

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Organisation

Entry ID: AWE0388

Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC)

(1951 - 1985)

Born 1 April, 1951

Died 31 January, 1985

Occupation Armed services organisation

Summary

The Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) was established in April 1951 to help overcome a manpower shortage. During the late 1970s female soldiers began to be integrated into the Army at large and in early 1985, the WRAAC was disbanded. The last Officers' Cadet School parade (6 December 1984) on the WRAAC School parade ground saw the Officer Cadets and the WRAAC Contingent marching to the strains of "Soldiers of the Queen". Prior to the formal closing of the gates the WRAAC School flag was ceremoniously lowered and slow marched "off", to be folded and handed over to the Chief Instructor of the WRAAC School for safe keeping. The gates, which had been repainted for the occasion, were then closed by Major Diane McVicker of the WRAAC School and Mrs Gwen Ellis – sister of Colonel Best.

The WRAAC Prayer was also included in the ceremony:

Almighty God, we ask you to reveal yourself in the fullness of your love to all who reach out to you. Help us to recognise ourselves as your children. Let the day soon dawn when we will allow your love to right every wrong.

Give us the courage and self control to play our part as members of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps to help your kingdom come on earth. Lead us in the pathway of life as your own wisdom and love see best: we are anxious only to do your will.

We ask you to give us the grace to rise above temptation, to be patient when tired, to be kind and helpful towards others.

To all members of our Army grant the special blessing that we need. Preserve us from selfishness. Bless every member of our Corps, our families and friends.

We come to you as children to our Father, asking these and all other blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Events

2051 - 2051

WO Pat Rawlings became the first Chief Instructor for the recruit training course.

2051 - 2051

The prefix 'Royal' granted by His Majesty King George VI, in recognition of the AWAS wartime service, thereby becoming Womens Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC).

2051 - 2051

Approval given for the introduction of the WRAAC in to the Citizens Military Forces (CMF).

1952 - 1952

Major Crane appointed Chief Instructor for the Officer Refresher Course. Later appointed as Chief Instructor for the Officer's Qualifying Course held for Non-Commissioned Officers who had previously been servicewomen.

2051 - 2051

Approval given for defining two Corps of the women's side of the ARA. 1. RAANC and 2. WAAC.

2051 - 2057

Lieutenant Colonel Kathleen Best, a former matron of the AANS, commenced duty as the first Director at AHO.

2051 - 2061

Colonel Sybil Irving appointed as first Honorary Colonel of WAAC.

2051 - 2051

Major Lucy Crane appointed Assistant Director of the WAAC.

1972 - 1977

Colonel Kathleen Fowler appointed Director of Corps.

1973 - 1973

Honorary Colonel Sybil H Irving dies.

1974 - 1974

Married women with children under 16 years are permitted to serve.

1977 - 1979

Colonel Barbara Maxwell appointed Director

1979 - 1979

Posting of Director abolished.

1979 - 1981

Colonel Dulcie Verinder appointed Head of Corps.

1981 - 1982

Colonel Pam Smith replaces Colonel Verinder

1982 - 1982

Lieutenant Colonel Pam Smith appointed Service Women's Advisor to CGS.

1982 - 1982

Colonel Margaret Fleming appointed to replace Colonel Smith.

1983 - 1983

WRAAC members swap their buttons and badges for those of the Corps in which they served.

1984 - 1984

Final course of Recruits and Officer Cadets march out of WRAAC School.

1985 - 1985

WRAAC School disbanded. Female officer cadets attend OCS Portsea.

1985 - 1985

The only member of the WRAAC to serve through the entire life of the Corps was WO2 Joyce Cole (Hogan) who retired aged 60 years. WO2 was awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, Meritorious Service Medal and the Defence Force Service Medal and Bar

2050 - 2050

Submission made to the Military Board, with consideration being given for the reintroduction of women into the Australian Regular Army (ARA) and Citizens Military Forces (CMF)

2050 - 2050

Cabinet approved the reintroduction of the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS). The Service was to be raised as an entirely separate unit, and not integrated with the male CMF.

2050 - 2050

Approval given for the enlistment of 250 personnel.

2051 - 2051

Decision made to discontinue AAMWS as a separate Service.

2059 - 2059

Members of the WRAAC became eligible to contribute to the Defence Forces Retirement Benefit Fund.

2059 - 2059

The Corps recognised as a permanent part of the Defence structure.

2061 - 2061

Colonel Irving retires as Honorary Colonel.

2061 - 2066

Lieutenant Colonel May Douglas appointed Honorary Colonel.

2067 - 2067

First detachment of WRAAC on overseas duty to Singapore. Seven WRAAC posted for 12 months service with 121 Signals Squadron.

2067 - 1985

Lady Helen Cutler appointed Honorary Colonel.

2052 - 2052

Announcement that the period of engagement (3 or 6 years) and training for women would be brought in line with their male counterparts.

2052 - 2052

Lieutenant-Colonel Best was promoted to Colonel.

2053 - 1985

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Margaret, C.I., G.C.V.O. appointed by Her Majesty The Queen as Colonel-in-Chief of the WRAAC.

1954 - 1954

Queen Elizabeth 11 visited Australia. WRAAC personnel participated in events around the country.

