_colin@bigpond.com)

**Membership Officer:** Chris Birch, Phone 0403 905 023, Email: [christinebirch52@gmail.com](mailto:christinebirch52@gmail.com)

**Grants & Merchandise:** Fran Sinclair, Phone: 0416 013 987, Email: [fran@kandfspace.com](mailto:fran@kandfspace.com)

### General Committee Members

Maggie Winduss

Dot Kunde

Lorraine Stone

### Newsletter

**Editor:** Lorraine Houlihan, Phone: 0408 126 710, Email: [l.houlihan1@bigpond.com](mailto:l.houlihan1@bigpond.com)

**Postal Address:** Sunshine Coast Ex-Service and Serving Women's Assn Inc., PO Box 654, BUDDINA, Q 4575

**Email:** [thornejl@hotmail.com](mailto:thornejl@hotmail.com)

**Members:** Please note the email address for our Association.



## **BANKING DETAILS:**

### Name of the Account:

Sunshine Coast Ex-Service and Serving Women's Association Inc.

### Institution:

Auswide Bank

BSB: 645 646

Account Number: 102736405

### Cheque made payable to:

Sunshine Coast Ex-Service and Serving Women's Association Inc.

### Forward to:

The Treasurer  
PO Box 654, BUDDINA Q 4575

## **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBS: \$15.00 per year**

*Membership payments are Due 31 December each year*

If you wish to pay by Internet Banking,  
Remember to include payee reference: Please quote your  
initial and Surname/Subs: e.g. JSmith/subs  
Payments will be accepted at the Meeting or Coffee n  
Catchup

## **CHANGE OF ADDRESS DETAILS**

*We are having a few Birthday cards and letters returned "NOT  
AT THIS ADDRESS". If you have moved address or changed  
your email or phone number, please notify our Membership  
Officer, Chris Birch on 0403 905 023. This will allow your  
Association to continue to provide you with updated  
information throughout the year.*

## **SCESWA MEMORABILIA**

SCESWA has three different types of Badges available to our members. We have Magnetic or Pin name badges. Please see Jan Thorne to arrange. Cost: Pin \$14.50, Magnetic \$16.00

Cloth badges are available from our Merchandise table. Cost is \$6.50

We also now have SCESWA Baseball Caps, \$22.00. Car Stickers, \$5.00. Note Books, Bags and Coffee Mugs

They may be purchased at all meetings and C n C and luncheon events. Fran will be happy to serve you.

New pieces of Merchandising to come.

## **DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER**

Deadline for the next newsletter **15 June 2026**

Every effort will be made to use all contributions, but it may not be in the next issue.

Please send all articles, clear photos and letters to the Editor at the association address or email Lorraine at [l.houlihan1@bigpond.com](mailto:l.houlihan1@bigpond.com). We look forward to members' input.

Disclaimer: All contributions are welcome. All care will be taken with material but no responsibility is assumed or accepted by the publisher or the SCESWA Inc.

