



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'  
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

## 2020 Annual Report

*Transforming lives  
through education*

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# Table of Contents

Our History	2
Chair's Report	4
CEO's Report	8
Board Director's Report	11
Patron and Board	14
Staff and Volunteers	15
2020 Scholars and Sponsors	16
Sponsors	18
Our Scholar Tessa Lucas	19
Our Scholar Grace Sholl	20
Our Scholar Chloe Dean	22
Our Alumni Leon Ross	24

# Our History

**The Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) is a national charity that manages a range of tertiary education scholarships for the children and grandchildren of Australian ex-serving men and women.**

AVCAT was established in 2003. Its history having originated with the former Australian Vietnam War Veterans' Trust (AVWVT), established in 1985. The purpose of AVWVT was to distribute the Australian share of the funds received from the Agent Orange legal settlement in the USA to Vietnam Veterans and their dependants.

The funds were distributed as cash payments to Vietnam Veterans in deserving circumstances. The AVWVT operated two funds, one was immediately available to Vietnam Veterans.

The other smaller fund which represented 10% of the total fund, was set aside for future use to provide longer term assistance to veterans. In particular, the AVWVT aimed to provide for any increase in assistance sought from widows for the care and education of their children.

The aim of AVWVT was to provide financial assistance to children of Vietnam War Veterans who would not, without a scholarship, have the financial means to complete a tertiary education degree.

AVCAT, has continued the legacy of AVWVT by assisting the children and grandchildren of Australian ex-service men and women to a better future through tertiary education. The scholarships are awarded to students who are independently assessed as being in financial need, show academic potential and are deserving. All scholarships support full-time tertiary study at University, TAFE, or registered training organisation.

AVCAT manages the Long Tan Bursaries on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs and non-government sponsored scholarships on behalf of a range of ex-service organisations, corporate and individual donors.



The Long Tan Bursaries are named to commemorate the Battle of Long Tan. The Battle of Long Tan was one of the fiercest actions seen by Australian soldiers during the Vietnam War.

The battle took place in the Long Tan rubber plantation on 18 August 1966. That day, 108 Australian and New Zealand soldiers fought a pitched battle against over 2000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops.

Vietnam Veterans' Day is commemorated each year on 18 August. The day was chosen to commemorate D Company, 6RAR who fought in the Battle of Long Tan. Therefore, each year applications for AVCAT managed scholarships are opened on 18 August.

The Long Tan Bursary, originally for the children of Vietnam Veterans, was extended in 2019 to include the grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans.

This year AVCAT manages more scholarships than ever. We assist approximately 250 young people each year to reach their potential through achieving a range of academic and personal goals.

# Chair's Report

**I am pleased to report on AVCAT's challenges during a difficult 2020, and the sound results still achieved.**

AVCAT has had a long and distinguished period of service in support of the children of veterans. From our earliest beginnings in 1985, when we were the Australian Vietnam War Veterans' Trust, we have consistently maintained our focus on providing financial support to the children and now grandchildren of Australian Veterans. This was primarily to allow them to reach their academic potential, in all cases in the knowledge that this may not be possible without the additional support that we are able to provide. Our criteria for selection have also remained broadly consistent; academic potential, being in necessitous circumstance, and deservedness.

We were established primarily to administer what became the Long Tan Bursaries for the children of veterans of the Vietnam Conflict. This is now done on behalf of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), and it remains our core responsibility. Our present Services of Agreement is due to conclude in June 2021 and we continue to work with DVA in both satisfying their requirements and ensuring continuity of support to bursary recipients and our wider stakeholders. I place on record our great appreciation for the support offered to us by the Department – the provision of office and committee meeting accommodation in Sydney, some information technology assistance, the conduct of presentation events at DVA offices around Australia, (suspended during 2020 in response to COVID), and periodic access to the Secretary and senior officers to discuss our operations, intentions, and challenges.

In 2020, we were fortunate to be able to present 50 Long Tan Bursaries. However, eligible and deserving applicants numbered 82, partly as a result of the decision to open applications to grandchildren who could establish a dependency on their veteran grandparent. This added weight to the need to increase available bursaries back to 50 or even more each year; a matter on which representations continue to be made. In November of academic



year 2020, there were a total of 101 Long Tan Bursary recipients undertaking courses.

