

Talk by Legatee Mary Brand to
Altona RSL Sub-Branch Veterans and Widows Lunch
28 June 2023

First of all, I would like to thank **the Altona RSL** for inviting Kevin and I to join you at your Veterans and Widows luncheon.

Hello, my name is Mary Brand, a Legatee with Melbourne Legacy since 2018. I am currently Chairperson of Western Branch and the Legatee for the Burnside Legacy Widows Group.

Age 67; married to Kevin in 1977. No Children but lots of nieces & nephews to love and cherish. Live in Werribee (since 1981).

GROWING UP

- ❖ I grew up in Bacchus Marsh and lived there until 1975 when my parents moved to Strathmore. Mum and Dad only lasted 12 months in Melbourne before heading back out into the “bush” and eventually settling in Campbell’s Creek near Castlemaine.
- ❖ My father served in WW2, enlisting in South Australia. He did his training at the Darley Army Camp (Bacchus Marsh) where he met my mother.
- ❖ After coming home from serving overseas, he and mum married in 1946.
- ❖ Youngest of five, four girls and one boy.
- ❖ Dad spent many, many years in and out of Repat Hospital. When I was three, dad was in hospital for about three years. Mum drove from Bacchus Marsh every week to visit, she had five children under the age of 10.
- ❖ Children were not allowed on the wards at, and I remember playing on the duckboards with my brother and sisters along with any other children who were there.
- ❖ I am not sure who it was, but during these difficult times there was always some food, a load of wood, clothes for the family and scholarships for schooling. It was not until many years later that I found out it was the local RSL and Legacy that helped my family, albeit extremely quietly to give the family privacy, as it would have devastated mum if the locals knew.
- ❖ Later in life dad, mum, my sister Lou, and I decided to take on Veterans Affairs to see if dad could get a TPI Pension. Wow was that an experience and hard work. Eventually DVA granted the pension along with a huge amount of back pay. This allowed mum and dad to buy a lovely home and a few acres at Campbell’s Creek.
- ❖ After many years of illness, paranoia and other issues Dad passed away in 1996, aged 76. He was a hard man who, I am sure, had been affected by his war experiences. But like many diggers, they did not talk about anything.
- ❖ Mum continued to live at Campbell’s Creek however was getting very lonely. Although all her children and grandchildren visited regularly, the only other people mum spoke with were people working in shops or her doctor. Not a good life for someone who had suffered hard times all her married life.
- ❖ We convinced mum to move to Melbourne in 1998 and she was able to get a self-contained flat at Vasey Housing (War Widows Guild) in Manningtree Rd Hawthorn.

- ❖ This was a transformation for mum, and she became involved with the Guild and her local Legacy club. Mum developed some wonderful friendships from these groups.
- ❖ As her health declined, we were able to get mum into Vasey House Nursing Home, Bundoora in 2010. What an eyeopener that was going down the nursing home experience. Fortunately, with Mum being a resident at Vasey in Hawthorn the transition was good, and the stress was a lot less than if she went somewhere else.
- ❖ Our beautiful Mum, Barbara, passed away in 2013.

After Retirement

- ❖ I retired from full time employment in November 2017 and by the middle of December that year I had registered with both Melbourne Legacy and RSL Victoria to volunteer in some way.
- ❖ I was not at all sure what I was going to do at either organisation, but I had decided a few years earlier that I wanted to give back to the service organisations that had helped my mum so much.
- ❖ With the Werribee RSL Sub-Branch welfare group, I visited the widows and diggers in the local nursing homes.
- ❖ I was inducted into Melbourne Legacy in March 2018 and have not looked back.
- ❖ Member of (and current Chairperson) the Western Branch of Melbourne Legacy. Our area of responsibility goes from Werribee across to Melton, down to Caroline Springs, Deer Park, Sunshine, St Albans, Taylors Lakes, Keilor, Keilor East; Avondale Heights, Maribyrnong, Footscray through to Williamstown and Altona, then Laverton, Point Cook, Williams Landing, Werribee South and back to Werribee with all suburbs in between. A huge area!!
- ❖ Currently we have three active Legatees for the widows in the West and there are four widows' clubs – Burnside (Caroline Springs); Footscray; Williamstown and Werribee. We are currently recruiting a retired RAAF member to join our team.
- ❖ Not all widows have a Legatee assigned to them, however if a widow requires assistance they just need to call Legacy House who will organise for one of us (a Legatee) to contact you.
- ❖ Melbourne Legacy now provides all types of help and assistance not only to our widows but also families of service personnel (both former and currently serving). Even if your partner is still living, please remember that if you are in need to contact Melbourne Legacy.
- ❖ During COVID the Western Branch made phone contact with over 500 widows. Many a wonderful conversation with the widows and these calls gave us an opportunity to not only update our records but also do a welfare check. Some emergency services were implemented from these phone calls – shopping; cleaning; CabCharges for doctor or hospital visits etc.
- ❖ Finally, after the years of hibernation our widows' groups are back and running and, home visits are also happening.
- ❖ In 2022 Kevin and I transferred our membership to Caroline Springs RSL where I am involved with their welfare team ensuring our widows are cared for by both services.
- ❖ I would not be able to do all of this without the wonderful support and help from my beloved husband, Kevin

My Family Members who have served in both WW1 and WW2

WW1

Grandfather (dads' side) – Merriton George Surrey TALBOT

SN2021 (enlisted 11/8/1915 in Adelaide S.A. – discharged 27//10/1919

Corporal – Australian Provost Corp

He married Elsie Fitz on 12/2/1918 at Warminster Christ Church, Warminster, England and they travelled to on the last troop ship Australia in 1919.

