

EDITION 3-25

SPANNER NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE RAEME ASSOCIATION QUEENSLAND

OCTOBER 2025



**FEATURING 101 FIELD WORKSHOP COMPANY
I COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT BATTALION**



Edition 3-25

31 Oct 25



Spanner News

Published three times per year, "Spanner News" is the Official Newsletter of the RAEME Association Queensland Inc

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the third edition for 2025 and last edition of Spanner News!

As we publish this final edition, it's fitting to reflect on another successful period for the RAQ, and to thank everyone, who contributes to our Corps' spirit, keeping it alive and allowing it to thrive.

Across the regions in Queensland, we continue to see large turnouts at events from the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, on the Darling Downs, in Brisbane, and of course the amazing team in NQ! Looking forward, RAEME Birthday celebrations are fast approaching, with events planned around the state. 2025 is set to end on a bigger and better note, so if you get the opportunity, please attend an event near you. All the details are in Friday Files and are published across our social and web platforms. To get your regular communications, join the RAQ at this link: <http://qld.raeme.org.au/index.php/membership/membership-m>

Our membership continues to grow, with new and returning members joining, or refreshing, their Association membership. This growth reflects our sense of belonging to an exceptional "family", and the collective pride we have in our Corps – we derive many benefits from remaining connected to the Corps and each other via the RAQ. Every membership matters and we thank everyone who has joined and continue to support our Association's mission.

On behalf of the RAQ, I was honoured to speak at the Mermaid Beach AEME SLSC luncheon in August, and along with Eddie 'Beans' Bevans present a new defibrillator to the club in the name of our RAQ Community Service Fund. This vital life-saving device, arrived just in time for the start of the surf lifesaving season, and replaces one of the two older units in urgent need of renewal – this donation reflects RAQ's ongoing commitment to community support, safety and wellbeing.

The Spanner Pack program continues unabated, with Coordinator Tom Cross working hard in recent months. Tom despatched packs to RAEME members deployed to PNG and on Operation Sovereign Borders. The positive feedback we've received shows just how much these small gestures mean to our deployed Crafties across the globe.

As we close this chapter, I want to extend my sincere thanks to BRIG (Rtd) Ross Grant AM, for his outstanding service as Editor of Spanner News. Ross's professionalism and dedication over a lifetime of service to the Corps and our Association has ensured the newsletters remain informative, engaging and true to the Corps spirit. On behalf of all members, thank you, Ross.

We've been producing Spanner News for over 20 years, starting as far back as the early 2000s. We're now turning the page toward a new truly National RAEME newsletter, being developed by Ian Cook, Secretary of the RAEME Association ACT. The first edition is scheduled for release around February 2026 and will combine updates and stories from all state and territories, a truly national Corps connection. More details of this exciting initiative will be released in coming weeks.

In the meantime, our weekly communications through Friday Files will continue to keep you informed, engaged and connected with everything happening across the wider Queensland Corps community.

Thank you all for your continued support and enthusiasm for the Association. It has been a privilege to share our updates through Spanner News, and I look forward to seeing the RAEME story continue through the next exciting chapter.

Arte et Marte

Peter Matthews
Chairman RAQ

chairman@qld.raeme.org.au



MESSAGE FROM COL COMDT QLD – COL PIERS CAMBRIDGE CSM



Let me firstly thank all of our current serving personnel who continue to maintain our Army's equipment, which is critical in terms of preparedness and being ready to meet any contingency that the Government may require of Army. I recognise that the Army continues to be a busy organisation and that it remains challenged through workforce hollowness. Keep doing your good work – professionalism, courage, and dedication are enduring qualities of RAEME Craftsman.

I recently had the pleasure of reviewing quite a few worthy nominations for Craftsmen of the Year. We must continue to recognise the good work of our soldiers, and the RAEME Craftsman of the Year is one such opportunity to do so. I would like to remind all leaders that it's essential to nominate soldiers for this award and to be aware of the timing and process (through Regional RAEME Representatives). In my humble opinion, some of the stand-out word pictures captured individuals who:

- displayed leadership qualities, including mentoring of others;
- had been recognised for their leadership and placed into positions of command, even if only temporarily or for a set activity;
- positively contributed to the workplace and other soldiers;
- overcame a significant setback or hurdle and remained positive;
- used initiative and problem-solving skills more broadly; and
- tirelessly self-sacrificed for the betterment of the organisation or activity.

In due course, I look forward to hearing which Craftsmen will be honoured.

I am very conscious of the good work the RAQ (Northern and Southern "Chapters") who continue to organise Spanner Clubs, lunches and other activities. You won't find any finer ex-RAEME folk who genuinely care for and take an interest in the well-being of current serving members (as well as us retired folk). Please join the Association or, at the very least, take part in some of the social activities. Having a strong network of like-minded people will benefit you in the long run – especially when you're ready to start your next career. I want to extend my personal thanks to those in the RAQ "Chapters" who work tirelessly for the benefit of all of us.

I recently published (through the RAQ Friday Files) some concepts regarding an additional Corps painting. Several people took the time to respond and provide feedback. Thank you, your feedback was captured and passed on to the Corps RSM verbatim. I'm sure the concepts will continue to be refined before an artist is commissioned, so if you are interested in contributing, please keep an eye on the RAQ Friday Files.

As the year draws to a close, and many of you are thinking about your move and next MQ, can I please remind you to think about attending celebrations for RAEME Birthday and those who can – contribute to the RAEME Corps Conference (which is a light version this year). The activities last year at 106 Fd Wksp and the Port Office Hotel were fabulous, and I would encourage all of you to attend.

Kind regards,

Piers Cambridge
COL COMDT QLD

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CORPS RSM'S UPDATE

Introduction. I would like to start by thanking SGT Justin Kingaby, who has offered to assist with this month's Corps Update. Justin wishes to take on the mantle as Corps RSM in the future. It is fantastic to see a young man reach out and take control of his aspirations. Justin offered the following opinions / suggestions below on the monthly updates, and the Corps in general, to which I have responded:

"I think it's important to note that the Corps website is very poorly designed. Perhaps if subscriptions improve and funding is available, a service may be engaged to redesign it? Alternatively, there may be members within our ranks who are keen to assist with such a project. I am uncertain of the specifics and requirements of getting something like this done, but it could vastly improve how members interact with the page."

"Additionally, I thought the following initiatives may be worth exploring to enhance Corps engagement:

- **Feedback Loop:** Establishing a mechanism for members to submit ideas, concerns, or feedback on Corps activities could be a valuable tool for fostering transparency and inclusion. **RSMs reply.** The Corps RSM page contains a "Discussion" tab. Whilst the web pages are being redesigned and transcribed to the new system, I think this is a great opportunity to expand the tab IOT allow members to raise points individually to me and future Corps RSMs.
- **Spotlight on Achievements:** A periodic highlight of Corps members who have excelled in areas such as operations, training, or innovation. This could serve as a meaningful forum for recognition, especially in cases where formal awards may not be appropriate. **RSMs reply.** Agreed, however; as a predominately SERCAT 5 HOC Cell, this will require units and individuals to supply the information."

These initiatives could be incorporated into regular updates or Corps communications. Beyond this, the Corps Update itself presents opportunities to stand up further initiatives that promote member involvement, such as the following:

- **Recommended Postings.** Engaging members in specific roles (e.g., IRTB) to share insights from a RAEME perspective. This could help improve interest and fill historically under-represented postings.
- **Career Pathway Promotion.** Sharing information on the various career progression options available to members to encourage broader professional development and help individuals shape their future.
- **Corps Mentorship Program.** A structured initiative pairing junior members with experienced personnel to provide guidance and exposure beyond their immediate role. While this would require commitment beyond normal duties, and may face engagement challenges, it has the potential to deliver long-term value to Corps members.

Corps Port 2025. Port orders are now closed. It has been a fantastic year for the Corps Port. A special mention must go to the team from 2 CDO workshops – names cannot be released in this forum). The "SF Support Package" was a hot seller, with stock sold out in a very short time. It was fantastic to see the Corps pass the word around on the number of different products offered this year in commemoration of events or activities.

Corps Shop. The hoodies that were a huge success in the past are still available through RAEME Clothing:

<https://shop.hunterpp.com.au/raeme/>

Sales have slowed, but whether this is due to the unseasonal high temperatures, or people have already bought enough for their own needs, I am not sure, but if you need to stay warm, the hoodie is for you. Purchases may be made through the Corps Shop: [raeme.org.au](https://shop.hunterpp.com.au/raeme/)

Expressions of Interest – Master Artificers (MA). Voting for the 2026 MA positions is now underway. Successful candidates will be notified ahead of the Corps Conference to facilitate their attendance. If you believe you can make a difference, please contact me. One MA position we are still chasing is ECN 235 - incumbent – WO1 Grant O'Leary.

