



*15<sup>th</sup> Year of Remembrance*

# **2020 Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Service**

**(Virtual Service delivered via Video Download)**

**Honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Servicemen and Women**

**11am, Sunday 31 May 2020**

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [viewers, listeners, readers]  
are advised that the following program contains images and  
voices of people who have passed away.*

***Lest we forget***



# Order of Service

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*Opening* Didgeridoo Player, Josh Whiteland  
(*biography page 9*)

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*Acknowledgment  
of Country* Master of Ceremony, Karla Hart

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*Blessing* Words from Rev Janet Turpie-Johnstone  
(*biography page 10*) read by Karla Hart

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*Reflection from the  
late Aunty Dot Peters* Aunty Dot Peters AM

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*Special thanks to the  
Victorian Aboriginal  
Remembrance  
Committee* By Karla Hart  
(*VARC biographies pages 1–9*)

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## Welcome

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*Opening Address  
from Gunditjmarra &  
Gunai-Kurnai Elder* Chairwoman of the Victorian Aboriginal  
Remembrance Committee (VARC),  
Aunty Beryl Booth (*biography page 1*)

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*Opening and  
Welcoming Address* Executive Director, Aboriginal Victoria,  
Tim Kanoa (*biography page 10*)

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*Welcome to the Shrine of  
Remembrance* Shrine of Remembrance Chairman  
Air Vice-Marshal (Retd) Christopher  
Geoffrey Spence AO (*biography page 11*)

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## Ministers Address

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*Minister for Aboriginal  
Affairs Address*

The Hon. Gabrielle Williams MP  
*(biography page 12)*

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*Minister for Veterans  
Address*

The Hon. Robin Scott MP  
*(biography page 12)*

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*Tribute to the late  
Aunty Dot Peters AM*

By Dr Andrew Peters  
*(biography page 8, tribute pages 15–18)*

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*Guest Speaker*

Flight Lieutenant Aimee McCartney  
*(biography page 13)*

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## Wreath laying

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*The Ode*

Travis Colson *(biography page 20)*,  
2020 Aunty Dot Peters Award recipient  
*(The Ode page 22, award information  
and recipient biographies pages 19–23)*

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*The Last Post*

Alastair Tomkins *(biography page 14)*

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*Period of Silence*

All in attendance

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*Rouse Bugle*

Alastair Tomkins *(biography page 14)*

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*National Anthem*

Royal Australian Airforce Band

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*Performance*

“Freedom Called” song by Dave Arden  
*(lyrics pages 24–25, biography page 14)*

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## Biographies of the Committee Members



*Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Committee and the 2020 Aunty Dot Peters Award Recipients. Front Row from L-R: Uncle Eric Peters, Andrew Peters, Anne Jenkins, Loraine Padgham, Aunty Jean Williamson, Minister Gavin Jennings, Sam Halim, Ricky Morris and Andrew McIntosh. Back Row from L-R: Emma Tibballs, Nyteisha Bushell, Damian Walker and Travis Colson.*

### **Aunty Beryl Booth**

#### *Gunditjmara and Gunai-Kurnai Elder Chairwomen of the VARC*



Aunty Beryl Booth is a Gunditjmara and Gunai-Kurnai Elder. Born in 1942, Aunty Beryl is the eldest of, and only daughter of Harry and Hannah Booth (née Lovett). Aunty Beryl married Noel McDonald, with whom she had four sons and two daughters.

Aunty Beryl is one of Victoria's unsung heroes and is a lifelong advocate for Aboriginal people around the state. Aunty Beryl has worked tirelessly to ensure that Aboriginal Servicemen and Women who served in WWI and WWII, are respectfully acknowledged. For this reason Aunty Beryl together with a strong cohort of men and women, founded the VARC in 2006. The Committee was established to bring honour and recognition to the Aboriginal Servicemen and Women of Victoria. It was in 2007, that the first Remembrance Service was held at the Shrine. Aunty Beryl currently serves on the VARC as the Chairwoman.

