

2021 Annual Report



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

*Transforming lives
through education*



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Our History

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

AVCAT commenced in 2003, evolving from 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 dependents.

AVWVT distributed funds 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 was set aside for future use to provide longer-term assistance to veterans and their families.

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

AVCAT has continued the legacy of AVWVT by assisting the children and grandchildren of Australian veterans to a better future through education.

AVCAT awards scholarships to students in financial need, who show academic potential and are deserving. All scholarships support full-time tertiary study at University, TAFE, or a registered training organisation.





Thomas Hooper, Len Russell AVCAT CEO, John Szabo CEO TPI NSW, Aidan Hill, Molly Thorne

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

The Long Tan Bursary is 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.

Applications for scholarships open on Vietnam Veterans' Day, 18 August, each year. The date for Vietnam Veterans' Day was selected to recognise D Company, 6RAR, who fought in the Battle of Long Tan.

AVCAT assists approximately 250 young people each year with the cost of their tertiary education. AVCAT has awarded 2930 scholarships since 2003.

Chair's Report

I am pleased to report on AVCAT's continuing challenges during a difficult 2021, 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 Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), and it remains our core responsibility. Our present Services of Agreement is due to conclude in June 2022 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, the conduct of presentation events at DVA offices around Australia, (suspended for the most part again during 2021 in response to COVID), and periodic access to the Secretary and senior officers to discuss our operations, intentions, and challenges.

In 2021, we were fortunate to be able to present 37 Long Tan Bursaries. However, eligible and deserving applicants numbered 70. This has continued to add 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 2021, there were a total of 103 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 corporate and 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 114 students over the past five 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 2021, we had 120 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 Andrew Gee MP, remains 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 to taking care of veteran's families, and we express our appreciation for the Minister's 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. We were very fortunate in May, between the various COVID lockdowns in NSW, of having His Excellency host a bursary and scholarship presentation at Admiralty House in Sydney.



Thomas & Darren Hooper



Hayley Robinson-Reeds, His Excellency General the Honorable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd)

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. Our recently established Alumni Program offers prospect of assisting in this respect. Fortuitously, one generous benefactor has offered a significant grant which should allow us to continue our work while we improve our fundraising efforts.

This year we piloted a mentorship program with 20 past and current scholars. This program was met with considerable enthusiasm by staff and both the mentors and the mentees within the program. At the conclusion of the mentorship pilot program the report indicated the great benefits which both the mentors and mentees received

from being involved. The AVCAT board have indicated that this type of program should continue to be offered to support our deserving scholars.

As mentioned in my Chair's report last year, Ms Joan Hughes retired as our chief executive officer in February 2021. The Board appointed Mr Len Russell to lead the organisation from February and he has brought his considerable experience in the not-for-profit sector to this role. Mr Russell has effectively introduced new initiatives to ensure that our governance and regulatory framework is consistent with legislative requirements. He demonstrates very effective management of our small staff team, particularly during the periodic disruptions through lockdowns and working from home. I extend my sincere thanks to Mr Russell for his substantial contribution to our endeavours and support to the board.

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 1,250 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. It is clear also that the veterans and their families who support these young people gain enormous satisfaction from seeing the results being achieved by their dependants.

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

CEO's Report

I continue to believe that education is one of the most important cornerstones of enabling individuals to reach for their dreams and their full potential.

At AVCAT we enable each of our young scholars the opportunity to study within their chosen field of interest and to come closer to achieving their personal and career goals.



AVCAT has continued to take on the challenges which COVID has thrown our way during the second year of the pandemic. During 2021 our staff have continued to work from home during the various lockdowns. Our scholars have also had to adjust to studying online which had many flow-on effects especially for those whose study required practical in-class learning. I am pleased to say that many of our scholars were able to adequately adjust to the new paradigm of remote learning.