St Eligius Cup. Planning is now well underway. All BDEs have the WNGO with dates locked in as 17 - 21 Nov 25. For those attending, we have tweaked last year's program to enhance the experience. There unfortunately will be a reduction in teams from 5 to 4, due to work commitments.

Corps Conference – Light. The Corps Conference – Light will be held at the "Home of the Craftsman" this year. The date is now locked in 20 – 21 Nov 25. The intent is to build on the previous two conferences' topics – "Defence Strategic Review implications – Workforce & Capability", evolving into "What skills does a technician in 2030 require"; "How do we see the Corps postured in the Logistical Support System"; and "What is the Corps value proposition for the ADF". A formal dinner will be conducted 20 Nov 25 at the Latchford Barracks SNCO Mess Annex IOT dine out members separating from Army. The dinner will be by invitation and if there are members interested in attending, please let me know asap (all travel, etc will be at your own expense).

Matt Stone Racing (MSR) – Bathurst 1000. The Corps has been privileged to have a fantastic working relationship with MSR, over the last two years. This has now developed into opportunities for our soldiers and potentially, engineering officers. This year MSR has expanded the race team to three cars, providing an opportunity for another technician to be part of the team and the HOC has approved the Corps to fund travel for three members to attend the race, not only for the weekend, but for the entire week. MSR will provide all meals and accommodation with the entire team. We are looking forward to feedback from the Corps members upon their return. Congratulations to CPL Michael Cheese (2 CER), CFN Brad Bauser (7 SIG REGT) & CFN Andrew McHugh (ASEME) – do us proud gentlemen. More to follow in the near future in relation to possible postings to MSR for Technicians and Officers.

Annual Corps Awards. The majority of award nominations have been received with voting to commence next week. The Corps Instruction on awards has undergone its last review and is due to be with the HOC shortly for signature and implementation. MAJ Scott Babington will be presenting a proposal to the Corps Conference (Light) for a Battlefield Tour, for all award winners, which will commence approx 2 weeks prior to Anzac Day 2027. The intention is for the trip to be funded by the Corps (or external support agency), with scope to include the COL COMDTs and retain the Corps' link to the RAEME Associations and our history.

MAJ Babington is also arranging for a plaque to be presented and placed in a suitable location in memory of SGT Paul (Dusty) Miller (tragically lost his life 16 Apr 23).

Corps Subscriptions. Corps Instruction Number Three – “RAEME Corps Funds Charter” states: “Membership in the Corps Fund signifies an individual’s willingness to support the Corps efforts in building esprit de corps.” The funds received from subscriptions assists with occasional gifts, with welfare support, support to Corps related activities & generates disbursements to the Regional RAEME Representatives for regional use. The intent has been (and will continue to be) that use of the funds being returned back to the members should encourage further contributions from non-subscribers. Since we have reduced the cost per subscription, we have seen a small increase in subscribers, but we need more. The more we have, the more we generate, and the more we can spend. As an example, if we (as a Corps) wish to have gifts to be presented to members upon their separation from Army (dependant on time served) we need a way to fund it effectively. Any help you can provide is appreciated.

Corps Raffle. The Corps will be undertaking a trial of a Corps Raffle, with tickets to be available via the Corps Shop. We intend to have \$2500 worth of prizes initially, possibly increasing, depending on the uptake. Tickets will be released shortly, and the draw will be conducted prior to the Corps Birthday.

Farewell to Mr David Clarke from CATW, ASEME. In 2007, WO1 David Clarke switched gears and was promoted to the rank of “Mister”, when he joined the APS in his new role as an instructor Armament and Artillery at CATW, ASEME. He has been an SME on all things related to Fitters / Weapon Technicians on ASLAV, tanks and artillery. He has been sharing his knowledge over the past 18 years with many generations of RAEME trainees and civilian Defence staff. His contribution has been enormous, and while his expertise will be missed as an instructor in CATW, you’ll still catch him in uniform in his reserve capacity over the next few years. Thank you, Dave, for your passion and knowledge, which you have provided to technicians over many years, upskilling them on specialist equipment.

Arte et Marte

Jon Tynan
WO1
Corps RSM
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ED NOTE: RSM, thank you for your regular newsy updates, and in particular, for this comprehensive one for the last edition of Spanner News – we will ensure future updates appear in the new RNN Newsletter and the various Association Newsletters.

FEATURE ARTICLE – 101 FIELD WORKSHOP COMPANY, 1 COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT BATTALION

Overview. The 101st Field Workshop Company (101 Fd Wksp Coy) is a part of the 1st Combat Brigade, located at Robertson Barracks Darwin. It provides integral maintenance support to the 1st Combat Service Support Battalion (1 CSSB) and close maintenance and recovery support to the Darwin Region. The workshop consists of a B Vehicle, Recovery, General Engineering (GE), and Electrical, Instruments, and Radios (EIR) platoons. Due to staffing constraints, the workshop underwent a recent restructure to compensate for a shortfall in senior technical positions. This saw the Vehicle, Recovery, GE and EIR PL combined to make two platoons within the workshop.

The workshop has an authorised establishment of 123 personnel, with 85 of those positions filled. The workshop is well-staffed at the craftsman level, with majority of our technicians being junior tradesman that recently qualified. The company’s shortfall is within its senior technical positions, with Corporal and above appointments staffed to fifty percent and a large number of NCO’s acting in a higher position. Despite this, the workshop has been able to confidently face all its challenges and built a reputation for dependability and technical proficiency. To put it another way, when the Brigade needs help, they call 1 CSSB; when 1 CSSB needs help, they call the workshop.



RAEME personnel conducting Ex Harry Bolt 24, a RAEME specific trade upskilling exercise

Strategic Context and Change in Capability. As an outcome of the 2024 Defence Strategic Review, Army underwent a large-scale restructuring to meet the strategic environment Australia currently faces. Standard combat units were brought back under the 1st Australian Division, with Brigades being specialised in order to streamline the management of battlespace effects. As a result, the 1st Combat Brigade shifted toward a light and littoral focus with its armoured and other heavy assets cross loaded to other Brigades. This has presented a particular challenge to 101 Fd Wksp Coy as it needed to review all its current SOP and capabilities to align with the

Brigade's new operating environment and equipment dependencies.

With the loss of the 1st Armoured Regiment and other armoured fighting vehicles, the vehicle workshop disbanded its A Vehicle capability and now focuses on B Vehicles and small watercraft. This also meant the Recov Pl lost its prized M88 Hercules to the 3rd Combat Brigade. Other trades within the workshop, such as Weapon Technicians, also had to begin building their repertoire of trade skills and experience to cover the new fleet of small watercraft and marine safety equipment acquired by the 1st Combat Brigade.

Workshop Leading the Littoral Charge. The transition into the littoral environment has presented challenges at a wider level, with trade personnel from the workshop having to battle for positions on specialist trade courses in order to gain exposure to new equipment. In addition, the workshop takes every opportunity to embed technicians in other units to gain relevant experience. Of note, the workshop makes significant contributions to Operation Resolute where technicians work with small watercraft on active operations.



45M conducting a recovery of a heavy lift asset in support of OP Resolute

Throughout 2025, the 101 Fd Wksp Coy has made much progress towards becoming light scales and littoral focused. Through the Brigade's exercise series, Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, and an additional War fighter Exercise, the workshop has made an important contribution towards the generation and testing of new littoral SOPs. It also had the opportunity to identify and test new preventative and corrective maintenance techniques, such as preparing equipment for the maritime environment and achieving maintenance support to a dependency dispersed across multiple islands and maritime vessels.

During 2025, the workshop also participated in a number of community events, such as Supercars and Motocross GP, which saw members from the company provide maintenance support and engage with the local community at these high profile events.



Resident Recovery Technician, CFN Neve, supporting Darwin Supercars

Technical Advances in Capability. Due to the lack of a higher grade maintenance facility within the 1st Brigade, the workshop has the opportunity to work with new capabilities typically held at an FSB level or higher. Technicians from the workshop have conducted a high level of research and provided valuable input on the potential employment of advanced technical assets, such as 3D printers and CNC machines, for fabricating bespoke repair parts in an environment cut-off from the typical logistic chains.

The workshop works closely with maintenance organisations within the Marine Rotational Force – Darwin (MRF-D), working with the United States Marine Corps, gaining exposure to assets not necessarily in the ADF inventory. Notably, during an exercise with MRF-D, one of their maritime vessels experienced issues with its engine. The workshop sent a technician, who had recently finished his OJE phase, to work with the USMC tradesman. Whilst aboard, the Craftsman was able to successfully identify and rectify the issue with the vessel despite the USMC technicians believing it was unfixable.