Building on our basic infrastructure support from DVA, primarily accommodation and staffing costs, and in an effort to satisfy the wider demand for scholarship support from the children and grandchildren of veterans of other conflicts, AVCAT has managed a complementary scholarship scheme. These scholarships are sponsored by Ex-Service Organisations and other private donors. Efforts have continued to expand this program, and since 2017, the Queensland State Branch of the RSL has been the strongest supporter offering scholarships to a total of 94 students over the past four years. We greatly value the confidence which all of our scholarship sponsors place in us to manage the selection of suitable recipients and support them through their studies. As at November 2020, we had 139 non-government supported scholarship holders undertaking their education through us. We are now seeking particularly to identify donors to ensure that there is an equitable access to these scholarships across Australia, noting that many scholarships are confined to the geographic area of the sponsor.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Honourable Darren Chester MP, remains closely engaged with our work, and has been working to assist us in further supporting the children of veterans whose opportunities have been adversely affected as a consequence of their parent's or grandparent's service. This reflects the increasing emphasis now being given on taking care of veteran's families, and we express our appreciation for the Minister's active interest and encouragement.

We are pleased to have His Excellency, General the Honourable David Hurley, AC, DSC (Retd) as our Patron. His Excellency continues to demonstrate a close interest in our endeavours and willingness to offer his support, and we hope in 2021 that we might be able to re-commence the practice of hosting a bursary and scholarship presentation at Admiralty House in Sydney.



*Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley, His Excellency, General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) and AVCAT Scholar Brayden Tii Tii*





#### *AVCAT Scholar Kel-sie van Rees*

AVCAT will continue to pursue good governance under the guidance of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC), to promote the opportunities to apply for bursaries and scholarships within the wider veteran community, and to communicate effectively with our applicants, successful recipients, and sponsors. The Directors of AVCAT use the materials available to not-for-profit organisations on the ACNC website to complement their continuing professional development. Our Auditor, James Winter of Grant Thornton, has been particularly helpful in ensuring that our accounting practices are up to date and we comply fully with ACNC requirements.

As I have mentioned previously, our funding situation remains quite tenuous. For some time we have been reliant on an annual draw-down from a fund established some years ago by a generous benefactor, but this will be exhausted in 2021. Considerable effort is being devoted by our CEO to seek other benefactors and corporate donors, to date with moderate success. Our recently established Alumni Program offers prospect of assisting in this respect. Fortunately, one generous benefactor has offered a significant grant which should allow us to continue our work while we improve our fund-raising efforts.

I record my gratitude for the work of our Chief Executive Officer, together with her small, dedicated and highly competent staff team. In late 2020, Ms Joan Hughes gave notice of her intention to retire in early 2021, after 5 years with AVCAT, and I place on record our collective appreciation for her professionalism, empathy with our bursary and scholarship recipients (particularly important during 2020 due to the additional challenges they faced during lockdowns), leadership of our wonderful staff team, support to the Board, and friendship. Ms Hughes was particularly adept during 2020 of managing the continuation of operations through home-based work in response to COVID. In this respect, our staff team also responded magnificently.



*The Long Tan Cross in Vietnam*

I extend my appreciation also for the time and commitment of my fellow Board Directors; and sincerely thank our wider group of volunteers who serve on or support the work of the National Selection Committee and the Finance, Audit, and Risk Committee. Without these combined efforts, we could not deliver on our commitments to the Veteran Community, dependants, and those who provide all of the financial support on which we depend. A recent broad assessment of the volunteer effort contributed to our endeavours over the past year is of the order of 800 hours.

The greatest satisfaction for all of us in AVCAT is to witness the impressive achievements of our bursary and scholarship recipients, noting that their completion rates are well above the national average of their other tertiary education cohorts. We record and publish several of the testimonials and letters of appreciation we receive from students following completion of their courses, and we all reflect on the value they have placed on their award, and their gratitude for the support they have received. It is clear to us that without these bursaries and scholarships, these wonderful young people would not be able to reach their full potential or satisfy their reasonable aspirations.

**Major General W. J. Crews AO (Retd)**  
Chair

# CEO's Report

**I believe that education is one of the most important cornerstones enabling individuals to reach for their dreams. With AVCAT offering tertiary scholarships, we enable each of our young scholars the opportunity to study within their chosen field of interest and to come closer to achieving their career goals.**



During the past 12 months we have seen our society take on the challenge of dealing with a pandemic which has brought with it a lot of uncertainty and adjustments. One of the main adjustments was the shift to working from home and studying online which had many flow-on effects. Most of our applicants and current scholars had to make various adjustments in relation to their study and home life. Many had to deal with mental health issues and an increase in caring responsibilities.