Aunty Beryl's passion and dedication to serve on the VARC was birthed from personal experience having had family members serve in both WWI and WWII. Aunty Beryl experienced firsthand the impact

of broken men returning home from war and attempting to integrate back into family life, compounded by the lack of rights and recognition Aboriginal Servicemen and Women received when and if they returned home, after serving their country.

Being a strong advocate for the rights of her people, Aunty Beryl not only serves on the VARC, but has also donated her time to many prominent Aboriginal run organisations, including the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. She was involved during the earliest days of what is known today as the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages and was previously the Chairwoman of the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation.

Aunty Beryl was employed as one of the first Aboriginal teacher aides at Liddiard Road Primary School in Traralgon. After returning to Melbourne to care for her mother in 1981, Aunty Beryl went on to spend 10 years as a public officer at the Kerrup Jmara Elders Corporation. Their efforts resulted in the Commonwealth Government passing the Aboriginal Land (Lake Condah and Framlingham Forest) Act 1987, at the request of the Victorian Government. It was a historic and hard-won decision that recognised Aunty Beryl's people as the custodians of the land at Lake Condah in Western Victoria.

In 1995 Aunty Beryl established the Victorian Aboriginal Embassy with other Elders including Uncle Eugene Alexander Lovett, which still operates from her home in Northcote. Aunty Beryl has been running the Embassy since 1995 and advocates strongly for the rights of Victorian Aboriginal people through the Embassy.

### **Sam Halim** *Vice Chair*



Retired Flight Sergeant Sam Halim is a twenty year veteran of the RAAF. As an Australian of Egyptian heritage, Sam served as a linguistics expert in Intelligence in the first Gulf War 1990-1991 and in the training of coalition forces in Kuwait in 1998.

In 2006, Sam was the President of Healesville RSL when Aunty Dot again approached the RSL to have them honour her father and the other unrecognised Aboriginal soldiers who had fought and died for Australia. It was Reconciliation Week and Sam organised to have the didgeridoo play during the reading of the Ode to honour them. This simple gesture was met with much resistance but Sam convinced the sub-branch it was the right thing to do. This was only the beginning of a longer fight for recognition.

Since 2006 Sam has been a tireless advocate for honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Servicemen and Women who have served, and continue to serve, in the Australian military. Sam has since stood side by side with Aunty Dot and the VARC in his service as Vice Chair of the VARC for nearly fourteen years, advancing the cause of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Servicemen and Women together.

Sam Halim has played a key role in organising every service from 2006 in Healesville to 2020, including the 2007 service at the Shrine of Remembrance when the Aboriginal Flag was raised for the first time. One of his main beliefs is that if you fight for your country, it owes you acknowledgement, equality and recognition.

Sam is well known for his community service and is the current President of the Healesville Rotary Club.

### **Uncle Glenn James OAM**



Uncle Glenn James OAM is Yorta Yorta man and is the 10th child in a family of 14. He was conscripted to serve in Vietnam when he was 20 years old after receiving three letters from the conscription office. The first notice demanded the service of Uncle Glenn James while the second rejected him on the grounds that he was Aboriginal, and the third confirming that his service was needed. He joined up in June 1968 at Puckapunyal, and later served in Vietnam from May 1969 to late April 1970.

Uncle Glenn is a former Australian Rules Football umpire and was President of the Victorian Football League (VFL) Umpires Association in 1985. Uncle Glenn umpired the 1982 and 1984 VFL Grand Finals and is recognised as the only Indigenous Australian to umpire VFL or AFL football.

Uncle Glenn has a Bachelor of Education degree and a Diploma of Technical Teaching, and he lectured at Swinburne University for many years. He currently liaises with a number of schools advising on their support for Aboriginal students and is involved with the Koori Courts. Uncle Glenn was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in 1987.

### **Uncle Eric Peters**



Uncle Eric Peters is the son of WWII Serviceman Private Vincent Robert Peters who died on the Burma Railway. Uncle Eric was only four years old when his father died.

Uncle Eric's 15 year old brother Harry Peters, raised his age to join the military service and he fought in Papua New Guinea during WWII.

Uncle Eric together with his sister the late Aunty Dot Peters AM are founding Committee members of the Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Service.