Raising the Next Generation: A Day in the Life of an On-The-Job-Trainee (OJT). CFN Tony Nguyen was a trainee Recovery Mechanic conducting his On-the-Job Experience (OJE) phase with 101 Fd Wksp Coy. Tony grew up Dandenong, VIC, where he gained some life experience through a variety of different jobs. However, Tony wanted to see and experience more of the country. At age 19 he enlisted into the ARA. This is how he describes his experience starting from a civilian to a fully qualified Recovery Mechanic:

"My journey began with basic training in Wagga Wagga where I was joined by people from all over Australia. After completing basic training, I went to the Army School of Transport in Puckapunyal to do my drivers courses, which I found incredibly helpful as I had never before received professional driver training. During the course, I learnt all kinds of driving skills. In the space of 6 months, I had progressed from riding a Postie's bike in Melbourne, to driving the 45M heavy wrecker."

"After I completed my Basic Recovery Course at North Bandiana, I was posted to Darwin to complete my on-the-job experience; this was my first time moving away from Victoria to a new region, environment, and territory. Darwin was hot and humid and everyone warned me about the wet season, trying to convince me that I 'would struggle with the heat and humidity'. However, once I accepted being wet, sweaty, and sticky, it was fine. I have grown to enjoy Darwin with the fishing, shooting, going to the beach at Gunn Point and swimming in the many waterholes at Litchfield National Park.

"In the Recov PL, experienced Recovery Mechanics have supported and enabled my career development and progression. I have had the chance to deploy into the field and living out of a truck and tackling all types of challenging recovery jobs. I've also had the privilege of taking part in Exercise Talisman Sabre. On this exercise, I flew in a C-130 cargo plane and slept on the deck of an LCM8. I enjoy my job as a Recovery Mechanic in the Army because it combines heavy industry, mechanics, travel and is engaging. It is everything I wanted in a career before I left Melbourne."



Artwork created by CFN Nguyen for Recovery PL

In mid-October 2025, CFN Nguyen completed his training phase and officially became a qualified Recovery Mechanic after twelve months as an OJT and will be moving on from 101 Fd Wksp Coy down to Puckapunyal for the next stage in his career.

101 Fd Wksp Coy has a well-deserved reputation for service since the Vietnam War, and it is clear to all that we have a wonderful opportunity to continue developing within a new role and strategic environment. Those challenges are being accepted by all ranks in the workshop, and more widely within 1 CSSB, and I am proud of the work being undertaken by our officers, senior ranks and soldiers.

Arte et Marte

Thomas Clarke
CAPT
OC 101 Fd Wksp Coy
1CSSB

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The Formation of the 5th Aviation Regiment's Operational Support Squadron. As Army Aviation modernises with platforms like the UH-60M Black Hawk and AH-64E Apache, its sustainment model has evolved to meet the demands of high-readiness CH-47F Chinook operations. A key enabler of this transformation is the establishment of the Operational Support Squadron (OSS) within 5th Aviation Regiment (5 AVN REGT) a dedicated sub-unit designed to deliver agile, scalable and integrated line maintenance and tactical support to rotary-wing operations.

OSS operates in close synchronisation with the newly formed 16th Aviation Support Battalion (**16 ASB – refer RAEME Newsletter Edition 25-2, 31 July 25**), which centralises deep maintenance, refuelling, rearming, and logistics functions across Army Aviation. While 16 ASB provides foundational sustainment across the enterprise, OSS remains focused on delivering responsive, forward-deployed support to CH-47F operations — ensuring readiness at the tactical edge.

OSS and Centralised Sustainment. The creation of 16 ASB has allowed aviation regiments to concentrate on flying and operational planning, while deep maintenance and logistics are consolidated under a single command. OSS, as an organic sub-unit of 5 AVN REGT, is purpose-built to maintain operational tempo through line maintenance, technical support, and distributed sustainment.



Importantly, OSS retains the flexibility to operate independently or in concert with 16 ASB, particularly during periods of sustained operational tempo. This layered model ensures that CH-47F support is both robust and adaptable — with OSS providing the tactical agility and 16 ASB reinforcing when required.



CFN B. Carrasco Undurrango torquing the lower Vertical Hinge Pin nut
RAEME Association Queensland Inc

OSS: Tactical Agility and Operational Reach.

Currently, OSS delivers line maintenance for the CH-47F Chinook fleet via a Tactical Support Troop (TST), an Electrical Mechanical Engineering Operations (EMEOPS) cell, and an O4-led headquarters. Whether based in Townsville, or deployed as part of an Aviation Task Group (ATG) or Aviation Task Unit (ATU), OSS retains the ability to sustain independent nodes, enabling concurrent support to multiple mission sets and readiness demands.

This agile model was given considerable attention during development, and was validated during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, where:

- OSS generated an O4-led TU to support maintenance for the ATG;
- Forward Repair Teams (FRTs) and a command element deployed to Shoalwater Bay Training Area; and
- simultaneously, additional FRTs and a command element supported operations in Townsville Field Training Area (TFTA).

This deployment across multiple locations showcased OSS's agility, resilience, and capacity to support high operational tempo across geographically separated nodes. Concurrently, the OSS remained closely integrated with 16 ASB's deeper maintenance and logistics capabilities.

Earlier in the year, OSS demonstrated its ability to rapidly generate elements to sustain CH-47F rotary-wing operations during the North Queensland Flood response. These recovery efforts included the movement 120 emergency services and ADF personnel.

During Tropical Cyclone Alfred, OSS once again displayed its operational responsiveness and flexibility. Rapidly generating CH-47F Chinook support elements.



OSS soldiers prepare a CH-47F Chinook helicopter to fly south and assist with ADF recovery efforts following Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred

OSS deployed Forward Repair Teams and logistics support to assist in aerial resupply, evacuation, and infrastructure recovery operations across affected regions

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in South-East Queensland. This deployment highlighted OSS's ability to integrate with emergency response frameworks while maintaining aviation readiness. The coordination with 16 ASB ensured a depth of maintenance and sustainment support were available throughout the operation, reinforcing the value of centralised support during high-tempo contingencies.



TST deployed to PNG who were able to visit the Kokoda Track

As well as flood and cyclone responses, OSS was tasked to support 5 AVN REGT's deployment to Papua New Guinea for Exercise HELICON LUK 25 and Exercise WANTOK WARRIOR 25. During September and October 2025, OSS provided CH-47F maintenance support to Task Unit BRAHMAN, High Density Altitude training, and joint operations with PNG Defence Force. This support included the force assignment of a TST throughout the deployment, reinforcing OSS's role in enabling expeditionary aviation operations.

Symbolism and Identity: The Emblem of OSS. To reflect its emerging role and ethos, OSS has adopted a bold new emblem inspired by Chrysaor, a figure from Greek mythology who embodies strength, resilience, and the ability to rise from adversity. Born from the blood of Medusa alongside Pegasus, Chrysaor is a symbol of determination and grounded power, complementing Pegasus's airborne grace. This duality reflects OSS's unique position: technically fierce, tactically agile, and deeply integrated into Army Aviation's operational fabric.



OSS emblem inspired by Chrysaor — symbolising technical strength and aviation integration. The motto ‘Arte et Volantes’ reflects the squadron’s vision: By Skill and Flying

At the heart of the emblem is a winged wild boar, airborne and forward-charging, with red eyes and prominent tusks that convey vigilance and readiness. The wings are spread wide, symbolising OSS’s aviation integration and its capacity to project support across distributed operations. The boar’s posture — mid-flight and facing forward — reinforces the squadron’s forward-leaning posture and operational momentum.

Beneath the central figure, a scroll bears the adapted Latin motto “Arte et Volantes” (“By Skill and Flying”), honouring RAEME heritage while reflecting OSS’s aviation-specific mission. The emblem is framed in Desert Sage, a colour chosen to represent the squadron’s enduring connection to CH-47F Chinook maintenance and its grounded, reliable and proven capability.

Together, these elements form a bold identity — one that reflects OSS’s commitment to excellence, adaptability, and its role in supporting Army Aviation’s largest recapitalisation in decades.

Looking Ahead. OSS is set to expand its capability by establishing a TST in Oakey, enabling direct support to 5 AVN REGT B SQN’s future UH-60M Black Hawk operations. This growth will further enhance OSS’s ability to deliver responsive, distributed support across Army Aviation’s operational footprint.

The 5 AVN REGT OSS–I6 ASB partnership marks a deliberate shift in Army Aviation sustainment — from fragmented support to a cohesive, integrated model capable of supporting high-readiness operations both at home and abroad. With a new identity forged in myth and proven in action, OSS is poised to be a cornerstone of Army Aviation’s future.

Rod Marrant
MAJ
OC OSS
5 AVN REGT



Ed Note: May I also extend my thanks to LT Hawkins who assisted the OC draft and shape the final story above.