We were able to hold five face-to-face scholarship presentation and recognition events during the year. The first was in Adelaide at the offices of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated ex-Service Men and Women's Association of South Australia (TPI SA). I would like to thank TPI SA for hosting the event where we had the scholars from 2021 attend and those who missed out on being presented their certificates from the 2020 cohort. Our new sponsor DEWC also hosted an award ceremony and lunch with staff in their offices in Adelaide. I would also like to thank our Patron, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) who hosted the 2021 and 2020 scholarship awards for NSW at his residence, Admiralty House. Other events which went ahead for those living locally were conducted at the offices of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) in Perth and at RSL Queensland in Brisbane. Even though I was unable to attend in person I was able to be there virtually, connecting online.

During the COVID travel restrictions, AVCAT implemented several online events where our new scholars from 2020 and 2021 could meet their sponsors.

Following on from the launch of our AVCAT Alumni Network, in November 2020, we conducted a six month mentoring pilot program for 20 AVCAT scholars. We invited our alumni to mentor scholars just starting their tertiary studies. The feedback from both the mentors and the mentees involved was



RSL Queensland Scholarship Presentation

overwhelmingly positive, with a recommendation for the program to continue and become a standard offering of AVCAT. In the years to come we will be investing in this new program and our hope is to find a sponsor also willing to invest in improving the lives of these deserving young people.

AVCAT's Purpose and Scholarship Applications

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 students in any single year through awarded bursaries and scholarships. Every year AVCAT receives many more applications from very deserving young people compared to the number of available bursaries and scholarships. Recipients are the children or grandchildren of ex-serving men and women. Awarding scholarships is a complex process which takes many months to review each application against our eligibility criteria and involves independent assessors to reach a final decision on each.

The independent assessors, who we engage, evaluate each application across a variety of criteria including financial and other difficulties regarding their access to tertiary education, academic potential and 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 board directors of AVCAT and either educationalists or defence welfare experts.

AVCAT Sponsors

AVCAT works closely with the sponsors and funders of bursaries and scholarships especially regarding 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 provide them with relevant updates. A recurring message back to sponsors this past year has been how lucky many of the scholars have been to have a scholarship as this has enabled them to be more financially secure during the extended COVID lockdowns as much of the part-time work had evaporated.



Paul Coppock OAM & Bob Schahinger State President VVAA SA with Laura McIntyre

We have continued our strong links with ex-service organisations across Australia and have started to expand our links to the corporate sector. We received 369 requests for information about the 2021 scholarship program, 215 applications were received, and 85 applicants were awarded a new bursary or scholarship. An ongoing priority for AVCAT is to secure more sponsors as there were 130 worthy people who missed out on a bursary or 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 18 for the 2021 scholarship recipients).

I acknowledge the additional support of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs in not only funding the 37 Long Tan Bursaries, that AVCAT administers on its behalf, but also providing administration funding that contributes significantly to the operations of AVCAT.

I would specifically like to acknowledge the support of Minister for Veterans' Affairs the Hon Andrew Gee MP and his staff; Repatriation Commissioner Don Spinks AM; Secretary of DVA Ms Liz Cosson AM CSC and other DVA staff.

Our Sponsors

My sincere thanks also to the new and ongoing sponsors of supported scholarships. There were 48 new sponsored scholarships available for the 2021 eligible applicants. Our generous sponsors are listed on page 18 of this report.

The total number of newly awarded bursaries and scholarships for 2021 was 85.

Acknowledgements

The AVCAT team is small in number, and all are part-time employees. 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 during my first year.

Len Russell

Chief Executive Officer



Deb Penaluna, Allan Dundas, Robyn Richardson, Cooper Schahinger, Len Russell

Board Director's Report

Long and Short-Term Objectives

The principal objective of the Company is to provide financial assistance through tertiary 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



Leon Eddy OAM President TPI SA, Kyra Lawrence, Lacey Burston, Len Russell AVCAT CEO

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. Mackey, W. (2018). Mapping Australian Higher Education 2018 (2018-11). Grattan Institute.).
2. Measuring the ratios of expenses to assistance funds distributed to recipients. The ratio of administrative and fundraising expenses to distributed assistance funds is 10.9% (2020: 11.1%). This compares to the ratio of operating expenses to distributed assistance funds of 55.7% (2020: 55.0%).

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 (now generally referred to as the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia) 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



WA Scholarship & Long Tan Bursary Presentation



Online 'Meet My Sponsor' Event

deserving circumstances as well as governance experience. The directors and alternate directors act in an honorary capacity and receive no compensation for their services.