### **Aunty Marlene Scerri**



Aunty Marlene Scerri is a member of the VARC. She has been a textile artist for 20 years, and a sewer for 49 years having sold her Art around Australia and overseas. With Art exhibited at the National Gallery of Victoria; Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Melbourne Museum; Whittlesea Council and St Vincent's Hospital. Aunty Marlene

also has a teaching career that spans over 15 years.

## **Aunty Jean Williamson and her late husband Uncle Noel Williamson**



Aunty Jean Williamson and her husband Uncle Noel Williamson (dec) were founding members of the VARC (Aunty Jean retired in 2020). Taungurung Elder, Aunty Jean Williamson (Stewart) enlisted in the Air Force towards the end of WWII when she was 18. Three of her Great Uncles from Yea/Mansfield area served in WWI in Europe and the Middle East. Aunty Jean's husband Noel Williamson served in the RAAF in WWII and although not Aboriginal, he was a respected member within the Aboriginal community.

## **Anne Jenkins**



Anne Jenkins is a Kamilaroi woman from North West, New South Wales. She has worked with the Indigenous Community in the Yarra Valley and Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne for 29 years.

Anne is a founding member of the Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA) now known as Oonah Health and Community Service Aboriginal Corporation and is currently the Chief Executive Officer. Oonah is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, established to address the needs of the Indigenous Community in the Outer East of Melbourne through the establishment of a Belonging Place where an integrated service model was set up to deliver culturally appropriate services for the Aboriginal Community.

Anne is an active member of her local community and as such has been involved in a large number of networks and advisory boards.

Anne is particularly interested in the development and maintenance of health, educational, employment and support programs for Indigenous people with the aim of encouraging them to embrace self-determination.



Throughout her career Anne has had the pleasure of working with and alongside the late Aunty Dot Peters AM who acted as mentor, role model and friend. It was in support of Aunty Dot that Anne joined the VARC. Anne watched in awe as Aunty Dot set out to ensure that the sacrifice her father made in WWII and many others before and after him received the recognition they deserved. This resulted in the Healesville RSL under the leadership of Sam Halim being the first organisation to honour Aboriginal Servicemen and Women. As a result, the VARC was set up and the Service at the Shrine was held for the first time in 2007.

### **Ricky Morris**



Ricky Morris joined the reserves in Gippsland in 1990 hoping to 'scratch the itch' of Army life. He joined the reserves rather than the regular Army as he had a young family and was also completing a plumbing and gas fitting apprenticeship.

In 1995 Ricky joined the regular Army as an Engineer and during this time was accompanying recruiting teams to Indigenous communities.

In 1999 Ricky was deployed to Timor-Leste for four and a half months, after which he was an Army Recruiter. Ricky transferred back to the Reserves in 2004 but volunteered for an eight-month tour of duty in Afghanistan in 2008–09.

Upon return he transferred to the Inactive Reserves and was employed by the Victorian Aboriginal Housing Commission and was active in Aboriginal veterans' groups. Ricky's family has a long service history, stretching back to WWI.

There were five Lovett brothers that served in WWI - Alfred, Leonard, Frederick, Edward and Herbert and four of these also volunteered for WWII most of whom had seen action on the Western Front. They are from the Gunditjmara Nation in Western Victoria from the Lake Condah Mission. Leonard 'Charlie' had a daughter, Alice, who served

with the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force in WWII, a son Leo, who served in the Korean War and a grandson, Mervyn McDonald, who served in the Vietnam War. Frederick served in Palestine with the 4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment. His grandson, Sergeant Ricky Morris, has served in East Timor and Afghanistan. Edward's daughter, Sarah Pearl, also served in the Australian Women's Army Service during WWII. The Veteran's Affairs building in Canberra is named after this family to honour their distinguished military contribution.

### **Lorraine Padgham**



Born in Wangaratta, Lorraine descends from the Nira Illam Balluk clan of the Taungurung people from central Victoria. Since retiring from TAFE teaching and University administration, Lorraine has been actively involved in teaching language and cultural heritage at U3A in addition to serving on a number of Indigenous

advisory committees.

As a Taungurung Elder, Lorraine is actively involved in culture retrieval and language reclamation and is passionate about developing opportunities for Indigenous children to access and achieve educational parity.