My grandfathers brother also enlisted on the same day – Walter Hillary TALBOT

SN2022 (Enlisted 11/8/1915 in Adelaide S.A. – discharged 11/7/1919

Bombardier, SN – 14th Field Artillery Brigade

Grand Uncle (mums side) – Alexander (Pel) Pilmer GULLINE

SN14097 (Enlisted 15/9/1916 in North Melbourne, Victoria – discharged 28/10/1919

Driver – 5th Divisional Ammunition Column (D.O.C.)

Uncle Pel was very active in the Bacchus Marsh RSL Sub-Branch on his return home

Also, there are **four** other relatives on my mother's side served in WW1.


Each have a named tree in The Avenue of Honour in Bacchus Marsh.

Kevin had three uncles who served in WW1, each coming home.

One of his uncles then relisted in WW2, after altering his age.

WW2

Father – Lindsay Hillary Coles TALBOT

	CORPORAL	
	LINDSAY HILLARY COLES TALBOT	
	SX13545	
	SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
	DATE OF BIRTH	08 FEBRUARY 1920
	PLACE OF BIRTH	WIRRABARA, SA
	DATE OF ENLISTMENT	03 JULY 1941
	LOCALITY ON ENLISTMENT	OTTOWAY, SA
	PLACE OF ENLISTMENT	ADELAIDE, SA
	NEXT OF KIN	TALBOT, MERRITON
	DATE OF DISCHARGE	15 JANUARY 1946
	POSTING AT DISCHARGE	6 DIVISION PROVOST COMPANY

LEGACY – Celebrating 100 years in 2023

In 1923, Major General Sir John Gellibrand formed the Remembrance Club in Hobart. Another returning soldier, Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Savige, was inspired to establish a similar club in Melbourne which was named Legacy. (13/10/1923)

Originally, it was returned servicemen who took this duty of caring for and supporting widows and children. They became known as Legatees. To this day, it is the Legatees who volunteer the support that Legacy provides to its beneficiaries.

Legacy is still caring for tens of thousands of widows who have lost their loved ones and been affected by their partner's service in the Korean War, Malayan Emergency, Vietnam War, as well as campaigns in Iraq, Afghanistan and in peacekeeping operations across the globe.

Legacy Clubs started as a small organisation with local Legatees assisting local families. Today, there are 44 Legacy Clubs, plus 1 in London, providing emotional, social, and financial support.

Some of the services include:

OLDER ADULTS

To prevent social isolation, Melbourne Legacy provides older adults with avenues for regular social interaction and companionship through group activities and monthly meetings at 70+ local Legacy Widow's Clubs in Victoria. These clubs are run by the widows with support from Legatees.

We also have a twice monthly walking group, a weekly stamp ladies meeting, a monthly concert, invitations to luncheons at Legacy House, reduced price theatre tickets, the Legacy Remembrance Service, and a special Christmas concert.

Melbourne Legacy's bi-monthly magazine "The Answer" provides information about Legacy's activities and services.

The Melbourne Legacy team can provide older adults with support through:

CASE MANAGEMENT

- Provision of information regarding aged care services
- Advocacy
- Referrals to other services and organisations –
- Welfare checks
- Assistance with applying for DVA pensions
- Financial assistance
- Linking in support from Legatees

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Melbourne Legacy may be able to provide financial assistance in certain situations to eligible Legacy Beneficiaries. Examples may include:

- Emergency house repairs or maintenance
- Assistance in accessing Allied Health Services
- Paying for urgent dental procedures and dentures
- Falls prevention aids, walking frames, walking sticks and handrails
- Accessing vision and hearing services

- Funding for pharmacy prescription items
- Funding for continence aids
- Essential white goods (Fridge, Washing Machine, Dryer, Heater)
- Emergency food vouchers (Cole's supermarkets)
- Assistance with transport to medical appointments

VETERANS

If you have served operationally in the Australian Defence Force and have given your health either in service or subsequently, Melbourne Legacy is here to help your family.

Melbourne Legacy is in tune and linked in with the veteran's community by staying informed of current issues and challenges facing today's veteran and their families.

Melbourne Legacy currently employs post 1991 veterans who understand the struggles veterans of today face and who may be able to support you with guidance and advocacy.

Advocacy seeks to ensure that people can have their voice heard on issues that are important to them, that their views and wishes are genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives and that their rights are defended and always safeguarded.

For veterans' and their families, advocacy services will usually focus on the provision of assistance with the lodgement of an initial claim with DVA through to assistance with the appeals process. The appeals process can be complex, and our advocacy support is provided from start to finish through internal reviews to the Veterans' Review Board and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Melbourne Legacy also actively engages with Ward 17 at the Austin Repatriation Hospital in Heidelberg, with weekly visits by a post 1991 veteran liaison officer who works as part of the broader veteran liaison team at Ward 17.

LEGATEES

THE CHARTER OF LEGACY – "THE SPIRIT OF LEGACY IS SERVICE"

The care of dependents of those who served the country; namely, veterans who gave their lives or health on operational service or subsequently, and Australian Defence Force members who die in-service, afford a field for service.

Safeguarding the interests of dependents, especially children, is a service worth rendering. Personal effort is the main essential. Inasmuch as these are the activities of Legacy, it is our privilege to accept the legacy of the fallen.

We are here to help you get the support you need and deserve.

If you are in need of support or have a general enquiry, please call our friendly team on (03) 8626 0500