AVCAT's Annual Financial Report for year ended 31 December 2021 is available on our website www.avcat.org.au.

Major General W. J. Crews AO (Retd)

Chair



Patron and Board

Patron

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

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

Mr Len Russell
Appointed 22 Feb 2021
Ms Joan Hughes retired as CEO and Company Secretary in February 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)
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 Australia
Member of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee

Alternate Board Directors

Mr Richard Cranna OAM
Alternate Board Director since 2021
Appointed by Legacy Australia
Member of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee

Mrs Jenny Gregory
Alternate Board Director since 2018
Appointed by Australian War Widows
Member of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee

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 Australia

Mr David J Norton FCA
retired from the Board September 2021
Mr Norton was a Legacy Australia Alternate Board Director since 2011

Company Auditor

Mr James Winter
Grant Thornton Australia Limited

AVCAT Staff and Volunteers

Chief Executive Officer

Len Russell

Finance Manager

Chris Wicks

Scholarships Manager

Robyn Richardson

Project Manager

Tania Hayes

Communications Officer

Emma Dallas

CRM & Scholarships Administration Officer

Lilia Anderson

Scholarships Administration Assistant

Jessica Nguyen

IT and Finance Contractor

Raji Fernando

Volunteers

National Selection Committee Chair

Karen Blackwell

National Selection Committee Members

Gordon Blake

Eileen Henderson OAM RFD (Reserve Forces Decoration)

Peter Kainerder

William (Bill) Roberts OAM

2021 Scholars and Sponsors

Long Tan Bursary



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Rachel Astrid	Hannah Loughhead
James Balsillie	Clara Loughlin
Anderson Bee	Nicholas McIvor
Janet E Blair	Liam Morath
Grace Brown	Euan O'Flynn
Georgia Caire	Ethan Palfrey
Angus Callahan	Mayha Podolski
Zachary Ellsworth	Ngan Roach (Bui)
Shaan Evans	Rachel Roberts
Daryl Gresty	Hayley Robinson-Reeds
Isabeau Harding	Shanda Saltmarsh
Jeremy Harrington	Lachlan Sharman
Ben Haskett	Kimberly Skinner
Princess Aurwin Heenan	Caitlin Stewart
Kerry Hespe	Benjamin Todd
Keiran Hill	Lucy Walker
Brianna Hobby	Caitlin Webster
Grace Hull	Byron Wrigh
James Kelly	

RSL Queensland



McArthur Alford	Louise Foster
William Averillo	Madison Gallaway
Ellen Aylett	Clare Hedger
Emma Benson	Emma James
Georgia Berry	William McFarlane
Hayden Brown	Sarah Phillips
Montgomery Chigwidden	Lee Sumner
Holly Collins	Shonae Walker
Cory Eglinton	Nicole Watson
Libby Foster	Lydia West

AVCAT



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

AVCAT RAAF

Danielle Canning
Kirsten Pini

AVCAT TLC

Ali Hogue
Olivia Micallef
Sheralee Smythe

Bravery Trust



Maddison Brighton

Carry on Victoria



Teagan Gleed
Ellie Newton

DEWC



Cooper Schahinger

2021 Scholars and Sponsors

Legacy Australia - John Gough Memorial



Thomas Cashman
Andrea Rowberry
Ebony Simmons
Caleb Wood

Dr Peter Helson

Troy Denholm

RSL Australia



Cooper Wharton

RSL Australia - Reg Saunders



Marshall Tye

RSL Victoria



Hannah Thorp

TPI NSW



Aidan Hill
Molly Horne
Keely Jameson

TPI NSW – Colin McGrath Memorial



Gemma Plant

TPI SA



Kimberley Morrow
Jake Stoeckel

Tasmanian Navy Network (Hobart) & TPI Tasmania



Harrison Harper

Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia South Australia - Daryl Knapp



Laura McIntyre

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia



Jin Ju Redding
Harrison Saunders

Australian War Widows Queensland



Macey Bennett

Sponsors



TPI Queensland



AUSTRALIAN
WAR WIDOWS NSW LTD



Newtown RSL sub-Branch
Forestville RSL sub-Branch



BRISBANE WATER (NSW)

LEGACY



mellori
MELLORI SOLUTIONS PTY LTD



NSW Trustee
& Guardian



Global Defence Solutions

Individual Sponsor

Mr Graeme Morris



Our Scholar – Melinda Thomas

My father served as an engineer in the Australian Army for over a decade, and sadly later lost his life due to an illness developed during his service overseas in Iraq.