Lorraine is an active member of the VARC. Both her parents served in the RAAF during WWII and her grandfather served in WWI (Gallipoli) and WWII. Through genealogical research, Lorraine discovered three Great Great Uncles from the Yea district had served during WWI. Contemporary newspaper articles acknowledged the esteem displayed by the local community for these brave Uncles on their departure however the unfortunate reality was on their return they did not receive the benefits awarded to other combatants. Through the VARC, Lorraine hopes that full recognition of that service, may one day, be afforded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Servicemen and Women, who served during wartime.

### Dr. Andrew Peters



Andrew Peters grew up in Healesville and is a Senior Lecturer in Indigenous Studies and Tourism at Swinburne University. With family connections to Coranderrk and Cummeragunja Aboriginal Reserves, Andrew is passionate about teaching and strengthening awareness and understanding of Indigenous culture and history, and particularly about acknowledging and valuing contemporary culture. He was awarded his PhD in 2017 and has received a number of awards for his work in education. He is extremely proud to follow in his mother's footsteps to further her dreams for reconciliation, including the ongoing recognition of Aboriginal service in Australia's war efforts.

### Andrew McIntosh



Andrew McIntosh joined the VARC in 2012. Of Welsh and Scottish heritage, he recalls his grandfather describing WWI bi-planes in dog-fights over the skies of Britain. One German aircraft was hit and the pilot, on fire, parachuted down to be met in a field by farmers with pitchforks and spades.

Since then Andrew has taken an active interest in military history and the service of Indigenous Australians in military conflicts. Andrew is a qualified accountant and helped found a movement within CPA Australia and the Institute of Chartered Accountants to address the dramatic under-representation of Indigenous Australians in the profession.

In his spare time, Andrew continues historical research that has supported identification of soldiers in the Shrine of Remembrance exhibition *Indigenous Australians at War*, uncovered the first known painting portrait of an Aboriginal soldier in uniform (T. Baumgartner, 1917). His research also supported the Committee's Centenary of ANZAC project to identify WWI Victorian Aboriginal Soldiers. Andrew

met with descendants of William Cooper and arranged for a portrait of Daniel Cooper (William Cooper's son who was killed in WWI) to be presented to the Shrine, where it will be held in perpetuity.

Andrew helped develop ANZ's Reconciliation Action Plan and was a mutual mentor to several young Indigenous people, including Australia's first Aboriginal Youth Representative to the United Nations in 2011. His support of Indigenous causes has extended beyond Victoria to assist in the preservation of Indigenous cultural sites and recognition of achievements of significance in other States as well as at the Australian Parliament in Canberra.

A documentary called *Five Soldiers* and commemorative artwork based on Andrew's research into WWI pharmacy student soldiers, were recently released. Andrew currently works as a Business Manager at Monash University, is a board member of a local community newspaper and has spent many years as a volunteer with emergency services.

## Biographies

### Josh Whiteland



"Koomal" is the traditional name of Wadandi man Josh Whiteland. Koomal is the Wadandi word for brushtail possum and the totem chosen for him by his Wadandi Elders. Josh was born in Busselton, WA and grew up surrounded by family, culture and a deep understanding of connection to country.

Passionate, learned and spiritually aware, Josh has a personal commitment to sharing his knowledge of his culture and lore with visitors. It is for this reason he created 'Koomal Dreaming' so that he could communicate at least part of his connection with his land and his people with guests from around Australia and the world.

## Reverend Janet Turpie-Johnstone



Janet was born in Portland, Victoria on Gunditjmara Country and has lived most of her life in Melbourne on Wurundjeri Country. Her ancestry is diverse with connections to Western Australia right through to Victoria, on both sides of the family. Janet serves on several community boards whilst continuing her academic pursuits.

Janet has five children who are adults and one Burrai.

## Tim Kanoa

*Executive Director, Aboriginal Victoria*



Tim is a proud man from the Kerrupmara Clan of the Gunditjmara people (South West Victoria) and Bunitj Iwaidja people (West Arnhem Land). Connection to community and culture is of vital importance to Tim.