We launched our AVCAT Alumni Network during November 2020 for recipients who have completed their scholarships with us, or who have graduated. We are looking forward to remaining connected with our past scholars in the years ahead.

## AVCAT's Purpose

AVCAT is a national independent charity registered with the Australian Tax Office (ATO) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). At AVCAT we continue to support approximately 250 tertiary education students in any one year through awarded bursaries and scholarships. The recipients are children and grandchildren of ex-serving men and women. Awarding scholarships is a complex process and takes many months to reach a decision. This is due to the fact that every year AVCAT receives many more applications from very deserving young people compared to the number of available scholarships.

Independent assessors evaluate each application across a variety of selection criteria. The eligibility criteria and assessment process guide the assessors to recommend applicants who have



financial and other difficulties regarding their access to tertiary education. Applicants for a scholarship also need to show evidence of their academic results as well as their connections and links to the veterans in their families. The final recommendations for scholarships are made by the National Selection Committee whose members are educationalists, defence welfare experts and Board Directors of AVCAT.

AVCAT works closely with the sponsors and funders of bursaries and scholarships especially in regard to information about the academic progress of each of the scholars. Sponsors are informed about this progress twice a year through annual and mid-year reviews. This gives each of the scholars an opportunity to thank their sponsors and give them relevant updates. A recurring message in the thank you notes to sponsors is that a scholarship allows the scholar to balance study with paid work and manage any personal issues. Many of the scholars have mentioned that knowing someone else cares about their education keeps them motivated and focussed on their studies and future goals. Many of them feel very privileged to receive a scholarship especially knowing that there are so many people who miss out on receiving one.

Strong and ongoing links with ex-service organisations are very important in promoting the work of AVCAT within the veteran community. Expanding the links to the corporate sector will enable more educational scholarships to be awarded ensuring that our young people get the best possible start in their chosen career. In 2020 we received 544 requests for information about the scholarship programs. 266 applications were received, and 98 applicants were awarded a scholarship. An ongoing priority for AVCAT is to secure more sponsors as there were 168 worthy people who missed out on a scholarship.

## Long Tan Bursary Scheme

The bursaries and scholarships that AVCAT manages on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA),

various ex-service organisations, corporate and individual donors, on average provides three years of financial support to students studying tertiary courses in universities, TAFE, and registered training organisations (RTO) across Australia (see Page 16 for the 2020 scholarship recipients).

In 2020 50 Long Tan Bursaries were awarded. I acknowledge the additional support of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) for funding the additional 13 Long Tan Bursaries that AVCAT administers on its behalf. The additional 13 bursaries allowed more worthy young people to receive a bursary in 2020. The Department of Veterans' Affairs also provides administration funding that contributes significantly to the operations of AVCAT.

With this development work of the Long Tan Bursary, I would like to acknowledge the support of Minister Chester and his staff; Commissioner Don Spinks; the Secretary of DVA, Ms Liz Cosson and the other DVA staff.

### **Our Sponsors**

My sincere thanks go to the new and ongoing sponsors of scholarships. There were 48 new sponsored scholarships available for the 2020 eligible applicants. Our generous sponsors are listed with the recipients of their scholarships on page 16 of this report.

The total number of newly awarded bursaries and scholarship recipients for 2020 is 98.

### **Acknowledgements**

The AVCAT team is small in number and all are part-time workers, but their combined skills, innovative ideas and hard work are highly valued. I acknowledge the work of the independent assessors and sincerely thank the volunteer members of the National Selection Committee for their commitment, detailed and fair assessments of applications.

Finally, I acknowledge and sincerely thank the Chair of AVCAT, Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd) for his support and thank the volunteer Board Directors for their time and service to AVCAT.

### **Len Russell (on behalf of Joan Hughes)**

Chief Executive Officer

# Board Director's Report

**The Board Directors will present an Annual Financial Report of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2020 at the May Annual General Meeting.**

### **Long and Short-Term Objectives**

The principal objective of the Company is to provide financial assistance through tertiary education scholarships to Australian Veterans' children and grandchildren who are in necessitous and deserving circumstances.

