

# Royal Australian Engineer Association of Victoria (Incorporated)

## Annual Report 2025

*(covering the period 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025)*

### **Introduction**

The Committee of the RAE Association (Victoria) has continued focusing on:

1. growing membership,
2. achievement of the fundamental purposes of the association, and
3. strengthening the management and administration functions of the Association.

This report outlines the efforts and activities undertaken by the Association in achieving these areas of focus.

### **Growing Membership**

Membership of the Association is critical for its future. Currently, we see this as an ongoing challenge. In the last 12 months we have seen a small increase in the overall numbers. Whilst we enjoy a good relationship with the Regiment, and have seen a steady number of applications, this is an area we need to continue focussing upon.

At the time of preparing this report we still had several outstanding memberships (20) which is most likely the result of cost-of-living pressures, or simply a change in personal circumstances. This number is higher than in the past and we are certainly spending more time trying to encourage renewal of memberships. It could be argued that we should seek quality rather than quantity, but we are an inclusive association and continually seek a broad and diverse membership base.

As of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025, our membership numbers stood at 383.

Detail of membership categories is shown in the table below.

Membership level (31st December yearly)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Concessional Life Membership \$250 once only for those Aged 65 and over	37	37	34	37	39	37	36
Complementary Life Membership	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Honorary Life Membership	6	6	4	4	3	3	2
Member	226	256	264	276	278	287	285
Associate Member	5	5	6	7	9	10	9
Over 80 Honorary Life Membership	42	42	41	45	42	43	42
Ordinary Member 10-year payment - Year ending 2025-	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>379</b>

### **Fundamental Purposes of the Association**

## **To foster esprit-de-corps between all Sappers.**

Our strategy for fostering esprit-de-corps is based on:

1. Developing and maintaining close ties with Sapper associations both locally and nationally.
2. Providing opportunities for members and guests to meet in fellowship.
3. Provide opportunities for members to attend excursions of both military and engineering interest.
4. Strengthening and the development of ties with 22nd Engineer Regiment.

## **Developing and Maintaining Ties with Sapper Associations.**

The Colonel Commandant Southern Region, COL Bruce Murray, AM (Retd), is a co-opted committee member of the Association and acts as a conduit between the Head of Corps, other RAE Associations and the Regiment. The functions of the RAE Southern Region Corps Committee (SRCC) were transferred to the Association in December 2021. This particularly includes the continued support (including financial) of events previously administered by the SRCC such as the Sir Clive Steele memorial lecture and the RAE Golf Day.

### **1. Local Sapper Associations.**

The Association retains positive links with local Sapper Associations such as the Woodpeckers, Blue Tongues and 22nd Construction Regiment Reunion group. The Woodpecker's Association has wound up and negotiations are currently underway to consider transfer of membership and assets.

### **2. Other Sapper Organisations.**

We have continued to share information with our kindred organisations in Victoria and other RAE Associations and units around the nation by sharing reports and copies of the Sapper Summit.

### **3. The RAE Corps Conference.**

The Corps Conference was not conducted in 2024. This was extremely disappointing and needs to be rectified. Great Australia wide benefits can be had by sharing with other Sapper Associations. These are critical for veteran and serving sappers alike. Strong vibrant Associations greatly assist in maintaining and enhancing ongoing comradeship, supporting welfare issues and ultimately the prevention of suicide.

## **Fellowship Activities.**

The Association provided the following opportunities for fellowship and camaraderie:

Family Day, 22nd Engineer Regiment. A family day was conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2024. The Association was invited to attend and provide a BBQ to members and families. The CO, LTCOL Russell Collins, presented two RAE Head of Corps awards, The Warrant Officer Class One John Raddatz OAM Award for Most Outstanding Junior Non-Commissioned Officer (SERCAT 3/5) to Corporal A.T. Purcell, and the Sergeant M. Chalk MG Award for Most Outstanding Sapper (SERCAT 3/5) to Sapper C.J. Finch. This is a significant achievement for the Regiment to receive two national level awards. **Congratulations Corporal Purcell and Sapper Finch.**

The 2024 RAEAV Awards. At the final parade, farewells and awards conducted on the night of 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024 the annual RAEAV awards were announced and presented by the Associations President, LTCOL Don Hughes. **Most Outstanding Sapper, Sapper Cameron Finch, Most Outstanding Junior NCO, LCPL Nathan O'Malley and Most Outstanding Young Officer, LT William Chen.** A hearty congratulations to the recipients of these awards.

