ALBERT COATES MEMORIAL TRUST

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MENTOR

Newsletter of the Albert Coates Memorial Trust

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ANNUAL SIR ALBERT COATES ORATION

The Annual Sir Albert Coates Oration, in collaboration with Federation University Australia, is to be held on **Wednesday 19th November, at 6.00 pm**, in the Geoffrey Blainey Auditorium, Federation University Australia, Chancellor Drive, Mt Helen.

This year's Orator will be Richard de Crespigny AM

Richard, a former QANTAS Pilot and author of two books, *QF32* and *Fly!* was the pilot in charge of QF32, a London to Sydney via Singapore QANTAS flight, an Airbus A 380, when one of the Rolls Royce engines failed over the Riau Islands, Indonesia, four minutes after take-off from Singapore Changi Airport.
After almost two hours assessing the situation, the plane made a successful emergency landing at Changi Airport in Singapore.
No injuries occurred to the passengers, crew, or people on the ground, despite debris from the aircraft falling onto houses in Batam.

Richard, born in Melbourne, in 1957, joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as a seventeen year old at the Point Cook RAAF Academy.
With the RAAF he flew transport, jet and helicopter aircraft.
During his eleven years' service with the RAAF, he served as Aide-de-Camp to two Australian Governors-General – Sir Zelman Cowen and Sir Ninian Stephen.

In 1986, he joined QANTAS where he flew Boeing 747, Airbus A330 and Airbus A380 jet aircraft.

In the 2016, Australia Day Honours, Richard was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his significant service to the aviation industry, both nationally and internationally, particularly to flight safety and to the community.

The Oration will be followed by the Sir Albert Coates Dinner at 7.30 pm in the Albert Coates Complex, Building U, Federation University Australia, Mt Helen.

Booking details:
Cost for the dinner is $70 and includes a two-course meal.
To book your place, please deposit $70 per person into the Albert Coates Memorial Trust Bank account with your name/s included in the reference.

BSB: 633 000
Account Number: 144 729 282

To advise of dietary requirements or other enquiries please contact Shiley McIver on 0434 540 171 or email at shirleymacfrog@gmail.com

RSVP - 12th November 2025 to Shirley McIver (details above).

A Note from the Albert Coates Memorial Trust Chairman – Don Moss OAM FRACS

The Coates Oration for 2024 was presented by Grantlee Kieza OAM, author of his recent biography "Sister Viv", the story of Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel, the sole nurse survivor of the massacre of twenty-one nurses on Radji beach in 1942.
His lecture covered the story of her life, but also some of the stories of the other nurses killed on that day.
I was captured by the number of them with a connection to Ballarat or other towns in the Western District of Victoria.
It stunned me that three of those nurses killed had direct connections to the city of Ballarat, which established the Australian Ex-prisoners of War Memorial, yet this was little known even among the medical and nursing community I have worked in for over forty years.

Vivian Bullwinkel was born in Kapunda SA, but did her nurse and midwifery training in Broken Hill.
In 1939, she shifted to work in a small private hospital in Hamilton, Western Victoria, before moving to the Jessie McPherson hospital in Melbourne.
Here Viv met Sr Olive 'Dot' Paschke, a Dimboola nurse who had trained at Queen Victoria hospital and was now assistant-Matron.
They enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) early in 1941.

Olive was transferred to Malaya, while Viv commenced military training in Puckapunyal. Here she met Sr Clarice Halligan, Ballarat born, who undertook her nurse training at The Melbourne Hospital 1927-29. (later the Royal Melb. Hospital)

After working in Singapore, prior to the Japanese invasion, eventually the nurses were ordered to leave on the ship *Vyner Brooke*.
Among the sixty-five nurses on board, were Sr Beth Cuthbertson, who was born in Stirling SA but completed her nurse training at Ballarat Base hospital and Sr Kath Neuss, born in Mollongghip, a small rural town just outside Ballarat, who had trained at Royal Prince Alfred hospital in Sydney.
Mona Wilton and Wilmar Oram were both nurses from Warrnambool Base Hospital, also of Western District Victoria origin.

The ship was bombed by the Japanese, and the passengers who survived abandoned ship onto lifeboats. Many were injured, and a number drowned including Dot Paschke and Mona Wilton.

Among the survivors who landed on Radji Beach on Bangka island, a large group of twenty-two nurses had surrendered to the Japanese soldiers but were forced into the sea and machine-gunned.
Only Bullwinkel survived, with the deaths of the three Ballarat nurses (Cuthbertson, Halligan and Neuss) added to the drownings of Paschke and Wilton.

They are all listed on the Australian War Memorial plaque in Canberra, but neither Dot Paschke nor Mona Wilton are recognized on the Australian POW memorial in Ballarat, presumably because they had not become official Prisoners of War.

Only Beth Cuthbertson is recognized in the plaque at the Ballarat Health services, since she was the only one who was a local trainee, or working at the hospital on enlistment.
Wilma Oram was the only nurse survivor of the five from western Victoria, though Vivian Bullwinkel had earlier worked at Hamilton.

Following three years where they each spent as Prisoners of War, both Vivian Bullwinkel and Albert Coates returned to work in Victorian hospitals, and indeed worked together.

Viv became Matron at Fairfield Infectious Disease Hospital (FIDH) 1959-1977, was awarded an MBE in 1973 and AO in 1993.
Coates worked as Honorary Consultant surgeon at RMH and FIDH, and was chairman of the Fairfield hospital's board 1956-1961.

They worked hard together with Sr Betty Jeffrey, to establish the Nurses' Memorial Centre (NMC), where Coates was president 1956-61.
His daughter, Winifred, followed him later as president of the NMC and also served as Trustee for the Albert Coates Memorial Trust.