Tim was appointed as Executive Director of Aboriginal Victoria in May 2019. Prior to this, Tim was Director of the Aboriginal Inclusion Support Branch in the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Tim has held other Victorian Public Service positions with Corrections Victoria as the Manager of Aboriginal Programs and as Executive Officer to a Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee.

Prior to joining the VPS, Tim worked as the State-wide Coordinator for the Koorie Youth Council, The Foundation for Young Australians as an Initiative Manager and project officer positions with the Koorie Heritage Trust and Windamara Aboriginal Corporation.

In addition, Tim has been on a range of boards and advisory committees supporting the Victorian Aboriginal community, including the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation, The Torch and the Koori Heritage Trust.

## Air Vice-Marshal (Retd) Christopher Geoffrey Spence AO



Chris Spence was born in Sydney in 1951 and joined the Royal Australian Air Force Academy at Point Cook, Victoria in 1969, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree.

After completing pilot training in 1974, he flew Iroquois helicopters with No 5 Squadron, including disaster relief operations throughout Australia, deployments to Papua New Guinea and a six-month tour with the United Nations Emergency Force II, based in Ismailia, Egypt. Following flying instruction training, Chris instructed both in Australia and on exchange with the Royal Air Force, including flying a Vampire in the Vintage Pair Display Team. He has commanded No 35 Squadron flying both Iroquois helicopters and Caribou tactical transport aircraft and was Officer Commanding No 86 Wing, flying the C130 Hercules.

In 1997 he was promoted to Air Commodore and posted to the position of Chief of Staff, Support Command Australia, subsequently assuming the position of Commander Training – Air Force in March 2000. In June 2001 he was promoted to Air Vice-Marshal and took up the appointment of Deputy Chief of Air Force. Following a posting as Head Strategic Operations in 2004, Chris assumed his final appointment as Commander Joint Logistics based in Victoria Barracks, Melbourne.

On retiring from the Permanent Air Force on 31 March 2007, Chris Spence served on the Active Reserve as a member of the ADF Airworthiness Board and the Defence Indigenous Reference Board, retiring for the second time in December 2017. He became a Legatee in August 2007 and served as President on the Board of Management of Melbourne Legacy Club for two years until March 2012. He is also a Board Member of the Defence Health Foundation, the Defence Bank Foundation and the AMDA Foundation (whose responsibilities include the Avalon Airshow). On 1 January 2012 he took up the position of Chair of the Shrine of Remembrance Trustees.

Chris Spence was appointed a Member in the Order of Australia

on Australia Day 1998 and an Officer in the Order of Australia on Australia Day 2004. He is a Fellow of the former Australian Institute of Management, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a graduate of both the USAF Air War College and the Harvard Advanced Management Program.

Chris is married to Lucille and they have two children, Angus and Hannah.

### **The Hon. Gabrielle Williams MP**



Gabrielle Williams MP is the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and Minister for Women in the Victorian Government.

She was appointed to the Cabinet in 2018, having previously served as a Parliamentary Secretary, and proudly represents her local community as the Member for Dandenong.

Gabrielle holds a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from Monash University. She has previously worked as a lawyer and project manager and has served as a director of a not-for-profit disability sport organisation.

Gabrielle is a passionate advocate for equity and social inclusion and is proud to be a member of Victoria's first ever gender-equal cabinet. She is committed to driving an important reform agenda to improve outcomes for women, young people and families across Victoria.

### **The Hon. Robin Scott MP**



Minister Scott has held the seat of Preston since 2006, retaining the seat in each of the four elections since he was elected.

Minister Scott is now the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Veterans since December 2018. He was previously the Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

The Veterans portfolio has a number of Acts for which the Minister for Veterans is responsible. These are the;

- *Veterans Act 2005* (except Part 4, which is administered by the Victorian Minister for Consumer Affairs)
- *Shrine of Remembrance Act 1978*
- *ANZAC Day Act 1958* (sections 3 and 4A) and the
- *Returned Servicemen's Badges Act 1956*.

The *Veterans Act 2005* requires the Government to administer the Victorian Veterans Council (VVC), including recommending board appointments to the Governor in Council (GIC).