The organisation's strategies for achieving this objective include:

1. The provision of financial assistance for Veterans' children and grandchildren through the awarding of scholarships to appropriate applicants who are undertaking tertiary studies and the soliciting and acceptance of donations to:
  - a Trust established for the benefit of Veterans' children and grandchildren
  - funds established and maintained for the benefit of Veterans' children and grandchildren.
2. The promotion and development of the organisation's scholarship policy and procedures occurs with ex-service organisations, the relevant Australian Government Departments and agencies and the broader business and education communities.
3. The retention of the administration of the Long Tan Bursary Scheme funded by the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs.
4. The provision of a support and review service to improve the educational outcomes for the children and grandchildren of Australian Veterans undertaking tertiary studies.

### **Principal Activities**

The Company manages and administers scholarships and bursaries, funded by the Australian Government, ex-service



organisations and individual donors through bursaries and scholarships provided by the Company.

The Company's activities during the financial year are those prescribed in its Constitution, namely the provision of financial assistance towards the costs of tertiary studies to the selected and deserving children and grandchildren of the Australian Veteran community.

### Performance Measures

The Company measures performance through the establishment and monitoring of Key Performance Indicators including:

1. Monitoring the completion rates of recipients in their respective tertiary studies. 83% of recipients from the cohort who commenced their studies in 2018 have completed their scholarship in 2020 and have graduated or are continuing their tertiary education (2017-2019: 85%). The national average tertiary completion rate is 64%-66% after 6 years of study (Norton, A., Cherastidtham, I., and Mackey, W. (2018), Mapping Australian higher education 2018, p32, Grattan Institute and Australian Government Department of Education and Training 2018).
2. Measuring the ratios of expenses to assistance funds distributed to recipients. The ratio of administrative and fundraising expenses to distributed assistance funds is 11.1% (2019: 8.9%). This compares to the ratio of operating expenses to distributed assistance funds of 55.0% (2019: 47.4%). The rise in administration expenses is due to the increased cost of IT and implementation of Covid-19 safe remote working arrangements during 2020.

### Members

The members of the Company are the six principal national ex-service organisations. They are the Australian Veterans' and Defence Services Council, Legacy Australia Incorporated, the Returned & Services League of Australia Limited, the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia Incorporated, the Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia Incorporated and the Australian War Widows Incorporated. The other member is the Chair who is appointed by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. The Repatriation Commission has the right to appoint a person to be a member but has chosen not to do so at this time.

### Directors of the Company

The Chair is a Director. Each of the member organisations appoints a Director and each Director may appoint an Alternate with the agreement of their appointing organisation. All the Directors of the Company have experience in matters associated with the support and welfare of veterans and their families in necessitous and deserving circumstances as well as governance experience. The Directors and Alternate Directors act in an honorary capacity and receive no compensation for their services.

### Company Secretary

Ms Joan Hughes was reappointed company secretary at the May 2019 AGM.

Mr Len Russell was appointed company secretary on 22 February 2021.

AVCAT's Annual Financial Report for year ended 31 December 2020 is available on our website [www.avcat.org.au](http://www.avcat.org.au).

### Major General W. J. Crews AO (Retd)

Chair





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# Patron and Board

## Patron

His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd)

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### Board Directors

#### Chair

Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd)  
Chair of the Board since 2017

#### Deputy Chair

Lieutenant Colonel Ian M Henderson (Retd)  
Board Director since 2005  
Appointed by Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia  
Member of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee

#### Company Secretary

Ms Joan Hughes  
(retired 25 Feb 2021)

Mr Len Russell  
(appointed 22 Feb 2021)

Mr Gordon S Blake  
Board Director since 2012  
Appointed by Australian Veterans' and Defence Services Council  
Member of the National Selection Committee

Squadron Leader Eric C Easterbrook  
OAM (RAAF Retd) (JP)  
Board Director since 2020  
Appointed by Legacy Australia

Mrs Meg Green AM RN RM MN  
Board Director since 2018  
Appointed by Australian War Widows  
Member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

Mr William (Bill) Roberts OAM  
Board Director since 2005  
Appointed by Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia  
Member of the National Selection Committee

Dr Robert Webster OAM FCPA  
Board Director since 2017  
Appointed by RSL National  
Member of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee

### Alternate Board Directors

Mrs Jenny Gregory  
Alternate Board Director since 2018  
Appointed by Australian War Widows

Mr Peter Jones  
Alternate Board Director since 2018  
Appointed by Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council

Mr Peter Kainerder  
Alternate Board Director since 2006  
Appointed by Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia  
Member of the National Selection Committee