1. The Annual Sapper Muster. The Sapper Muster was conducted on 01<sup>st</sup> March 2025 and conducted at Oakleigh Barracks. About 85 members and guests attended this year's event which provided an opportunity to catch up with friends and enjoy a wonderful social event. One Life Member was in attendance, Rob Youl OAM, RFD. Our Patron, Colonel John Wertheimer AM, RFD and Colonel Sharon Coates CSC were also warmly welcomed. The CO 22 ER, LTCOL Russell Collins, and the RSM of 22 ER, WO1 Clinton Matheson, formally represented the Regiment. Apologies were received from the Head of Corps, Brigadier Say DSC and the Corps RSM WO1 Russel Peel. Stewart (Ace) Williams, a valued sponsor, was also in attendance and had travelled from Cairns.
2. Christmas Function. The annual Christmas (Saint Barbara) function was held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2024 at the Croydon RSL. This event allowed members to gather in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.
3. Remembrance Day. The Association was formally represented at the Ringwood RSL, the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, and the Warrandyte RSL Remembrance Day Commemorations.
4. The following activities were also conducted: Celebration of the Corps 122<sup>nd</sup> Birthday at the Belgrave/Upwey RSL on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024. This function celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of the Association and the amalgamation of 4CER and 22<sup>nd</sup> Construction Regiment to form 22<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Regiment. The Sir Clive Steele Memorial Lecture was conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024 with SPR Scotty Balestra showcasing a foot bridge he constructed in Rwanda along with a wonderful virtual presentation by CAPT Emily Mirabella on the southwest pacific campaign in WWII. The Sir John Holland Golf Day was conducted on 21 October 2024.
5. Sapper Tree of Remembrance. On 17 November 2024 the Engineer Memorial tree was rededicated by the Association's Chaplain, Captain Kirsten Linden, in the gardens of the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance. Brigadier Bob Slater AM, RFD was present.
6. Newborough Reunion. The Association again hosted the Latrobe Valley sappers in the Yallourn-Newborough RSL on 4 October 2024.

#### **Excursions and Tours**

The Association aims to provide a variety of excursions and tours annually.

1. Canberra -Newcastle Tour. Between 10-16 June 2024 a tour was conducted visiting the Australian War Memorial and Parliament house and then Fort Scratchley in Newcastle along with a visit to Fighterworld at RAAF Base Williamtown..
2. Kapooka Tragedy Commemoration. The Kapooka Tragedy Commemoration was conducted during the period 20 – 22 May 2023. The Secretary of the Association, Jim Davis, laid a wreath on behalf of the Association. 21 May 2025 will commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the tragedy.

#### **To foster and maintain the history of the Royal Australian Engineers in Victoria.**

The Association has four main areas of focus in maintaining the history of the Corps in Victoria:

1. History Rooms. The Association manages the preservation and collection of memorabilia for the 22 Engineer Regiment unit history rooms in three depot locations under a memorandum of understanding (MOU). This MOU is reviewed from time to time. With more than 3144 items and 31,800 photographs and 60 videos now registered, the Association is well advanced in the management and maintenance of RAE history and memorabilia in Victoria. The Association continues to have items donated and has secured further storage facilities at Oakleigh Barracks. The Association has a dedicated website that provides access to information on the artefacts and documents now managed by our curator, Mel Constable. More volunteers are always welcome to assist with the collection, display, and management of the collection. The website can be accessed at <https://raevictoria.com/>
2. Heritage Trail. The heritage trail project focuses on placement of markers on sites of historical significance to the Corps. A renewed focus on selecting and installing plaques on significant sites around the country is needed. Many sites are in country areas. Volunteers are invited to continue this important work.
3. Historical Plaques. The placement of a plaque at the Trades Hall Council to recognise the location of the first Engineer Depot at the site located on the corner of Lygon Street and Victoria Street, Carlton is complete. The outstanding efforts of our Patron John Wertheimer, along with the late Colin Bowater and Bruce Campbell, are acknowledged.
4. History Book. The book, *Forests, Fires and Fortifications*, the Diamond (75th) History of 22nd Engineer Regiment 1950 – 2025 chronicles the history of the construction elements of the current regiment (Headquarters 22 Engineer Regiment, 105 Construction Squadron and 203 Works Section). It is intended to be published as an electronic copy. We aim to release the book to celebrate 75 years since the raising of the supplementary reserve in 1950. A further history volume is envisaged to tell the story of the supporting sapper Associations along with a third volume focusing on Victorian Combat Field/ Engineers. These are large undertakings and will require further volunteers.