106 Fd Wksp Coy, 7 CSSB Exercise Wrap-Up; RAEME in the Fight. In June 2025, 7 CSSB deployed on Exercise DIAMOND STRIKE and TALISMAN SABRE as the 7th Brigade Support Group (7 BSG.) flowing across the battlespace.



7 BSG was tasked with sustaining the 7th Brigade through high-tempo, mobile operations. Lima I (Call sign Lima I or LI) was in direct support of Battle Group WARHORSE, L2 was designed to Support Battle Group RAM whilst L3 (Commanded by OC 106 Fd Wksp Coy), formed the nucleus of the BSG, delivering the bulk of its repair and sustainment capability to the BDE. The BSG focus: Survivable sustainment support and light to medium grade repairs that kept combat service support (CSS The structure of 7 BSG was immediately validated on Exercise DIAMOND STRIKE with L2 redeploying from the BSG to support another element. L3 was then required to become an agile CSST providing direct support to Battle Group RAM, which was now a multi-national combat element, consisting of elements from the Royal Fijian Military Forces, British Royal Gurkha Regiment, His Majesty’s Armed Forces of Tonga and the New Zealand Defence Force.

L3 proved itself as a mobile, light CSST, survivable and highly capable of providing forward support to a motorised Battle Group of over 1000 coalition personnel. L3 demonstrated the ability to balance logistics effects and survivability, redeploying seven times over a 10-day exercise. L3 hides, carefully chosen in dense terrain, tested our drivers’ patience and skills but offered vital concealment and protection from detection resulting in L3 remaining below the detection thresholds of the adversary. Meanwhile, LI supported Battle Group WARHORSE as the opposition force for 7 Bde.

The Campaign season would continue to include Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 25, The largest iteration to date, involving nearly 40,000 soldiers and 19 nations. 7 BSG, now reconstituted following the return of L2, would maintain its design for battle, remaining survivable through mobility and dispersion yet remaining effective and responsive to the demands of the battle groups. Following a refit to fight period that saw all 106 Fd Wksp Coy officers on the tools as well as an inject of recently

qualified junior officers, 7 BSG was postured to undertake the most complex logistical challenge of its history.

RAEME in Action. L3 team included a mix of all trades – vehicle mechanics, tech-elecs, boffins, welders, and more – each bringing its own expertise to the fight. Repair remained the core business, with vehicle mechanics working tirelessly to return exercise and real world mobility-killed vehicles to the field. Some repairs were quick fixes, whilst others required detailed planning and analysis. ASM 7 CSSB was often seen using ration pack cheese tins in a way that would challenge even the most creative minds. Regardless, the results spoke for themselves: vehicles back in action, albeit with some trusted cheese tin repairs, lessons reinforced and combat power sustained.

During the exercise, L3 consisted of three composite FRTs, mixing trades to deliver repairs under austere conditions. The flexibility of the FRTs allowed medium-grade repairs to be completed from within the BSG itself, keeping the brigade in the fight longer.

L3 reach went beyond vehicles and maintaining a complicated power grid. L3's boffin support kept 7 CSR's communications alive, including direct support to HARDROCK's PMV-C. Due to the support relationships with L1 and L2, L3 was responsible for the bulk of the Brigade and its attachments, MPs, medics and intelligence detachments – no one went without.



Beyond the Workshop. L3 RAEME officers and soldier's efforts were not confined to just spanners and toolkits; the L38 call sign contributed to mortuary operations (simulated), bolstered defensive activities and established a temporary civilian evacuation centre. L38 provided direct support to the MPs Temporary Internment Solitons whilst integration with the NZDF's, Combat Team Wolfpack A2 Echelon added another layer, with the NZDF meshing seamlessly into the supply platoon and bringing both capability and camaraderie.

Conclusion. Overall, L3 proved the strength of RAEME's flexible repair capability, technical mastery, and soldiering skills. From integral repair and power distribution to mobile hide manoeuvre and sustainment support, L3, as a part of 7 BSG enabled 7 Brigade's combat power and momentum. Despite constant movement, communication challenges, and shifting priorities, L3 remained a reliable

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linchpin in sustaining the Brigade—never static, always ready.

Arte et Marte

Rafa Puli
LT
L39 Minor 7 BSG

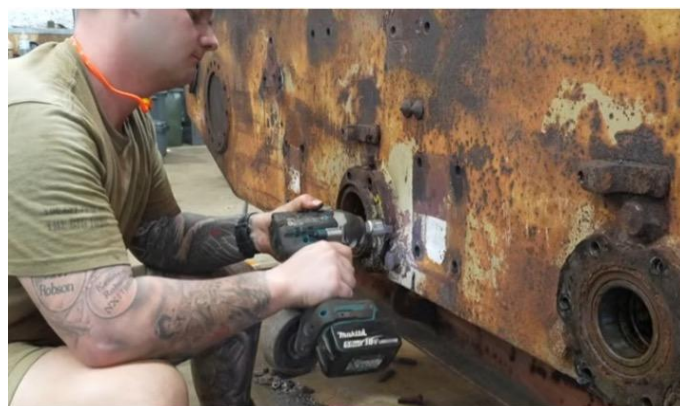


3 RAR maintains strong ties with Australian Armour & Artillery Museum. Throughout 2025, Craftsman from the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR), have had the unique opportunity to work alongside staff at the Australian Armour & Artillery Museum in Cairns.

As 3 RAR prepares for the Introduction into Service of the Redback Infantry Fighting Vehicle under Project Land 400-3, it is vital that our maintainers have the technical skills to sustain the land force. Exemplifying the strength of the relationship has been the hands-on experience gained for the “Crafties” involved through enhancing 3 RAR's community engagement efforts within the North Queensland community.

The Australian Armour & Artillery Museum is a privately owned museum and is the largest of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. With a collection of over 220 vehicles and artillery pieces, many of which are unique to Australia, the museum plays a vital role in preserving military history from the 1800s through to the present.

With maintenance placement rotations being conducted throughout the training year, the Australian Armour & Artillery Museum has been instrumental in hosting teams from 3 RAR Technical Support Platoon (TSP) in developing their knowledge in armoured vehicle maintenance. The placements have provided TSP with the opportunity to support preservation of the museum's large collection of battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and self-propelled artillery including engine servicing and refurbishment, hull fabrication, and track maintenance.



CFN Hull supporting restoration of STUG III G

Outside of the workshop, 3 RAR personnel have assisted in the relocation of exhibits and joined museum staff for test drives of restored vehicles on the museum's dirt track. These experiences have allowed the team to apply

their technical skills on increasingly rare and specialised equipment.



CFN Brazell controls a pack lift

With [AusArmourFest](#) being the pinnacle event in the museum's calendar, in early July a rotation from TSP returned to the museum to undertake a focused maintenance task on a Leopard 1 Armoured Recovery Vehicle (ARV). The ARV was found to be leaking oil, producing excessive smoke, and in need of a major service.



CPL Basso conducts preparation for pack lift

The team, working alongside head mechanic Steve, started with the removal of the power pack and progressed through a range of servicing tasks to get the vehicle online. Once complete, the ARV was test-driven to verify the repairs with the platform ready to support AusArmourFest.

While not discounting the morale and esprit de corps opportunities that have evolved from the relationship, the outstanding work conducted by the "Crafties" of 3 RAR has sought to uphold the reputation of "Old Faithful". AusArmourFest is held on 29 – 31 August 2025. The Australian Armour & Artillery Museum posts a weekly VLOG of the maintenance and restoration projects. Tune into Workshop Wednesdays at the following [link](#).

LT Brayden Cairns
PI Comd TST
3 RAR



Workshop 6 ESR: Versatile Support on EX TS25. During Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025 (EX TS25), Workshop Troop of the 6th Engineer Support Regiment (6 ESR) was deployed as the primary support element for the Divisional Engineer Equipment Park, demonstrating exceptional adaptability, resilience and tactical proficiency in a complex and hostile field environment performing a thus far unpractised concept within the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

Primary Support Role. Workshop Troop 6 ESR served as the cornerstone of technical and logistical support for the Divisional Engineer Equipment Park. The unit provided Forward Repair Team (FRT) and recovery capabilities under austere and contested conditions, conducting critical equipment recoveries and repairs in an enemy threat environment within the Townsville Field Training Area. This ensured a sustained operational tempo for engineer elements from 6 ESR and 3 CER, enabling uninterrupted mission execution.

Independent Operations. Beyond its core engineering support role, Workshop Troop 6 ESR operated independently across the region in support of multiple units, including:

- 10th Force Support Battalion (10 FSB)
- 1st Military Police Battalion (1 MP)
- 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment (3 CER)

This deployment highlighted the team's ability to integrate seamlessly with diverse formations, delivering tailored support across a wide operational spectrum including working with international partners.

