

CENTENARY OF ARMISTICE DAY—

An event to be celebrated;

World War One—a cost to be commemorated;

One Hundred Years—so many lives to be remembered and so many stories, many untold.

A mural, containing artwork painted by Bundaberg artist Ross Driver, is located in Bundaberg's War Nurses Memorial Park. It spans those 100 years and acts as a reminder of the cost of war and the contribution of Australian nurses who have selflessly cared for others. It also reminds us of the stories that make up Australia's history.

OPERATION BABYLIFT

The Vietnam panel of the mural depicts Rosslyn Richards who served in the Royal Australian Air Force for 34 years as a registered nurse. Ros is known to many of us as a member of Fraser Coast RAAFA. Her painting appears on the cover of this issue and was taken from a photograph of Ros participating in Operation Babylift in 1975.

In 2016 Ros was able to tell her story to the Fraser Coast Chronical. Some of this is shared below together with information from the Anzac Portal.

The article in the Chronical leads with the indelible memory Ros has of her aircraft heading down the runway with 81 orphans on board just as an American plane explodes.

The American plane, a Galaxy, was also part of Operation Babylift and was carrying 243 children, their escorts, medical staff and aircrew. Soon after the Galaxy took off the plane's cargo door blew off. The pilots tried to return to Tan Son Nhut Airport, Saigon but 2 kilometres short it hit the ground, bounced over the Saigon River and exploded. There were few survivors. The dead included 143 babies and two Adelaide women, Lee Makk and Margaret Moses, who had volunteered to help with the children.

Only minutes earlier the crews of two RAAF Hercules stood on the tarmac chatting with the crew of the giant Galaxy. The first Hercules followed the Galaxy after it took off with the second not far behind. A few hours later the two Hercules landed at Bangkok and disembarked 194 children, three doctors and twenty nurses.

Ros told the reporter "Before we left, we packed cardboard boxes with foam for the babies to be carried in." "On the day we were leaving, as we were heading to the airport, we had five babies thrown through the car windows for us to take."

The babies aboard the Australian Hercules were carried five to a litter for the older ones and the smallest, in cardboard boxes, were placed on the floor. All had water bottles between their lips to ease the pain of changing air pressure.

Other RAAF Hercules evacuated some 80 Australian civilians, mostly embassy officials and their families, from Saigon.

With two stints connected with the Vietnam War, 1970-71 and 1974-76, Ros Richards would have many memories both

good and bad. She said that being able to rescue those children was one of the highlights.

AUSTRALIAN WAR NURSES CENTENARY OF ARMISTICE MURAL

The Bundaberg mural consists of 6 panels:

- the first is World War One featuring Head sister Constance Keys RRC (AANS) who was one of the four Queensland nurses to sail with the first convoy of ships bound for Egypt. Constance Keys was from Mt Perry.
- Captain Pearl Mittelheuser (AANS) on the second panel (WW2) died as a Prisoner of War of the Japanese. Pearl's family home still stands in Targo Street.
- Vietnam, Flight Officer Rosslyn Richards (RAAFNS)
- Lieutenant Alexandra Logan (RAANC) of Bundaberg served in Rwanda and her panel depicts the Australian Peacekeepers who have been serving somewhere in the world every year since 1947 to current day.
- Major Patrick Bates (RAANS) is a work colleague of one of Bundaberg's Army Reserve nurses. Patrick's service includes Afghanistan.
- The final panel is the Peace mural and it shows school children remembering the fallen and celebrating peace at the Bundaberg Cenotaph. In the background is War-warrant Officer Class One Jennifer Waldron of Bungadoo, handing out biscuits to children in Somalia.

The mural was commissioned by Bundaberg Ex Servicewomen and funded by that association with support funding from a commonwealth grant through the Hinkler electorate. It will be launched by Hon. Keith Pitt MP at 0930 on 11 November at War Nurses Memorial Park.

COMMEMORATING ARMISTICE IN BUNDABERG

Bundaberg will commemorate the anniversary of Armistice Day 11 Nov 1918 with a service at ANZAC Park. Assembly for this service is 1030 and it will include the dedication of a new memorial in ANZAC Park.

On the eve of Remembrance Day a special concert "Our ANZACS: their words and music" is taking place at Christ Church, Maryborough Street from 1830. Entry is free.

At 1000 on 11 November Christ Church will dedicate six bells 'The Peace Bells'. The bells are being installed in the War Memorial Bell Tower. A project 80 years in the making. It was reported that Bundaberg will then be the home of the heaviest peal of six bells in Australia.

Regional Remembrance Day services will be held at Burnett Heads, and Bargara...the News Mail is sure to advise of any others.

**Take the time to
REMEMBER**