### **Lieutenant Aimee McCartney**



Aimee McCartney is a proud Taungurung and Wotjobaluk woman from the northern suburbs of Melbourne, and is the eldest girl of nine children. In 2013 Aimee completed a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Australian History and Archaeology at the University of Melbourne.

For six years Aimee worked for State and Federal Government establishing clear and accessible employment pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples, across all departments, divisions and business units.

Aimee is active in her local community as she is a member of the Barengi Gadjin Land Council and Taungurung Waters and Land Council. In 2017, Aimee represented Victoria at the National Indigenous Youth Parliament.

In 2018, Aimee joined the Royal Australian Air Force as an Indigenous Liaison Officer and after completing her initial military training was posted to No. 21 Squadron (City of Melbourne) at RAAF Williams – Laverton and RAAF Base Point Cook. In her role, Aimee strives to provide a culturally safe workplace through the development of genuine, respectful and sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Air Force communities.



## Alastair Tomkins



Alastair Tomkins is a Brisbane based musician, actor and arts educator. He started the grassroots initiative “Music for mateship” to help musicians support Anzac Day 2020 in their local communities during COVID-19 lockdown.

## Dave Arden



Dave Arden is known in his Aboriginal lore as a Songman and Storyteller.

David comes from the Gunditjmara people in South Western Victoria and Kokatha people of the West Coast, South Australia. David’s poetic songs are inspired by his deep passion and love for his country, his upbringing and his family with whom he shares a special, spiritual connection. Highly respected in the music industry within Australia, his song writing, vocal ability and ethics are second to none. David sings from the heart, with an incredible vocal range and a beautiful musicality.

David is a highly sought after artist. Over the past 28 years, David has toured extensively both nationally and internationally. He spent ten years as lead guitarist with Archie Roach, and has worked and performed with the late Ruby Hunter, Hard Times, Kutcha Edwards, Dan Sultan, Shane Howard, Tiddas, Coloured Stone, Paul Kelly, Bart Willoughby, Mixed Relations, to name a few. An original and founding member of The Black Arm Band, David was co-musical director of the live touring show ‘Murundak’ - songs of freedom. The Black Arm Band is a gathering of some of Australia’s finest Aboriginal musicians, with their songs of struggle, resistance and freedom.

## Tribute to the late Aunty Dot Peters AM



Dorothy Peters was dedicated to the progression of reconciliation in Victoria for many years, working within the community to build understanding and respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Among her numerous achievements, she successfully brought long overdue recognition to Aboriginal Servicemen and Women.

The well-known Yarra Yarra Elder was greeted by all as Aunty Dot. Born in Melbourne in 1930, she grew up in Healesville. Her mother, Daisy, had been born on the nearby Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission. As a child, Aunty Dot would visit her grandparents at the Coranderrk site. Her grandmother taught her traditional basket coiling, and how to weave eel traps out of reeds and sword grass. Aunty Dot would fish and swim in Badger's Creek, a tributary of the Yarra, while learning respect for the land and all of its creatures.

Departing Healesville in her youth, Aunty Dot worked as a telephonist in Melbourne for a number of years. In the 1960s she was a stewardess on a cruise ship but in 1969, she returned to Healesville to raise her young son. She was a valued member of the local community.

For over 40 years, Aunty Dot was part of the reconciliation process in Victoria. Her involvement seemed natural and inevitable to her, and became as much about reconnecting with her own ancestry as promoting cultural awareness to the wider community. In 1980, she began to teach Aboriginal studies and for 10 years was a popular Aboriginal educator at a local primary school. She set up a program to teach the children about Aboriginal history and culture. She also reflected on her own history and later was inspired to write a dreaming story about how Badger's Creek got its smooth rocks and clear water.

Aunty Dot never lost the weaving and basket coiling skills her grandmother passed down to her. Over the years she held countless workshops, teaching the ancient techniques in schools, at festivals and community events and to overseas delegates. In 2002, she won the prestigious Red Ochre Award for her work in preserving and teaching the art of basket coiling in Victoria.