My siblings and I were raised by our brave mother. From a very young age, I knew that I wanted to work hard to achieve things my father never got the chance to. I will always look up to my dad, he was a very wise and kind man. I hope to do him proud.

I have always been interested in maths and problem solving. I thoroughly enjoyed economics at high school, so I chose to continue studying it at university. Soon after I was accepted into a Bachelor of Economics at Sydney University I happened to find my dad's old army papers in our garage. I discovered that he had also studied an economics degree while on placement with the army in Singapore. I never knew – it was a very special discovery.

For the last couple of years, I've been working part-time as a research analyst at an economic policy think tank. This internship has developed my skills, provided me with valuable industry experience but most notably it has allowed me to grow confidence in my abilities.



I have lived out of home and independently for most of my tertiary studies, as it was more conducive to a positive study environment. Living out of home, as well as obtaining a distinction average last year was largely made possible due to the assistance that I received from AVCAT and my Australian War Widows NSW Scholarship.

I was fortunate enough to receive a graduate job offer for next year as a management consultant at a global consulting firm, Kearney. I look forward to finishing off my undergraduate studies and beginning a challenging, and exciting, chapter next year.

I hope to develop my problem-solving skills in the private sector to later work in development economics, a field that focuses on poverty solutions for developing countries. I believe using economics to find social-maximising outcomes for people in poverty is where my passion truly lies.

Melinda was awarded the Australian War Widows NSW Scholarship in 2020 and graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Economics; she is now working in a graduate role at a global consulting firm.

Our Scholar – Bruce

My name is Bruce, and I am a 2019 Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) Scholar and Long Tan Bursary recipient. My father is a Vietnam veteran; he served in the Royal Australian Navy for nine years as an electronics and radar systems technician.

I've always been interested in health care but never quite knew where I'd fit in. I thought about medicine, psychology, nursing - even having a go at research with a year of study in Medical Science under my belt. But still, I felt there was something more I was looking for.

After a year of studying Medical Science at university, I took the plunge and applied to study for a Bachelor of Health Science (Paramedicine).

Health is not just the absence of illness or injury. It encompasses the whole person, incorporating their mental and social wellbeing to provide a holistic view of the whole person. In contrast to past transport-centred ambulance practice, modern paramedicine has a holistic approach to healthcare. It deals not only with high-acuity 'emergency' interventions, but also low-acuity and high complexity scenarios such as mental health presentations.

The opportunity to practice paramedicine is an honour. The privilege of caring for someone on what they might consider one of the worst days of their life, and the trust they have in you, is a responsibility not to be unappreciated.

A compulsory part of my degree is completing several clinical placement blocks in both state-based ambulance services and non-ambulance-based pre-hospital care environments. While exciting, clinical placement is a large personal and financial commitment. It requires me to support myself anywhere in the state, without paid work, for up to five weeks at a time. It is reassuring to know that I have the support of AVCAT during these challenging times.

I look forward to graduating and having the opportunity to practice as a registered paramedic in the future. Wherever it takes me, whether it be the Defence Force, state ambulance or private non-ambulance service, I look forward to a safe, fulfilling career in paramedic practice.

Bruce was awarded the Long Tan Bursary in 2019.



Our Scholar – Macey Bennett

Every person has a unique perspective on the way the world has shaped them, and everyone has a unique story to convey how they walk the earth. My family, my passions, and the opportunities in my life have influenced the determined, enthusiastic, and grateful woman that I am today. Here is a glimpse of my story.