Mr Patrick W Medway AM BA MED  
Alternate Board Director since 2018  
Appointed by RSL National

Mr David J Norton FCA  
Alternate Board Director since 2011  
Appointed by Legacy Australia  
Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

### Company Auditor

Mr James Winter  
Grant Thornton Australia Limited

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# AVCAT Staff and Volunteers

## Chief Executive Officer

Ms Joan Hughes (retired Feb 2021)  
Mr Len Russell (Feb 2021)

## Finance Manager

Mr Chris Wicks

## Scholarships Manager

Ms Robyn Richardson

## Project Manager

Ms Tania Hayes

## Communications Officer

Ms Emma Dallas

## Scholarships Administration Officer

Ms Lilia Anderson

## IT and Finance Contractor

Mr Raji Fernando

## Volunteers

### National Selection Committee Chair

Ms Karen Blackwell

### National Selection Committee Members

Mr Gordon Blake  
Mrs Eileen Henderson OAM RFD (Reserve Forces Decoration)  
Mr Peter Kainerder  
Mr William (Bill) Roberts OAM

# 2020 Scholars and Sponsors

## Long Tan Bursary



Hayley Atkins  
Dante Breakwell  
Lara Burford  
Jack Burton  
Ethan Clarke  
Benjamin D'Arcy-Evans  
Indea Davey  
Alexander Davies  
Amber Diss  
Ruby Dolso  
Ryan Fletcher  
Mitchell Gainsford  
Tomara Gallegos  
Poppy Giddings  
David Gordon  
Will Griffiths  
Nathan Hankin  
Estee Hilf  
Chin-Yun Hsu  
Ellie Huckstadt  
Sage Hunter  
Claire Johnson  
Caitlyn Jowett  
Grace Kent  
Louisa Malone  
Lily McDonald

Sonya McDowall  
Matilda Messitt  
Lily Pacey  
Mackenzie Parsons  
Ampornsawan (Tawan)  
Petcharawan  
Kelly Randall  
Isaac Reilly  
Thomas Richards  
Fiona Sanderson  
Yasmin Savage  
Caleb Scanlan  
River Shanahan  
Samzen Shanahan  
Jessica Simmonds  
Danielle Sokil  
Robert Staples  
Jamie Tenikoff  
Brayden Tii Tii  
Tominika Tukutau  
Matthew Ulanowski  
Kel-sie van Rees  
Caitlin Withers  
Brooklyn Wright  
Jomai Yeomans

## RSL Queensland



Claire Anfruns  
Indigo Carey  
Lisa Dowling  
Jessica Hughes  
Siobhan Jones  
Caitlin Kearney  
Imogen Kennedy  
Amy Knight  
Jayde Langley  
Erynn Langley

Kaitlyn Lyons  
Louis Monaghan  
Adeline Pinder  
Cooper Rawson  
Jessica-Ann Riggs  
Bethany Rowe  
Grace Sholl  
Jarrod Waring  
Kellie Webb  
Dyami Wetherspoon

## AVCAT



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'  
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

### AVCAT

Jack Burns  
Nicholas Manser

### AVCAT RAAF

Steven Cooke

### AVCAT TLC

Nicholas Meins  
Ashleigh Simpson  
Hannah Witenden

# 2020 Scholars and Sponsors

## Australian War Widows NSW



Megan Beecher  
Melinda Thomas

## Brisbane Water Legacy



Jack Honey  
Fiona Nguyen

## Carry On Victoria



Madelyne Knappe  
Georgia Mogford

## Chatswood RSL Club



Maddison Nunn

## Legacy Australia - John Gough



Declan Cashman  
Chloe Dean  
Nathan Frerk  
Cai Herps

## Dr Jan Milburn

Catherine Allingham

## NSW Nurses and Midwives Association



Jazmin Meizer

## Roy Morris Memorial Scholarship

Blake Bennett

## RSL Australia



Chelsea Green  
Chloe Johnstone  
Jordan Kenney

## RSL Australia - Reg Saunders



Jade Bray-Walker

## Newtown RSL - Sub Branch



Laura Hespe

## TPI NSW



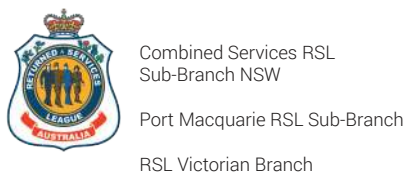
Erin Ginters  
Ethan Surace  
Zara Whelan  
Hannah Wilson

## TPI SA



Lacey Burston  
Kyra Lawrence

## Sponsors



Vietnam Veteran's Association of Australia South Australia

Vietnam Veteran's Association of Australia Western Australia



Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia

### Individual Donors

Dr Peter Helson

## Our Scholar – Tessa Lucas

### I was brought up on stories of the Australian Defence Force.

Both my grandfathers, Grumpy and Poppy, are veterans. My Grumpy, Charlie, served in Korea with the Royal Australian Air Force and my Poppy, Ron, served in Malaya with the Australian Army. It was only natural that I would develop a passion for history as I got older.