Adaptability in Diverse Roles. Workshop Tp's flexibility was further displayed through its engagement in a variety of non-standard roles. Personnel from the workshop contributed to rear area security operations, provided escort for divisional bridging assets, and facilitated general logistics functions in support of a minimally staffed Q function. This adaptability reinforced the broader sustainment framework of the exercise and underpinned the value of multi-skilled soldiers in contemporary operations, as well as the adaptable can do attitude embodied by RAEME.

Tactical Recovery. A notable achievement of the Workshop during EX TS25 was the execution of live tactical recoveries in the field environment, including by night. These recoveries required precision, coordination, and situational awareness, often conducted under limited visibility and in a threat environment that encouraged the use of minimal assets and minimal time on site. The success of these missions not only restored critical 1st Division lines of communication, but also demonstrated the readiness to operate under pressure and in alignment with divisional manoeuvre elements.



Conclusion. Workshop Tp's performance during EX TS25 exemplified the modern Army's emphasis on agility, interoperability, and mission-focused support. Their contributions were instrumental in maintaining operational effectiveness across multiple locations, reinforcing their reputation as a reliable and versatile support asset within 6 ESR and the wider Australian Army.

Regards,

Major Kyle Ferguson
OC
OSS 6 ESR



RAQ EVENTS ACROSS QUEENSLAND AND NORTHERN TERRITORY

RAEME Res/CMF Reunion 2023 – Sherwood/Indooroopilly RSL Sub Branch 17 Aug 25. The event saw 62 folks in attendance and included activities that reflected RAEME traditions and prompted many discussions of past experiences.

Among the attendees were a few faces which we haven't seen for a long time including Dom Messina, Col Valentine, Glen Reid, Helen Turner, Robert Sawford, Myles Frost and Ron Aumann. Unfortunately, Noel Myler has had to resign as Treasurer because of health issues and Ian Leabeater and John Parfitt have taken over handling the finances.

Of note this year, was the attendance of two former COs at 1 EME Gp, Bulimba, Ron McElwaine and Gerry Keats. It was the first time Gerry has been able to attend a reunion, and he had the honour of cutting the delicious RAEME cake. Sadly, Gerry passed away a week later – see **Vale notice on page 16 of this edition.**

Spanner News



Gerry Keats and Ron McElwaine

We are fortunate to have several dedicated helpers to run the function with many tasks to be performed from preparation and cooking, food purchase and preparation, manning the bar, arranging tables and many background tasks for the reunion. Mention must be made of RSL members who assisted including Raymond Marozin, who looked after the bar; and Phil Kyle, who organised the catering and did the cooking. Also special mention must be made of Katie Townsend and Deb Ferguson, the RSL staff members, who generally assisted with the event. Wendy Leabeater also did a marvellous job with catering and general assistance, and a special thanks to Melisa Austin, who came along and provided access to the audio system.



Gerry Keats cutting cake

We are very thankful for the raffle donations from Westside HQ, and Matt Conway, President of that Club. Also Fred Neilsen, who has for many years produced the RAEME cane for the reunion - this year the cane was won by Sharon Standage. And finally, thank you to Cedric Payne, for another generous donation.

Another function is over, and we hope to see everyone again next year and ready to socialise.

Cheers

John Parfitt
Convenor



Report on the Gold Coast Lunch 2025. On Saturday the 23rd of August we conducted a lunch at the Mermaid Beach (AEME) Surf Lifesaving Club on the Gold Coast. We had 36 ex-RAEME members and their partners in attendance on what turned out to be a really great day both weather wise and lunch wise.



As well as our usual old and bolds including the likes of Claude Palmer, Stephen Howells and Dave Grant we also had some new faces for the day including Denis Cush, Bob King, Robert Bowering and Perry Belford who came down from Toowoomba for the day. Hopefully, all will return in 2026.

The club did itself proud. Even though there was a private function planned for about 150 guests scheduled to begin at 1600 on the club veranda, they managed to fit us in on the veranda till 1500, then shuffled those remaining inside to reserved tables. The tucker was just great. How they do it in the kitchen is beyond me, they must have Gordon Ramsey in there cracking the whip or something.



A feature of this lunch is the lack of formality, but the Chairman of the RAQ, Peter Matthews, took the opportunity to say a few words; and more importantly, took the opportunity to present the club with a defibrillator, a cool \$2500, sponsored by the RAQ.



Peter had felt the RAQ needed to do something for the club given its roots from it being formed back in 1945 by soldiers in the Corp of AEME based in Brisbane through to the present day and the club asked if a defib unit could be provided as they did not have one. The Surf Club takes its AEME / RAEME roots very seriously.

Regards,

Eddie “Beans” Bevans
Convenor
Gold Coast Lunch



Brisbane Spanner Club – Gaythorne Bowls Club.

The latest Spanner Club was held on Friday 5 September at the Gaythorne Bowls Club, bringing together over 100 serving soldiers, members, and guests for another fantastic event.

Attendees came from across a wide range of units including 1 REGT, 2 CER, 2/14 LH, 6 RAR, 7 CSR, 7 CSSB, and 8/9 RAR – to name just a few. With plenty of chicken and pizza to go around, plus several lucky door prizes of Bunnings vouchers, there was no shortage of good food and laughter.



These Spanner Clubs are a great way to connect across our Corps and the wider Army family. The Association is proud to give something back to those currently serving, as well as our members and friends.



Massive thanks to Gaythorne Bowls Club for hosting, and to our crew – Dave White, Dave Langley, Kingsley

Pocock, Bruce Hermann, Brian Daley and the Exec Team for helping pull it all together.



Don't forget we've got a heap of functions and events lined up this year to support our members across the state, including the Sunshine Coast, NQ, Darling Downs, and of course our RAEME Birthday celebrations. This year, they will be held in North Queensland on Friday 28 November, Brisbane on Monday 1 December, along with the Women in RAEME Cocktail Event on Friday 28 November, and the All Ranks Luncheon on Sunday 30 November.



More pictures are available in the RAQ [photo gallery!](#)

RAQ Sunshine Coast Annual All Ranks Luncheon – 13 September 2025. The Sunshine Coast Chapter of the RAQ held its annual luncheon at the Maroochy RSL on 13 Sep 25. The event was very well attended, with 88 participants, despite two late withdrawals due to sad family circumstances.

Our host for the day, COL CMDT, COL Piers Cambridge (RTD), delivered a captivating presentation that provided an informative look at some of his work in AHQ on the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, prior to leaving the Army in 2024. His reflections on personal experiences, shared both from his own career and those of others in the room, made for an engaging presentation – it was followed by a capability update that was greatly appreciated by all in attendance.



Katrina and Piers Cambridge, Ty Bodle, Brian Daley, Peter Yates, "Huck" and Jackie Berry

A local Sunshine Coast identity, Mr Frank Carroll and his wife Joan, were our special guests. Frank operates Carroll's Transport Depot, a very interesting vehicle museum in Coolum, where he also houses and maintains amongst other vehicles, an RAQ Army Jeep. RAQ Chairman Pete Mathews thanked Frank for his support to the RAQ and presented him with a copy of the most recent history of RAEME *"With Skill and Fighting - Craftsmen of the Australian Army 1942 to 2014"*, in recognition of his support. See [more detail here](#).



Frank Carroll and Peter Matthews

Special acknowledgment was given to the outgoing organizers, Ross Grant and Mike Prain, who were warmly thanked for their outstanding work over many years in elevating the luncheon into the successful and highly regarded event it has become.



L to R – Ian Malcolm, Martin Fisher, Wendy O'Conner, Andrew O'Conner, Ed Smeaton and Ian and Roz Hartshorn

This year's luncheon also had an international touch, with guests from Canada; Terry Dillon's grandson, Sam, and his wife, Lindsay, joining us for the occasion.



Shirley & Len Stainer with Melissa Long (centre)

Overall, it was another highly successful Sunshine Coast luncheon, achieving its goals of bringing like-minded people together to share good times, catch up with old mates, and gain an update on Army capability and its impact on contemporary RAEME.



Smiling organisers after a successful lunch – L to R – Tom Regener and Terry ‘Sandles’ Johnston

A great day was had by all. **We are now look forward to our next Sunshine Coast gathering on 23 November 2025 at the Alexandra Headlands Surf Club.**

Arte et Marte

Terry and Tom

**Terry Johnson / Tom Regener
Co-convenors
Sunshine Cost Events**



Spanner News

COMING EVENTS

Event	Date
RAQ Darling Downs Luncheon – Toowoomba	Sun 16 Nov 2025
RAQ Sunshine Coast Gathering - Alex Surf Club	Sun 23 Nov 2025
RAEME Birthday - Lavarack Barracks Townsville	Fri 28 Nov 2025
RAQ Women in RAEME WIR3 Cocktails - Gaythorne RSL	Fri 28 Nov 2025
17 Const Sqn Wksp UNTAG Reunion luncheon - Chermside	Sat 29 Nov 2025
RAQ All Ranks Luncheon – Brisbane	Sun 30 Nov 2025
RAEME 83rd Birthday	Mon 1 Dec 2025
RAEME Birthday - Gallipoli Barracks Brisbane	Mon 1 Dec 2025
RAQ NQ Gathering - Townsville - Townsville RSL	Sat 6 Dec 2025

For further details on Events please contact the [Functions Officer](#) .To view all functions happening around Australia by the Associations [Click on this link](#)

SPANNER PACK CONTINUES ITS GOOD WORK – OCTOBER UPDATE.