2055 - 2057

Colonel Dawn Jackson appointed deputy director of WRAAC

2056 - 2056

An alliance between the WRAAC and the Womens Royal Army Corps (WRAC), approved by Her Majesty the Queen.

2056 - 2056

Colonel Irving reappointed as Honorary Colonel

2056 - 2056

WRAAC and RAANC personnel participated as usherettes etc. at the Melbourne Olympic Games.

2057 - 2057

Colonel Best died aged 47 years.

2058 - 2058

Approval given for the adoption by the WRAAC of a Corps flag.

1959 - 1959

The main gates at WRAAC School were designed and named in honour of Colonel Best – “the Kathleen Best Memorial Gateway”.

1986 - 1986

Female cadets are trained at the Royal Military College Duntroon or the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA).

1980 - 1980

Graduates are no longer allocated to WRAAC, but rather to the corps in which they are to serve.

2057 - 1972

Colonel Dawn Jackson appointed director of WRAAC

Published resources

Book

Soldiers of the Queen : women in the Australian Army, Bomford, Janette, 2001

Colonel Best and her soldiers: The Story of the 33 years of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, Ollif, Lorna, 1985

A Stroll down memory lane, WRAAC Association, 2001

Resource Section

Australian Servicewomen's Memorial, Southwell-Keely, Michael, 1999,
<http://www.skp.com.au/memorials/pages/00018.htm>

Journal Article

Vale - Barbara Edwina Audrey Starrett (nee Maxwell) Colonel and Last Director of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, 1991

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra

[Representations for grant of title of "Royal" to the Women's Australian Army corps](#)

[\[Seven slides from the opening of the Kathleen Best Memorial Gates, Women's Royal Australian Army Corps \(WRAAC\) School, Mosman, NSW, 6 November 1959\]](#)

[Policy and working files of the Directorate of Women's Royal Australian Army Corps \(DWRAAC\) of Army Headquarters/Army Office?Policy and working files of the Directorate of Women's Royal Australian Army Corps \(DWRAAC\) of Army Headquarters/Army Office](#)

[History of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps](#)

[Miscellaneous historical notes etc. from Women's Royal Australian Army Corps school and Women's Royal Australian Army Corps directories](#)

[Kathleen Best Memorial \(Gates\) and portrait](#)

National Archives of Australia, Perth Office

[Accounting stocktake - officer-in-charge's schedules \[WRAAC - 14th Women's Royal Australian Army Corps\]](#)

[Training - military - general - period of CMF training \[WRAAC - 14th Women's Royal Australian Army Corps\]](#)

[Displays - General WRAAC Corps Day \[WRAAC - 14th Women's Royal Australian Army Corps\]](#)

[Pay and allowances CMF - general - additional training \[WRAAC - 14th Women's Royal Australian Army Corps\]](#)

[Establishments and strengths - general \[WRAAC - 14th Women's Royal Australian Army Corps\]](#)

[Audit reports - general - army audit reports \[WRAAC - 14th Women's Royal Australian Army Corps\]](#)

[Establishments and strengths - general - CMF units \[WRAAC - 14th Women's Royal Australian Army Corps\]](#)

[RAASC - supplies - expense supplies requests \[RAAC - 14th Women's Royal Australian Army Corps\]](#)

[Accounting stocktake - officer-in-charge's schedules \[WRAAC - 14th Women's Royal Australian Army Corps\]](#)

National Archives of Australia, Various Locations

[Speech by Colonel Sybil H Irving \(honorary Colonel of the Corps\) made at the opening of the Kathleen Best Memorial Gates, Women's Royal Australian Army Corps \(WRAAC\) School, Mosman, NSW, 6 November 1959](#)

[The Women's Royal Australian Army Corps](#)

Australian War Memorial, Research Centre

War Establishments and Amendments - [Colleges and Schools:]

[Australian Service Canteens Organisation records:] Employment of WRAAC, [Women's Royal Australian Army Corps] ASCO [Australian Services Canteen Organisation] (Army Component)

First WRAAC, Women's Royal Australian Army Corps

WRAAC drill at Queenscliff training company

Operation clean up DPR/TV/566

WRAAC arrive in Singapore DPR/TV/743

Two members of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC), attached to the Royal Australian Survey Corps, working on topographical survey maps.

Army Minister visits WRAAC School DPR/TV/1513

Bomford, Janette M.(b: 1953)

Hat badge : Womens Royal Australian Army Corps

A pre-dinner chat for Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) officers

Archbishop Daniel Mannix, Catholic Chaplain General of the Australian Army with three unidentified representatives from the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS), Women's ...

Private Pam Armstrong of the Women's Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) 12 Company, works over a large oven by using a butterbox

The canteen at the Australian Army Canteens Service Soldiers Club, Royal Military College, Duntroon.

Collar badge : Womens Royal Australian Army Corps

Australian servicewomen's memorial

National Archives of Australia, Melbourne Office

Kathleen Best Memorial Gates

State Library of New South Wales

Cutler family - papers, 1909-1995

Author Details

Anne Heywood

Created 25 November 2002
Last modified 29 October 2018

Digital resources



Title: Untitled
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023