I stressed during year 12 because everyone else seemed to know exactly what they wanted to study or do in the future. I had no idea. I was stumped. I wanted to go to university and study English, or history, but I did not see myself getting a career out of it. I didn't realise how wrong I was.

I went to the University of Canberra open day in 2017 and on a whim attended an information session for the Bachelor of Museums, Heritage and Conservation. That's when I decided what I wanted to do. I wanted to work in the heritage industry, as a conservator.

A few months later I was offered a place at the University of Canberra. I deferred, taking a gap year in 2018.

I'm glad I took a gap year because I truly realised just how expensive life is when I moved to Canberra in 2019. My course had been altered so I was doing the new version, Bachelor of Arts (Culture & Heritage). I'm now in my second year and I still love my degree.

My TPI NSW Scholarship is a big honour for me and my family. It has been a life saver in many ways. Studying arts means a lot of reading and I began to struggle with my eyes. Without my scholarship I would not have been able to afford glasses. I noticed a difference in my grades after I got my glasses.

I used my scholarship last year for a day course in paper conservation, which was incredibly fascinating. Without the help of my scholarship, I would not have been able to afford to go.

I applied for a job last year at a national institution, out of curiosity, to see how I would go. Several interviews later, I was hired as an education assistant at the Australian War Memorial. I love my job. I take school groups and teach them stories of the people who the memorial represents.

My TPI NSW scholarship has been a massive financial help during COVID-19. With national institutions closed, including the Australian War Memorial, I am not working, and I probably won't be for a while yet. My scholarship has made balancing life and study easier, which I am incredibly grateful for.

**Tessa was awarded the TPI NSW Scholarship in 2019.**





## Our Scholar – Grace Sholl

**Servant leadership runs in my family's blood. Both of my maternal great-grandfathers served during WWI, and several of my maternal great-uncles served in Vietnam. Both my mother and father carried on this tradition, serving for over 60 years combined in the Australian Army.**



Growing up as an 'Army Brat', I watched both of my parents struggle with their physical and mental health throughout their service. I came to feel responsible for looking after them, even as a young child. I can remember, as young as the age of three, deciding that I would become a doctor so I could help people like my parents, who sacrificed everything to uphold the values they stand for.

I've always found the human mind fascinating, even before I learned of the long family history of mental illness I had inherited. From the age of 12 I was determined to become a psychologist. Four years later I graduated from high school and applied to Griffith University. I was accepted into the Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) program.

I was thrilled by the endless opportunities for service and growth that university provided and threw myself into as many programs as I could. I've been a Peer Notetaker for Student Disability and Accessibility services, volunteered and served the Griffith community as a Student Services Student Leader, volunteered with Griffith's School of Applied Psychology at Nathan Open Day 2019, and mentored first year psychology students as a School of Psychology Mentor.

I was elected to represent Griffith's Mount Gravatt campus on the Griffith University Student Representative Council (SRC). In my free time I volunteer with Headspace as a Youth Representative, partaking in policy consultation, sitting on interview panels, and helping with community engagement at local events.

I am a volunteer with Griffith Mates, a peer-support network that helps international students adjust to university life in Australia through a range of community events and activities. My roles include assisting with and presenting at university events, mentoring international students new to Australia, assisting at events like networking nights and

multicultural dinners, and producing several short videos for Griffith Mates.

With my RSL Queensland scholarship I have been able to wholeheartedly immerse myself into my studies and volunteer work. My scholarship also allows me the ability to look after my parents while studying and look after my own physical and mental health.

AVCAT has allowed me to flourish at university without the worry of how my parents and I would find the funds for my textbook, transport, and medical fees.