Do you know of any RAEME personnel that will be deployed on operations or exercise over the Christmas period – if you do, please contact me so the RAEME National Network (RNN) can send them an Spanner Pack to provide some extra cheer while they are away from family and friends this Christmas.

I would like to highlight that the RNN will provide Spanner Packs globally for any RAEME maintenance, training / mentoring detachments, or individual embeds - officers and other ranks on UN or coalition postings. Generally, if the training activity is longer than two or three months, we like to provide our soldiers with a care package, to let them know the association is thinking of them, to help boost their morale and thank them for their dedication to service to the Army, whether it is a warlike or a non-warlike activity.



Example Spanner Pack ready to go



Spanner Packs can be delivered anywhere. E.g. Ben “Lobster” Laubscher, 6 ESR with Spanner Pack at Erub Island, Torres Strait Islands

I currently have a couple of Spanner Pack requests; however, I am sure there are probably more personnel, particularly individuals, on postings overseas and it would be great to ensure they are properly supported.

If you would like to request a Spanner Pack, please go to RAEME Association Queensland website: qld.raeme.org.au Click on the “Contact Us” tab at the top of the home page, then email the Spanner Pack Co-ordinator. **Or** send an email directly to: spannerpack@qld.raeme.org.au

For more information about Operation Spanner Pack, or donation details, to support this great cause, go to RAEME Association Queensland website, select “About Us” page and select the “Operation Spanner Pack” link.

Arte et Marte

Major (Rtd) Tom Cross
RNN Spanner Pack Coordinator
spannerpack@qld.raeme.org.au



VALE

It is with deep regret we advise of the following deaths amongst the members our Corps:

- **Polson**, WO1 (RTD) Mal passed away peacefully on the 24 Jul 25 after a battle with cancer. A proud RAEME soldier and true gentleman, Mal was deeply respected by all who had the privilege to serve with him. There was no formal funeral service, but the family held a private celebration of Mal’s life.
- **Lockart**, WO1 (RTD) Alan Raymond passed away peacefully at home in Bendigo, VIC, on 11 Jul 25 aged 85. Alan served with distinction on operations in SVN in 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment from May 1967 to May 1968. A service to celebrate Alan’s

life was held at the William Farmer Reflection Chapel, Eaglehawk.

- **Pearce**, Gary passed away on 3 Aug 25 after a short illness. Gary was a Radio Mech who served our nation for many years. He only retired from the ADF as a civilian in early 2024. A wake to celebrate his life and achievements was held in Canberra on 18 Aug 25.
- **Godwin**, SGT Leigh Francis passed away on 5 Aug 25. Leigh proudly served for 20 years having joined in 1974. Leigh was a RAQ Life Subscriber No.944 and late of Townsville and formerly of Toowoomba. Leigh remained connected to both communities following his discharge. A funeral service was held in Townsville on 12 Aug 25.
- **Dawson**, CPL (RTD) Matthew “Smokey” passed away on 9 Aug 25, when he lost his battle with personal struggles. Matthew is survived by his partner Suey, his children Sean and Charlie and family David, Wendy, Brad and Lou. Matthew enlisted in 2003 as an VM and was posted to ALTC, 9 FSB, 2 CAV Regt, ASEME and 4 CSSB. Matthew deployed on Operation Slipper in 2010/11 and Operation Astute in 2012.
- **Ennis**, Kenneth Lesley “Ken” (20th F&T) passed away on 18 Aug 25, after a long battle with cancer, aged 77. Ken served in SVN with the 7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, from Feb 70 to Mar 71. Ken’s funeral was held on 28 Aug 25 at Nathan, QLD.
- **Chattin**, SGT (RTD) John Fredrick “Jake” passed away on 4 Sep 25, aged 77. Jake enlisted in the Army and served in RAEME deploying to SVN with 17 Construction Squadron Workshop from 17 Jan 68 to 14 Jan 69, providing vital maintenance and engineering support to Australian forces. John was privately farewelled by his family and friends on 12 Sep 25 the Sheffield RSL Club.
- **Greenbury**, WO2 (RTD) Peter James OAM passed away peacefully on 7 Sep 25 in Greenslopes Hospital, after a short battle with cancer. Peter was born in 1947 in Brisbane and served in the Australian Regular Army from 1965 until 1988. He saw operational service in SVN with 161 (Indep) Recce Flt from 3 Jun 67 until 28 May 68. He was awarded an OAM in the 1984 Queen’s Birthday Honours List in recognition of service as Quartermaster Sergeant, 106 Field Workshop.
- **Keats**, Gerry COL (RTD) Gerry Keates passed away on 9 Sep 25. Gerry was a long serving RAA officer, but considered his time as CO of 1 EME Services Group Bulimba a career highlight. He is fondly remembered by many former RAEME officers and senior ranks, who served with Gerry at 5 Fd Regt, 11 Fd Regt and 7 Fd Regt.
- **Angus**, WO2 (RTD) Peter “Gus” passed away peacefully at home on 10 Oct 25. Gus served with distinction in RAEME for 31 years (1978–2009) as a VM. During his career, he deployed on Operation Solace, Operation Warden, and Operation Astute. A

proud and dedicated member of the Corps, Gus gave back to the RAEME community through his leadership and service as President of the North Queensland RAEME Association (Life Member No.107) prior to its amalgamation with the RAEME Association Queensland, where he became a Life Subscriber (No.868).

WELFARE

RAQ has not received any advice of members in distress over the last four months.

Please Note. Please advise me via email address below, of any brothers and sisters, who have passed, or are in distress, in Queensland. Please ensure the detail provided is accurate and as complete as possible.

Arte et Marte

Barry Shipway
Welfare Officer

welfare@qld.raeme.org.au



RAEME HISTORY SEGMENT – AAOC AND AEME AT WAR 1939 to 1945

Introduction. The following excerpts were taken from the 2014 RAEME Corps history, *“With Skill and Fighting – Craftsmen of the Australian Army 1942-2014”*. They summarise the contribution made by Australian Army Ordnance Corps (AAOC), Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineer (AEME) Corps, the forerunners of the modern Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, (RAEME) Corps; and highlight the experiences of one unit (113 Fd Wksp) and some individuals. **This story commemorates the work undertaken by AAOC maintenance units, but in particular, fledgling AEME units in all theatres of WW2 up to the Japanese surrender (VJ Day) 80 year ago on 15th August 1945.**

“Australia was generally ill-prepared for WW2 and it took some time for the prevailing lethargy to be overcome. Almost reluctantly additional funds became available to develop the Army’s electrical and mechanical services, but unfortunately much of the knowledge and experience that had been gained during WWI had been lost or was ignored and the Australian Army was entirely dependent on British sources to achieve the necessary development. In spite of these difficulties and some cross-Corps confusion regarding the responsibility for the maintenance, repair and modification of mechanical and technical equipment, the first WW2 AAOC workshops were raised early in the war.

“Key to the AAOC deployable capability was the Army Field Workshop (AFW). However in spite of the importance of this capability to the AIF, raising an AFW was a difficult task. The outbreak of war had accentuated the need for tradesmen, and workshops had to compete fiercely to obtain their establishment of skilled manpower from the limited national

resource. This was a requirement made more difficult by the perception held by some trade qualified AIF recruits, who enlisted to fight, but who saw service in a workshop as a non-combat role. Bureaucracy was an additional hurdle, resulting in slowness to release trade qualified men from the central Army pool of enlistees.



1939: New recruits of the 6th Division entraining at Melbourne Showgrounds railway station for Puckapunyal

“All of these problems were eventually overcome and AFWs were raised, trained and deployed in support of AIF Divisions in the Middle East, Malaya and Australia.



1941 Maddalina: The Motor Transport Section of 2/2 AFW at work on Bren Gun Carriers

“The 2nd AIF’s initial engagements in the Middle East were fought against the Italians and as a result of battle damage, the harshness of the terrain, and a decision to employ captured Italian vehicles and equipment, the workshops were faced with an enormous work load and often exposed to enemy fire. During the attack to remove the Italian garrison from Tobruk, No. 6 Recovery Section of the 2/2 AFW actually went into action with the tanks and carried out repairs during the battle. For this action SGT W.M. Allison and PTEs E.O.J. Dunning and K Smith were awarded the Military Medal.