#### **To disseminate information relating to Sapper activities.**

Information dissemination is based on:

1. The Association's Website. The Association has a highly active and progressive website which provides flexibility with online purchases, membership and events which is located at <https://raevictoria.com/>
2. Facebook®. We increased the Association's facebook® page use with greater emphasis on advertising and reporting on activities and events. This will continue.
3. Mail. The committee continues to provide email updates for members who do not access social media pages. We also continue to use the Australia Post surface mail for members who do not access the internet. We have decided to close our PO Box and utilise the Ringwood East Engineer Training Depot as our postal address (56 Dublin Road Ringwood East, VIC 3135).
4. Sapper Summit. The Association magazine, *Sapper Summit*, continues to provide informative and enjoyable articles and reports on RAE activities in Victoria. The Editor, Michael Potts, seeks contributions from any source.

#### **Welfare**

The Association provides limited welfare support through visitation by both members and the Association's Chaplain, Kirsten Linden. Additional professional or specialised guidance/assistance is provided through organisations dedicated to this task (RSL, Legacy, Open Arms etc). Increased exposure to the RAE Overwatch organisation is a positive method of ensuring that individual Association Members can assist in providing frontline welfare support to individuals in need. Our Secretary, Jim Davis, is the point of contact for welfare issues.

## **Management and Administration**

The overall management and administrative procedures within the Association are well established and in line with current practices.

### **Financial position**

The Association's financial position remains strong allowing us to continue with the implementation of various projects as outlined in the financial reports.

The financial accounts have been audited by independent auditors.

### **Administrative Systems**

The Association continues to implement systems to reduce administrative workload whilst improving overall governance of the Association.

The main management system is based on a web-based application provided by "TidyHq". This system is the basis for both membership management and financial management of the Association, allowing relevant committee members access to all financial and membership data/information.

The introduction of the new website at <https://raevictoria.com/> has improve member access to information and introduce simplified procedures to access electronic funds transfers for payments and purchases.

The Association is in a strong position improving on the delivery of its products and services designed to achieve the fundamental purposes of the Association whilst maintaining a strong financial position.

### **Committee of Management**

We would like to thank the management committee and guidance team for their efforts in continuing to improve the outcomes achieved by the Association. Particularly, a special vote of thanks is extended to our outgoing Padre, LTCOL John Raike.

COL John Wertheimer AM, RFD - Patron

COL Bruce Murray AM - Colonel Commandant

CAPT Kirsten Linden - Padre

### **Committee**

LTCOL Don Hughes (Retd) - President

LTCOL Todd MacDougall (Retd) - Vice President

Jim Davis - Secretary

Duncan Howarth – Treasurer

Mel Constable - Curator, Heritage, and Tours

Michael Potts - Editor Sapper Summit

Eric (Jock) Howatt JP – Merchandise and Fundraising

Margaret Handte - Social

MAJ Mark Shanks RFD (Retd) – Golf and Latrobe Valley area representative

## **Life Members**

MAJ Austin Byrne RFD (Retd)

Mr Norm Dodgson

LTCOL Colin Bowater RFD (Retd) (RIP)

MAJ Bruce Campbell RFD, ED (RIP)

LTCOL Rob Youl OAM, RFD (Retd)

## **22 Engineer Regiment.**

The Association warmly appreciates the ongoing support to all the Association's activities from 22 Engineer Regiment. In particular: the Commanding Officer LTCOL Russell Collins, the RSM WO1 Clinton Matheson and our Liaison Officers, SGT Ben Thompson and SGT Justin Merritt.

## **Succession Planning**

A formal succession planning system is established within the Association. The vision is to have all positions filled, with future members identified and assisting the current incumbent. There is scope for additional functions to be included: heritage trail, history rooms, commemorative activities, Sapper Summit research and writing, visits and tours and sporting representatives. Regional representative and event organisers are also sought.

## **Conclusion**

The Association celebrated its tenth anniversary during 2024. Overall, the Association is in a sound financial position with good reserves whilst it continues to actively achieve its fundamental purposes. Although the membership base is steady, further improvement could be directed towards recruiting current serving sappers throughout Victoria. It is deemed critical to ensure a Corps Conference includes the various sapper Associations from around the country.

J.H. (Jim) Davis

Secretary

March 2025

D.C.(Don) Hughes

President

March 2025