***Grace was awarded the AVCAT RSL Queensland Scholarship in 2020.***



***Lieutenant Colonel John Sholl***

***Captain Christine Warne***

## Our Scholar – Chloe Dean

**My name is Chloe, and I am honoured to be a recipient of the 2020 John Gough Legacy Scholarship. Each ANZAC Day, I march with my Dad and proudly hold his hand.**

Each generation of my family has served – including my great grandparents, fondly known as Grandfather and Lil Pop, whom both served for the Army in Papua New Guinea during WWII. It was not until 2019 – 75 years after his service – that Lil Pop was finally, formally recognised for his service and received his medals, at the ripe young age of 99, by the Warrant Officer of the Army.

In 2003, Dad was deployed to the Middle East Area of Operation (MEAO) on Operation Catalyst. In 2009 and 2010, he was once again deployed to the MEAO and then sent to Afghanistan, on Operation Slipper.

My Dad was serving in Operation Slipper when Grandfather died. Dad



was unable to travel back to Australia for his funeral. So, at the age of nine, I read my father's speech for his own grandfather's funeral. I didn't know it at the time, but it was this moment that solidified in my heart that I would always be there to look after my Dad.

In August 2012, my Dad was sent to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Operation Slipper, before being sent back to Afghanistan. I watched from the sidelines as each time he came home, he struggled with PTSD, depression and other mental health disorders, coupled with extreme physical injuries. Over the years, his mental health steeply declined. In 2018 he was finally medically discharged from the RAAF, and met his service dog, Bailey.

In 2016, my mother had an unfortunate accident at work, which ultimately resulted in an extreme chronic condition that causes excruciating facial pain, known as trigeminal neuralgia. There is no cure. In 2019, she underwent experimental deep brain surgery, which, unfortunately, did not help her condition – rather, it has caused permanent tremor in one side of her



*WO Grant McFarlane, Lil Pop and Chloe's father Dean*

body, memory loss, hearing loss and vision loss.

If you know me at all, then you know that my family is the single most important thing in my life. Throughout high school, I acted as the carer for my parents. Right now, I am currently in my second year at The Australian National University completing a Bachelor of Science, with a focus in developing drugs to help overcome or manage extreme chronic pain.

AVCAT gave me financial and emotional support I couldn't have even dreamt of. I am able to work from afar, developing drugs that may help my parents – or people like my parents. It is because of AVCAT that I am able to be a carer from afar, and each April, I am able to travel back home to rural NSW, march with my Dad, and proudly hold his hand.

**Chloe was awarded the Legacy Australia John Gough Scholarship in 2020.**

*Chloe and father Dean with his service dog Bailey*





## Our Alumni – Leon Ross

**I am a 23-year-old Australian Multimedia Composer. At age 17 I moved across the country to pursue my passion for film scoring at Box Hill Institute, the only specialised course in Australia.**

Throughout my studies I struggled immensely with my personal life, financially and psychologically. One thing that kept me going was my passion for storytelling. I managed to take some time to recover and re-emerge with a burning passion.

In 2018, I got the opportunity to be mentored by composer George Papanicolaou. He trained me at the molecular level of dramaturgy, and imparted important life lessons through his brilliant wisdom. I consider him a dear friend and I will be forever grateful for his impact on my life.

In recent years I have put my head down and focused like never before.

In 2018, I was awarded the AVCAT Long Tan Bursary, completed my Bachelor of Applied Music and received awards for Outstanding Student and Best Film Score, as well as nominations for film-score awards. This led to opportunities such as co-composer, and ongoing sound mixing work with George Papanicolaou at Original Score.

2019, was a busy year. I was studying a master's degree at the University of Chichester (UK), remotely, and

**AVCAT**Alumni  
NETWORK

working on multiple projects. I worked at Original Score and Audio Force, a music licensing company located in Berlin and Japan. I received multiple award nominations and had films enter, and win, awards in film festivals all around the world.



My path inevitably leads me to Los Angeles; however, I am currently exploring avenues to support the growth of local films in Australia. A long-time composer friend and I are opening a new business to support this growth, and to provide specialised private education, a record label (for Australian IDM and Scores). Our goal is to open a production house here in Melbourne.

All these goals take extreme dedication, perseverance and quite possibly a lot of support in coping with rejections. AVCAT has provided me a mental stabilizer of sorts, allowing me to focus on my aspirations and act on them to bring them to fruition. Thank you AVCAT and all for the countless support throughout my growth as a composer.

**Leon was awarded the Long Tan Bursary in 2018.**



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