Aunty Dot's father, Vincent, was a Yorta Yorta man born at the Cummeragunja Mission in New South Wales. He fought in the Second World War, but was captured and died a prisoner of war on the Thai Burma railway. The prejudices of the day meant her father's sacrifice for his country went unacknowledged. His family did not receive any of the support afforded to other relatives of those killed, and when Coranderrk was annexed as a returned soldier settlement, no land was given to them.

Aunty Dot always insisted that her father's memory should be properly honoured and formal recognition given to the significant contribution made by Aboriginal men and women in the Australian Armed Forces. In 2006, she approached the Healesville Returned and Services League (RSL) and persuaded this organisation to take part in Reconciliation Week. Aunty Dot's son adapted the Ode of Remembrance to be accompanied by a didgeridoo. It was played during a special ceremony.

Soon after, Aunty Dot began discussions with the Victorian Government and, shortly after, on 31 May 2007, the first Victorian Aboriginal Men and Women Remembrance Service was held at the Shrine of Remembrance. For the first time, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags were raised at the Shrine. The service is now held annually and has been adopted nationwide. Aunty Dot was a member of the Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Committee, building further support and services for Aboriginal veterans.

Over the years, Aunty Dot broke down several barriers. She became the first Aboriginal member of the Healesville RSL Ladies Auxiliary and the first Aboriginal Board Member of the Healesville and District Hospital. She involved herself in a wide range of local community groups and services, including the Police Liaison Committee, Healesville Indigenous Arts Enterprise, Yarra Valley Reconciliation Group, Yarra Valley Health Service and Outer Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network.

Aunty Dot's work has been acknowledged with many awards, including a NAIDOC Elders Award, Yarra Ranges Shire Lifetime Achievement Award, Victorian Aboriginal Award, and, in 2001, a Centenary Medal. In 2011, Aunty Dot was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women.

Aunty Dot was a much-loved member of the community, respected and admired for her ability to connect with people in a warm and engaging way. She has given so much of herself in the name of promoting respect and recognition and in doing so has contributed not only to reconciliation in her local community, but right across Victoria and beyond.

## **The Aunty Dot Peters Award**

*The Award honours the late Aunty Dot Peters AM who was born in 1930 and sadly passed in 2019. The Award was established to honour the memory of her father Vincent who died a prisoner of war on the Thai Burma railway. Aunty Dot always insisted that her father's memory be honoured.*

*The Aunty Dot Peters Award was birthed from a dream that the late Aunty Dot Peters had for her people to empower Aboriginal men and women, and to seek true reconciliation between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people.*

*Aunty Dot, being a former educator set this award up to encourage young people to be true to themselves and strive for a good education. The Award itself, supports Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander students to complete Years 9 and 10 at a Victorian school. Awards are available for four students, who will receive \$5000 each.*



# Biographies of the 2020 Aunty Dot Peters Award Recipients

## Travis Colson



Travis Colson is very proud of his heritage from the Warrabal people from Central Queensland.

Travis is a Year nine student at Churchill Kurnai College in Victoria. Travis did not have a good start to his schooling, due to his transient life, travelling to remote communities in the Northern Territory. Travis and his family are very proud of his current achievements.

Travis is passionate about soccer and has won numerous trophies. Travis was selected to go to the Gold Coast and then to England for a training camp. Currently Travis plays with the Men's 2nd division at Churchill and is co trainer of the Under 14's.

Travis hopes to enter the Air Force and become a Helicopter Pilot. Travis thanks the Committee of the Aunty Dot Peters Award for the opportunity to achieve his personal goals.

## Nyteisha Bushell



Nyteisha Bushell is a proud 15 year old Yorta Yorta girl. Her Aboriginal family originate from Echuca, they are the “River People”. Nyteisha has an older brother and younger sister. Nyteisha and her sister live with their Grandmother in Bacchus Marsh.

With the love from her parents and Nan’s rules and boundaries, Nyteisha is living in a happy and safe home.

Nyteisha has taken her Nan’s advice “dream big dreams Teesh then work at making them come true”.

Nyteisha is proud of her schooling achievements and her “best ever” school report.

In the past two years, Nyteisha was chosen to play in the Victorian netball team Seven Sisters.