Sr Vivian Bullwinkel was a remarkable contributor to her community, as was Sir Albert Coates.
But each of the nurses who volunteered to serve were courageous and skilled supporters of the soldiers.
I hope the sacrifice of these nurses with Ballarat connections will not be forgotten.

Lest we forget!

Lunch with the Speaker - 13th May 2025 - Charles Zhang

Charles Zhang began his talk with a brief history of Chinese history in Victoria, beginning with the Chinese who were present during the late 1830s and 1840s working as shepherds for pastoralists and later becoming significant participants in the gold rush from the 1850s.
At this time one of four diggers were Chinese.
Charles continued the story into the twentieth century where harsh government policies impacted on the lives of local Chinese people.
Charles described major Ballarat based projects preserving and presenting Chinese history, heritage and culture.
The Ballarat Chinese Library holds thousands of Chinese language documents and images which assist researchers.
The Victory House Museum project has been developing, over the past couple of years, since a century old Chinese house in Geelong Road was purchased to preserve it as a museum of Chinese local history.
The Chinese Australian Cultural Society Ballarat has played a key role in promoting awareness of Chinese Culture.
Charles showed a short AI generated documentary with dozens of historical photographs of Chinese community activities in Ballarat from 1901.
It included animated scenes created from the old photographs.
The Coates Trust is grateful to Charles for sharing his knowledge of Chinese Australian history with us.

Roger Trudgeon (photo Elizabeth Trudgeon)

Recent Awards

The Leckie Peri-Neonatal Scholarship Award

This year there were four recipients of the Award each receiving $2500.
All four nurses are studying either a Graduate Certificate or a Graduate Diploma of Health.

Pictured below with Neil Leckie and Desley Beechey are the awardees. (Photo Elizabeth Trudgeon)

L to R: **Brooke Croton, Jessica Bray**, Neil Leckie, (Award Donor), **Letisha Guy, Tracey Calleija,** Desley Beechey, (ACMT)

Deakin University

Nicholas Spark

Nick has been awarded the 2025 Coates Trust scholarship at Deakin University in the Doctor of Medicine program.
Nick is a Ballarat based student, in the Rural training scheme. He has learnt that three of his grandfather's uncles served in WW1 and were all killed in action.
Nick has worked on a research project on the usefulness of telehealth in Pain Management in rural cancer. He is an active sportsperson and is interested in music.

Australian Catholic University Nursing/Paramedicine

This year's awardee is **Lana Dodd**

Lana was attracted to her Nursing/ Paramedics degree by the challenge of helping "change people's lives".
Throughout her schooling in Ballarat, Lana was in the Student Leadership Senate, House Captain, rowing co-Captain, and in recent years has been actively involved as rowing coach and as a leader in her local football & netball club.

University of Notre Dame

Aubrey Wood is the recipient of the $3000 award for 2025.
Aubrey had undertaken a B Med Sci (Hons) degree at University of Sydney 2017-2020, majoring in Immunology, and achieving 1st class Honours. She then worked as an Anatomy dissector at Melbourne and Macquarie Universities, before commencing her Doctor of Medicine degree at Notre Dame 2022-25. Excursions to Vanuatu in 2019 and 2022 in voluntary roles, exposed her to health care in remote communities. This was part of her interest in applying for her elective in Tanzania. Her long-term aim is to work in rural or remote communities in Australia. Prior to embarking in practice, Aubrey plans to work in the Australian Army reserves, following the footsteps of her grandfathers who both served in the US Army.

The University of Melbourne/Royal Australasian College of Surgeons - Surgical Anatomy

This year there were two awardees - **Jane Song** and **Thiri Thet**.
Jane in a letter of thanks to the Albert Coates Memorial Trust writes:
I am very grateful to be receiving the Albert Coates award.
I am going to begin my training in Radiology with Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists from next year (2026), at the Austin Hospital.
The graduate diploma of surgical anatomy at the University of Melbourne has been a fantastic learning experience that will certainly help me excel in my career in radiology.

Federation University Foundation Awards - Bio-medical Science, Nursing and Visual Arts

This year there were fifty-two nursing, three Biomedical and one Visual Arts Applications. Students apply online through the Foundation and are assessed under three main criteria:
Overall academic scores in completed first and second year units; a hardship score based on a questionnaire completed by all enrolled students, and a 500 word personal statement.
Awardees for this year are:
Bio-medical science - **Kristina Leaver-Schwarz**
Nursing - **Frah Adrees**
Visual Arts - **Nasci Lethlean**

The University of Melbourne Rural Clinical School

Jarred Donlan is the successful awardee.
Jarred is currently studying in Wangaratta whilst his young family live in Queensland.
Jarred served for over five years in the Army as a Combat Engineer and had overseas postings to Afghanistan, East Timor, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei.
Jarred has worked as a farm manager and also studied Paramedicine.

ALBERT COATES MEMORIAL TRUST

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Donations to the ACMT are tax deductible.

The Albert Coates Memorial Trust sponsors a range of scholarships for medical, nursing and para-medicine training.

This includes scholarships at Federation University (Nursing and Biomedicine), Melbourne University (post-graduate Anatomy and Rural Clinical School), Deakin University (Medicine), Notre Dame University (Medicine), Australian Catholic University (Nursing/Paramedicine) and Victoria University (Paramedicine).

Scholarships are offered to regional registered nurses in post-graduate courses, and to Peri-neonatal nurses at Grampians Health (Ballarat Base Hospital).

Albert Coates Memorial Trust Committee

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