“During the siege of Tobruk, the Greece campaign, and later actions in the Western Desert, the men of the 2nd AIF

Workshops and their recovery elements made a significant contribution to the eventual defeat of the Axis powers in the Middle East.



Recovery under fire in Greece 1941

“Closer to home, the Australian Government agreed to commit the 8th Division AIF to Malaya to assist with countering the Japanese threat. Elements of the 8th Division AIF, including supporting Light Aid Detachments (LAD) and AFW support arrived in Malaya during February 1941.



Members of the 2/4th AFW, 8th Division, on a troopship

“A second contingent of the 8th Division arrived in Malaya during June 1941. On 7 December 1941 Japan entered the war with a surprising and devastating attack on the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii.¹ The next day Japanese forces commenced their invasion of Malaya. In a matter of weeks Japanese forces gained control of much of South East Asia and the South West Pacific Area. Australian troops of the 8th Division captured during this period numbered about

17,000. 9,607 members of the Division were killed in action, or died later as prisoners of war.

“In spite of their capture and harsh treatment, some artificers found a way to defy their Japanese captors. Lieutenant R Wright of the AAOC made three covert radio sets, one hidden in a broom; another was concealed in a clock and a third in a water bottle. These radio sets enabled prisoners to keep abreast of war news and greatly assisted in the maintenance of morale. None of the radios were discovered by the Japanese. The photograph below was taken after the Japanese surrender. It shows Lieutenant Wright demonstrating his covert broom radio to three unidentified members of the AIF.



“The rapid Japanese advance continued and in January 1942 Japanese forces overran a comparatively small Australian force on the New Guinea island of New Britain. This Japanese victory opened the way for a Japanese invasion of New Guinea, posing an even greater threat to Australia. On 19 February 1942, Japanese forces attacked Darwin, twice before noon with more than 260 aircraft launched from four aircraft carriers in the Timor Sea and from land bases at Ambon in the Maluku Islands of the Dutch-East Indies. Darwin, only lightly defended, was left devastated by the Japanese attack. At least 243 people were killed during the bombing and much of the city’s infrastructure, including valuable port resources, was destroyed.² Darwin was bombed on a total of 64 occasions between 19 February and November 1942.

“A number of AAOC workshop elements were in Darwin at the time of the initial bombing attacks and it is possible a spotter from 23 Independent Brigade Group Workshop was one of the first to report Japanese aircraft over the town³. Confronted with the grim reality of a major attack on mainland Australia, defensive preparations were finally begun in earnest. At the strategic level the Australian Government directed the return of the battle hardened AIF troops from the Middle East. Prior to the return of these troops efforts were made to slow the Japanese advance with the deployment of available AIF and Militia units.

¹ After just two hours of bombing, more than 2,400 Americans were dead, 21 ships had either been sunk or damaged and more than 188 US aircraft destroyed. This devastating attack so outraged the USA that it abandoned its policy of isolationism and declared war on Japan the following day, officially bringing the USA into WW2.

² “[Bombing of Darwin](#)”. War history. Australian War Memorial. Accessed 30 September 2013.

³ Owen Robinson, History of RAEME (un-published) p. 116.

"John Newton (Militia) enlisted during 1939 and was allocated to AAOC as a Wireless Mechanic in the 2/3rd Australian Field Workshop (AFW), 1 Australian Corps. In this capacity John deployed to the Middle East serving in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. On return to Australia he was undergoing additional training in Queensland prior to deployment to New Guinea when the formation of AEME was announced. John recalls that the announcement "hardly caused a ripple".⁴

"Harry Hopper (Militia) had a similar experience. Harry commenced his war service as a civilian radio technician when he provided expert advice to Army on appropriate radio communications for New Guinea. A few months later as Infantryman he was detailed to establish a radio network from Port Moresby to the top of Imita Ridge on the Kokoda Track. "During this task Harry became ill and was slightly wounded in an air raid⁵. Evacuated back to Australia, Harry's technical skills were finally recognised and he was assigned to AAOC. On 1st December 1942, while undergoing training as a Radar Technician, he was advised, almost as an afterthought, that he had been transferred to AEME.

"Doug Brazier also enlisted in the Militia during 1942 and was allocated to AAOC.



On 22 August 1942, to a background of Japanese air raids, Doug Brazier celebrated his twenty-first birthday at "Camp One"

A carpenter by trade, Doug was posted to 113th Brigade Workshops and initially deployed to Queensland. During June 1942, Doug deployed with the 113th Workshop to Port Moresby in support of Army, Navy, RAAF and US forces. Doug recalls that he and his mates were "impressed" by the birth of the new Corps, but mainly because as of 1 Dec 42, the 113th "Australian Independent Brigade Group Ordnance Workshop was re-designated as 113th Australian Independent Brigade Group Workshop, AEME. However there was no time for celebration, they were just too busy.

"The experiences of these three soldiers and the various units in which they served are typical of most AEME units. There was no time for the new Corps to adjust to the tempo of operational

service. In New Guinea the quantity of work facing AEME was enormous as the number of workshops was not increased in proportion to the number of troops or equipment deployed in theatre. For example, under 7th Div. command 113th Independent Brigade Group Workshop and the LADs were directed to do all repairs until a base workshop was established.

"Throughout 1943, 113th Workshops remained in the Port Moresby area, changing locations as required. It was on the receiving end of frequent air raids, and on 12 April 1943, during a daylight raid by 100 aircraft, four 60kg anti-personnel bombs were dropped into the centre of the workshop area. Three key vehicles and their contents were destroyed and six personnel were wounded.

"Tradesmen were in short supply and AEME personnel were often temporarily detached to other units where their talents and expertise could be best utilized. The down side of these detachments was that the unit surrendering personnel was still expected to meet its deadlines in spite of having fewer personnel. The tempo of operations in New Guinea could not be sustained without relieving those elements at the 'sharp end' for rest, recreation and retraining; and AEME elements rotated back to Australia to recuperate prior to returning to an operational area. 113th Brigade Workshops' turn for a rest came on 22nd December 1943. After almost 18 months of continuous war service, home leave rotations of 24 days were a welcome relief.



1942: A 3-ton Blitz truck on Port Moresby Road about to be recovered by 113th Brigade Workshop

"In the campaigns that followed in New Guinea and the islands of the South West Pacific Area and beyond, AEME artificers and tradesmen and women earned for themselves and their infant Corps, a reputation for hard work, courage and initiative. While some of their work was accomplished in well-appointed workshop facilities within Australia, in operational areas, tasks were performed under the most appalling of climatic conditions, fatigue and disease and a constant backdrop of enemy action. Some Workshop units suffered up to 35% casualties from disease. The effect of these casualty rates was felt by the healthy members of AEME units, as work rates had to be maintained.⁶

⁴ Op cit pp.93-4.

⁵ A more detailed account of Harry Hopper's experience at that time is provided at

Appendix Two.

⁶ Robinson, O. p.124.

"John Newton was to become a disease-related casualty and as a result his war took a different turn. On his return from the Middle East, John had been posted to Queensland to await deployment to New Guinea. During this waiting period John had been promoted to Corporal, and then posted to the 2/118th Brigade Workshop. With this unit, John rendered war service at Milne Bay and Lae. However while preparing for operations in the Lae area, John was diagnosed with asthma, and returned to hospital in Australia. Discharged from hospital, John was promoted to Sergeant and posted to 8th Advanced Base Workshop, Moorebank, as an Artificer Telecommunications.



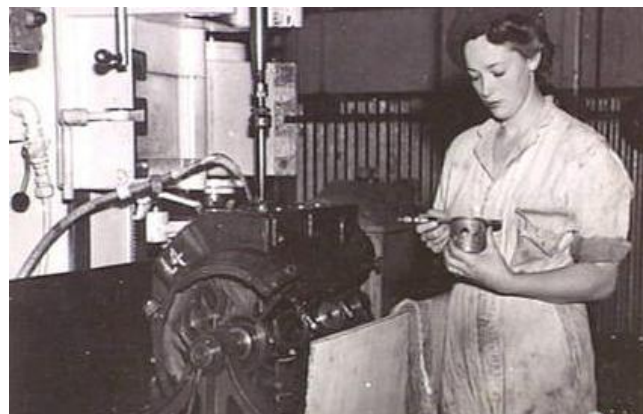
Camouflaged Workshops at Milne Bay 1942

"Away from the operational areas the contribution of AEME to the war effort continued. The 8th Advanced Workshop, a Fourth Echelon unit boasted facilities that would have seemed pure luxury after John's experiences in First, Second and Third Echelon units. The work carried out at 8th Advanced Workshop focused on a level of repair that would have been almost impossible to carry out in forward areas.