As an Aunty Dot Peters Award recipient, Nyteisha is working to reach her career goals and becoming a kind, respectful, strong, assertive young lady.



## Emma Tibballs



Emma Tibballs is a Gunai-Kurnai young lady from Wurruk Victorian who attends Sale College.

Emma is an active member of the AIME program and is involved with other Indigenous programs and initiatives during and outside of school hours.

Emma has a keen interest in music and a strong desire to learn more about her Aboriginal cultural background. As she enjoys talking to people, Emma would like to go to University and become a Counsellor or Therapist.

The Aunty Dot Peters Award, will allow Emma to join in more aspects of school life, including sports and help Emma reach her career goals.

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## The Ode

They shall not grow old,  
as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them,  
nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun  
and in the morning,  
We will remember them.

## Damien Walker



Damien Walker is a proud Yorta Yorta man from the north east region of Victoria and a year nine student at Yarrawonga Secondary Collage. Damien lives in a family of six people consisting of his Mum, Dad, sisters Jasmine and Rihanna and brother Aaron.

In the community, Damien has competed in multiple sports and Aboriginal Community Events such as the Marngrook Day in Albury Wodonga and the Yarrawonga Mulwala Bridge Walk for NAIDOC Day. Some of Damien's achievements inside of school include winning the ASX Share Market Game in 2019, winning events at school sports days and learning to do dot painting in his school Indigenous program.

Damien has a passion for Metalwork, Woodwork and Information Technology.

As an Aunty Dot Peters Award recipient, Damien hopes to study Computer Science and become a Software Engineer.

## Freedom Called by Dave Arden

*A song co-written with Paul Kelly. It is a story written about the Guditjmara men who served in the First and the Second World Wars, and how they fought for a country when they were not even recognised as citizens in the lands of their ancestors.*

My great uncles were ordinary men  
They fought in the First World War  
Left a wife and children  
When the army came to call

They were sectioned at Gallipoli  
Stood on the Turkish shore  
All around so many young faces  
Some didn't come back at all

When freedom called  
Those wounded men and women stood tall  
When freedom called  
Oh God!  
Is there nothing left at all?  
When freedom called...

Andy Arden came from Framlingham  
He fought in the Second World War  
A full-grown man, but not a citizen  
He couldn't vote under the law

They sectioned him in Guditjmara country  
On the western district shore  
Drafted as an M.P.  
To uphold the army's law

When freedom called  
Those Gunditj men and women stood tall  
When freedom called  
Oh God!  
Is there nothing left at all?  
When freedom called...

Sometimes those men would sit there quiet  
Go driftin' in their mind  
It seemed to me they could see the spirits  
Of the ones they left behind  
They fought for more than just their homeland  
They fought for respect  
To walk down a road like any other man  
Lest We Forget...

When freedom called  
Those Mara men and women stood tall  
When freedom called  
Oh God is there nothing  
left at all  
When freedom called  
Those Gunditj men and women stood tall  
When freedom called



## Special Thanks

*The Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Committee would like to acknowledge the following people:*



- The two founders (the late Aunty Dot Peters and Sam Halim).
- Former Victorian Premier Steve Bracks - the first Premier of Victoria to offer support for the Service.
- Members of the VARC:
  - Aunty Beryl Booth (Chair)
  - Uncle Glenn James (AOM)
  - Uncle Eric Peters and his late wife Margaret Peters
  - Aunty Jean Williamson and her late husband Uncle Noel Williamson
  - Anne Jenkins
  - Ricky Morris
  - Lorraine Padgham
  - Andrew Peters
  - Marlene Scerri
  - Andrew McIntosh (Secretary)
- Karla Hart
- Royal Australian Airforce Band



### **Aunty Dot Peters' Wreath**

The gum leaf wreath artwork by Nina Kelabora used in the materials for this service was inspired by the late Aunty Dot Peters AM, who laid a gum leaf wreath at the Shrine each year. The colours of the leaves are the same as those found in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags. Individual leaves, sitting side by side, proudly represent Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal soldiers who have served and continue to serve as equals in the Australian Defence Force.



SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE  
MELBOURNE