

**Royal Australian Engineer Association of Victoria (Incorporated)**

# ***“Victorian Sappers”***

## **Annual Report 2026**

*(Covering the period 11<sup>th</sup> April 2025 – 9<sup>th</sup> April 2026)*

The Committee of the Royal Australian Engineer Association of Victoria (Incorporated) (RAEAV) continues to focus on growing membership, achieving the fundamental purposes of the Association and enhancing numerous administrative and management functions.

### **Key issues**

Key issues identified during the year include:

The impact of the Defence Estate divestment of properties program, particularly the implications for the historical and heritage collections at Oakleigh Barracks.

The positive proposed instigation of an Australia wide RAE conference initiative to improve connectiveness between all RAE groupings and associations.

Successfully producing a significant contribution to the ongoing Corps history and heritage data collection responsibility with the publication of ***Forests, Fires & Fortifications***, an updated history of sappers in Victoria.

### **Membership**

The RAEAV continues to enjoy a high-level of membership.

Critical to this membership growth, is recruiting and mentoring a positive and vibrant management and leadership team.

A formal succession plan enhances this by approaching experienced and dedicated sappers to assume these important roles.

Continued emphasis is focused on recruiting serving sappers reaching the end of their active careers.

A table outlining membership is enclosed with this report at Annex “A”

## **Fundamental Purposes of the Association**

To satisfy the fundamental purposes of the Association, which is ultimately about fostering *esprit-de-corps* between all sappers, a number of significant activities and functions are conducted annually. Providing fellowship is a primary function of the RAEAV and this is powerfully recognised with the conduct of numerous commemorative, social and historical activities:

### **2025**

Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal, 18th April.

ANZAC Day commemorations, Croydon, Ringwood, Heidelberg, Warrandyte Melbourne City, Moe, Yallourn/Newborough and Yinnar RSLs.

Blue Tongues Reunion, Major Creek, 16th-17th May.

80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Kapooka Tragedy Commemoration, 21<sup>st</sup> May.

Waterloo Dinner, Watsonia, 27<sup>th</sup> June.

Corps Birthday, Upwey/ Belgrave RSL, 5<sup>th</sup> July.

Vietnam Veterans commemorate the Battle of Long Tan, Doncaster RSL, 7th August

Latrobe Valley RAE Muster, Newborough, 3rd October.

Sir Clive Steele Memorial Lecture.

Victorian Sappers Golf Day. Evans Zoller Trophy, Royal Melbourne Golf Club

Remembrance Day, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, 11<sup>th</sup> November.

22 ER Change of Command and final end of year parade and family day, Oakleigh Barracks, 7 December.

RAEAV Christmas Lunch, The Ringwood Club, 10 December 2025

End of year Saint Barbara's Day Christmas function, Croydon RSL, 5th December.

### **2026**

Sapper Muster, Oakleigh Barracks, 28<sup>th</sup> February

Visit to Fort Queenscliff, 14 March.

## **Maintaining ties with other Sapper organisations.**

Through our Colonel Commandant, Brigadier David Wainright DSC, AM, we maintain enriching contacts with all our fellow sapper associations both locally and nationally. In

particular, the Woodpeckers, Blue Tongues, 22<sup>nd</sup> Construction Regiment Reunion Group, RAE Overwatch, Opens Arms, Legacy and the Latrobe Valley Sappers.

The Association also has positive connections with the RSL community, particularly sub-branches at Ringwood, Croydon, Warrandyte, Doncaster, Yallourn - Newbrough, Oakleigh, Upwey-Belgrave and the State (Branch) Headquarters at 4 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000.

Nationally, we regularly communicate and share our magazine, *Sapper Summit*.

### **Recognition**

Recognising the wonderful contributions Victorian Sappers have made is important.

The RAEAV annual recognition awards each year are presented at the end of year regimental parade.

For 2025 the following awards were made:

**Most Outstanding Sapper**, Sapper Sean Miller,

**Most Outstanding JNCO**, LCPL Damon Gillan and

**Most Outstanding Young Officer**, LT Rachell Wardell.

A national RAE Commendation to Michael Potts for his tireless work as Editor of the Association's bi-annual magazine ***Sapper Summit***., at the annual 2025 Christmas Lunch.

Brigadier Bob Slater AM, RFD was awarded a ***Life Membership*** of the RAEAV at the 2026 Annual Muster.

### **Management and Administration**

The financial position of the Association remains sound and full details will be provided at the AGM.

The appointment of RAE Colonel Commandant Southern Region was handed from Colonel Bruce Murray AM to Brigadier David Wainwright DSC, AM in early 2026.

Colonel John Wertheimer AM, RFD remains as Patron for the Association.

Noel Tipton replaced Todd McDougall as Vice President in February 2026.

The full effects of the Army Estate divestment program are not yet fully clear. In essence, the three Victorian "Engineer Depots" will not be sold but will experience increased utilisation, particularly at Oakleigh Barracks.

This will have a direct impact on the history and heritage ability of the RAEAV to store, catalogue and display artifacts. The actual history display room adjacent to the main

Drill Hall at Oakleigh Barracks will not be affected. The office, storage and record facilities of the Association will need to be catered for elsewhere – possibly by the utilisation of a shipping container. These arrangements continue to evolve.

Established in 2014, the RAEAV revisited and reviewed its constitution during the reporting period to ensure currency and clarity for members.

A minor amendment, clarifying Honorary Life Membership rules, will be presented to the AGM this year.

The RAE Head of Corps (HOC) has approved the creation of a central platform to include national up-to-date contact details, a national calendar of association events and a streamlined process for purchasing Corps merchandise.

Also endorsed by HOC is the proposal for an annual teleconference with the first scheduled for July 2026 which allows time for associations to prepare reports for their respective Colonel Commandants prior to the Corps Conference held in early November each year.

Connectivity within the Association remains good with the [raevictoria.com](http://raevictoria.com) web site and the RAE Association Victoria Facebook page coupled with our biannual magazine *Sapper Summitt*.

A monthly meeting occurs between the CO and RSM 22ER and the President and Secretary RAEAV.

### **History and heritage**

In 2025 we celebrated the centenary of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kapooka Tragedy and the 75<sup>th</sup> (Diamond) anniversary of the establishment of the RAE Supplementary Reserve (RAE-SR) in 1950 and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kibeho massacre in 1995.

2026 celebrates 125 years anniversary of the Australian Army, 123 years of the Royal Australian Engineers and 166 years of the Victorian Volunteer Corps of Engineers being established in 1860.

A fresh history of Sappers in Victoria, *Forests, Fires & Fortifications*, was launched by the Association on Remembrance Day 2025 at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital by the Chairman of Austin Health, Mr Ross Cooke OAM.

The RAEAV is a corporate member of the Friends of Fort Queenscliff Association.

The Victorian Military Engineer Heritage Trail project requires an injection of interested personnel.

## Annex A

### Membership Numbers as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026

Membership level (31st December yearly)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Concessional Life Membership \$250 once only for those Aged 65 and over	37	37	34	37	39	37	36	38
Complimentary Life Membership	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Honorary Life Membership	6	6	4	4	3	3	2	2
Member	226	256	264	276	278	287	285	286
Associate Member	5	5	6	7	9	10	9	7
Over 80 Honorary Life Membership	42	42	41	45	42	43	42	48
Ordinary Member I 0-year payment - expired 2025	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
Total	325	355	353	373	375	384	379	383