"At around the time John Newton was posted to 8th Advanced Workshop "normal" workshop environment in some AEME units underwent significant change. The Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) had been formed during 1941 and by 1942 its members were being employed throughout Australia and overseas by a number of Corps. Most female soldiers allocated to AEME were employed in the clerical jobs, but some were Craftswomen. The quality and the value of AWAS work was of the highest order.⁷



BRIG Field and party inspect vertical type of full circle mould after a tyre has been re-treaded at 8th Advanced Workshop, AEME. (Photo AWMI)



2/18th Advanced Workshop. Cfn C M Halley, a member of the first Australian Women's Army Service School, operating a honing machine



AEME employed AWAS members on overseas deployment. Colonel G.H.S. Moran inspects AEME AWAS personnel attached to 2/1 Base Workshop at Lae in New Guinea (Australian War Memorial)

"Having completed well-earned R&R⁸, deployable AEME elements returned to the AO⁹. In the case of 113th Workshops, after almost eight months back in Australia, during August 1944, the Workshop redeployed to the northern coast of New Guinea, to a location known as Siar Plantation. As was often the case at that time Workshop units were required to prepare their allocated workshop sites prior to commencing operations. This preparation was often carried out with hand tools.



Workshop bays constructed from local coconut trees

⁷ Barker, T. pp.113 - 115

⁸ Rest and recreation

⁹ Area of Operations



Milling coconut tree trunks with a circular saw powered by a captured Japanese engine

"On 12 July 1944, General MacArthur directed General Blamey to use Australian Forces to neutralise Japanese forces in Australian and British territories and mandates. He also specified the minimum forces to be employed on these tasks. Further, MacArthur indicated his intent to deploy Australian forces in the advance to the Philippines. Accordingly, Blamey employed four divisions, to neutralise Japanese forces in New Guinea, New Britain, and the Solomon Islands. Consequently, Doug Brazier as a member of 113th Workshops was deployed to Bougainville from Nov 1944. The Workshop continued to operate from Bougainville until the end of the war.



113th Workshop on parade at Torokina Perimeter, Bougainville July 1945

"As for many operations in the SWPA, there were two enemies. The first enemy was the Japanese who even though the tide of war had turned against them, remained determined and brave. AEME Workshops were required to maintain their own security and on many occasions AEME personnel came in contact with the enemy.

"The second enemy was the environment. Heat and humidity sapped men's energy and promoted disease. Torrential rain greatly impeded work areas and caused floods which destroyed bridges and turned tracks into quagmires making movement almost impossible and cutting lines of communications.

"Yet in spite of both of these adversaries as a matter of great pride, the deployed AEME elements continued to meet their workloads and deadlines.



Roads covered with corduroy were spoiled by mud slurries.



Jeep trains passing on Boin Road



The Japanese/German Prime Mover used to pull Jeep Trains on Bougainville. The employment of this tractor resulted in the stretching of many Jeep chassis, and as a result additional work for AEME

It should be remembered that during WW2, plastic had not been invented. Consequently, all the equipment AEME personnel worked on was made either of wood, metals (such as steel, brass, gun metal, aluminium, duralumin and sheet-metal), canvas, jute rope, leather, glass, wool, cotton, rubber and paints. In many cases replacement parts were built on location, requiring skilled tradesmen and took time.

"Elsewhere, AEME units were involved in bitter fighting across the SWPA. MacArthur changed his mind regarding the use of Australian troops in the attack on the Philippines. Instead he sent them to Borneo and Java, where Australian operations were undertaken by the 1st Australian Corp, comprising the

7th and 9th Divisions, 1 Base Sub Area and Corp Troops. This force was moved from Australia to Morotai in preparation for the planned invasion. AEME units played a key role in the Borneo campaigns at Tarakan and at Balikpapan. It was to this force and the newly formed Advanced Land Headquarters Workshop, that John Newton was next posted and where he was to serve until the end of the war.



Recovery Group, 1st Australian Beach Workshop, with Diamond T wrecker trucks after the invasion of Labuan off the Borneo north-east coast



27 September 1945: Fitters of 27th Maintenance Platoon Advanced Land HQ Workshop at Morotai



John Newton and some of his AEME mates admiring a road sign at Morotai

“Then suddenly it was all over. Future operations against the Japanese ceased after two atomic bombs were dropped on mainland Japan and the Japanese surrendered¹⁰.



9 September 1945: Lieutenant General Fusutaro Teshima signs the Instrument of Surrender at Morotai before an assembly of more than 10,000 Australian troops. Among those assembled were SGT John Newton and other AEME members of the Advanced LHQ Workshops

“While peace brought relief from WW2’s anxiety, death and destruction, it also delivered uncertainty for the future of the fledgling Corps of RAEME. At inception, AEME’s prime focus was to improve the Army’s electrical and mechanical engineering functionality. The Corps had achieved all that was expected of it, proving its worth in the vicious campaigns in New Guinea, the Islands of the South West Pacific Area and Borneo. Yet, was all of this sufficient to guarantee the future of the new Corps during peace?”

That question has now been answered, as 80 years later, the Corps has cemented itself as a formidable component of the ADF with an outstanding reputation for getting the job done.

**Ross Grant
Spanner News
History Editor**



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¹⁰ On 06 August 1945, the United States dropped a massive, atomic bomb on **Hiroshima City**, immediately killing approximately 80,000 people. Then, three days later, the US dropped another atomic bomb on Japan, this time on Nagasaki City, killing an estimated 40,000

people. In response to the twin bombings, Emperor Hirohito announced Japan’s unconditional WW2 surrender in a radio address on 15 August 1945.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This is the last edition of Spanner News in this format. In the future, I will assist our RAQ Chairman, Pete Matthews, develop a slightly modified but more comprehensive version of the RAQ Friday Files; while supporting the new editor of the RAEME National Network's (RNN) national newsletter, Ian Cook, in Canberra, to produce a nationally focussed newsletter. The plan is to produce a wide range of interesting stories, which impact all in the national RAEME family, and hopefully, take a load off the various communications representatives in each state or region.

It has been an honour to edit Spanner News and receive contributions from many unit correspondents in Queensland and NT over the last 20 plus years. These correspondents also included serving and retired members of our Corps, and helped inform readers, young and old, of our daily work training for war; but equally, remind readers of those who have established the Corps reputation – our challenge in a time of significant change is to continue building on the reputation of our forebears.

Don't be shy telling your stories as they come to hand in 2026. They will be published, but in a timelier way in the RAQ "Friday Files". Some will also be published nationally! For Queenslanders, you can still rely on "Friday Files" to give you early advice, information and locations on forthcoming events, to enable you to get together with your friends, teammates, or colleagues from the ground, aviation and maritime capabilities – your stories are all relevant and interesting.

So let loose your unit correspondents and RAEME associations' communications' officers and seek out stories and despatch them to: commschair@qld.raeme.org.au by the COB on Wednesday of each week for inclusion in the following "Friday Files."

Ian Cook has a big task to compile the monthly stories and articles for the new national newsletter, in collaboration with the various associations in the RAEME National Network (RNN). If you haven't already see Ian's work, check out this link:

<https://act.raeme.org.au/index.php/publications/monthly-newsletters>

Have a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Regards,

Ross Grant
Editor SN



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See you there!



NEW RAEME NEWSLETTER



RAEME CORPS SHOP

“WITH SKILL AND FIGHTING: CRAFTSMEN OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY 1942 - 2014”.

For those yet to buy the Corps memoir, there are still copies available, detailed below is how to obtain a copy. It may be a great gift for someone who has served in the Corps.

Books are only \$40.00 plus postage. Copies can be ordered from the Corps Shop, which is available on the RAEME National Website (<https://raeme.org.au>).

Whilst on the site why not check out the other items available.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to drop us a line at

RAEME.HOCCell@defence.gov.au

Please be patient, there are only a couple of Defence Members in the HOC Cell and they have other tasks.

RAEME Sunshine Coast Get-together

The final RAEME Sunshine Coast Chapter get-together for 2025 will be held on **Sunday, 23 Nov 25 at the Alex Surf Club**. We'll gather upstairs in the Terrace Room at the Bistro, with the merriment commencing from 12:00 noon.

Following the success of our previous two events this year (and with more members recently joining our Sunshine Coast Chapter), this pre-Christmas gathering is shaping up to be even more popular. We're looking forward to welcoming new faces and reconnecting with the more longstanding members, spouses, and friends.

There'll be some special **lucky door prizes** up for grabs, but of course, the real highlight will be simply enjoying each other's company. Don't miss out on what promises to be another memorable afternoon!

Parking: There is plenty of parking available either directly in front of the club or across the road in the club's detached car park, accessible via Mari Street.

RSVP: As the event is being held in the Bistro during the busy lead-up to Christmas, early notification of your attendance would be greatly appreciated. That said, I'll make every effort to accommodate late RSVPs as well, so don't let timing stop you from coming along.

Terry Johnson
sunshinecoast@qld.raeme.org.au