My name is Macey, I am 18 years old, and I am from Townsville, Queensland. I have a small family that consists of my younger brother and my mum. My dad was in the Air Force and unfortunately died when I was four years old. I also had a brother who passed away because of Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia as a baby. Even though these devastating situations put my family in some tough circumstances, they are experiences that have shaped me into the strong-minded person that I am today.

When I was growing up, the thought of going to university seemed almost impossible. No one in my family had ever enrolled in university and the costs seemed way out of reach. However, I have always had a little fire in my belly and have always strived for greatness, knowing that no goal of mine was ever out of reach.

I am studying a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and Creative Industries majoring in Communication at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. Sometimes I pinch myself because I am the luckiest girl in the world.

Without the support of AVCAT and the Australian War Widows Queensland Scholarship, I would

never have been able to move away from home and achieve my dream of studying to become a lawyer.

Although I miss my family incredibly, I have fully immersed myself in every opportunity that comes my way. While studying at Duchesne College, I have been heavily involved in the teams of Debating, Swimming, Public Speaking, One Act Play, Athletics, Cross Country, Opera on the Lawn and Choir.

I have also been involved in leadership and was nominated as First Year Representative for 2021 and for Service Convener on the Student Executive Team for 2022. At the University of Queensland sports awards night, I was also awarded the

Spirit of the Inter-College Council.

This year has been the best year of my life, and studying full-time has given me so many incredible opportunities. My degree is five and a half years long and I am incredibly grateful to AVCAT for supporting me on this journey that I will cherish forever. I hope to continue to study hard, yet continue to get involved in all the activities that surround me so that I can one day achieve my dreams of becoming a lawyer and making a difference in our society.

Macey was awarded the Australian War Widows Queensland Scholarship in 2021.

Our Alumni – Julia Clugston

I was fortunate enough to receive the AVCAT Long Tan Bursary after being encouraged to apply by my secondary school teachers. With this scholarship, I was able to see myself off to university in Melbourne to study a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Journalism and Professional Writing and Editing.

My father served Australia in the Vietnam War. A time, and a place that we don't think of lightly. Although he has shared some things with me over time, there is still so much there that is missing. When coming on board with AVCAT, it has been a journey of emotions to read and hear about other people's relationships with this war, their parents, grandparents or great grandparents serving for our country. The effects of which, are still being felt even as the generations pass by. There are so many stories to hear, so many memories (both good and bad) to share, and so much connection to our land and families to be felt.

During my third year of studying, AVCAT reached out to see if I was interested in being mentored by someone, perhaps with similar interests, lifestyle, degree. I took this opportunity because I knew it was a great chance to make a new friend or learn some new skills. And I am so glad I did.



I was paired with Elisabeth from Townsville! Now, I'm based in a small town in rural Victoria, so this was both exciting and unnerving to be meeting someone from nearly the top end of Australia (how cool are connections and social media!!)

Elisabeth and I share an interest in writing, she was a working journalist whilst I was studying to be one! As a typical third-year student who was looking to graduate at the end of the year was thinking 'jobs, career, jobs'. Elisabeth came to the rescue to help with all things great and small to do with me applying for and seeking jobs. Showing me a world I didn't realise existed. I was quite narrow-minded in what I thought about writing and she opened doors for me.

Elisabeth and I were in different time zones for a while and so one night we both were up late (me later than her) editing a piece of work I had to submit for my class THAT

night. To say she is a legend is an understatement.

With all her help, I was able to land a dream graduate role with Parks Victoria. I am now working as a ranger in the beautiful Grampians National Park. Although I hope to return to journalism and writing one day; I am enjoying stretching my legs after being online for two years straight and enjoying seeing so many beautiful sights every day.

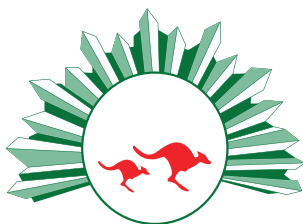
One day, I hope to visit Elisabeth in Townsville, because that would be so damn cool.

I am so thankful for AVCAT bringing Elisabeth into my sphere, suddenly making the world seem even smaller. It's a connection I am very grateful for.

To our veterans, our current army and our future. Also, to those that are binding us together, I thank you.

Julia was awarded the Long Tan Bursary in 2019.





**AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST**

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