

# THE DESPATCH

Edition 1 2016

## The Power of Art Therapy – A Young Veteran’s Story

Six months ago 23-year-old Cameron Hapgood could not have imagined he would become a pillar of support for contemporary veterans like himself.

Thanks to the art workshops offered by Russell Pick in Ward 17 through The Repat Foundation – The Road Home, Cameron has found a release from living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Cameron was 17 years old and had just completed year 10 when he joined the Australian Army. At 19 he was deployed to Afghanistan for six months as a Counter-Rocket Artillery and Mortar Operator where his job was to operate and maintain radar systems for incoming rockets and artillery.



Cameron is a strong believer in the benefits of art therapy.

For Cameron it proved harder than expected to detach from his time in Afghanistan, leading him to Ward 17, as a patient at the Repatriation General Hospital.

**“I was on a downward spiral at the start of 2015 and my friends and family were worried about me,” Cameron said.**

Despite only being at the beginning of his journey with PTSD, through Russell’s canvas painting classes, Cameron has

reconnected with a love of art he had left behind at high school.

“It’s still very soon in my therapy and I have a long way to go, but my time in Ward 17 and art classes with Russell have really helped me,” Cameron said.

“At first the classes were a bit daunting because I hadn’t participated in art since high school. It was a subject I loved at school but I disconnected from it since joining the defence force.”

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## Upcoming Events!

**8 – 20 March 2016**

Spirit of ANZAC –  
Centenary Experience  
(see page 2)

**Friday 29 April 2016**

2016 ANZAC Commemorative  
Cocktail Party

**Friday 4 November 2016**

SAVE THE DATE!  
Remembrance Business  
Breakfast

## Leaving a Legacy

Through the generosity of people like you, health and medical research will help reward the men and women that serve to protect us with hope and healing.

For many people, leaving a lasting legacy in their will is an opportunity to give a significant contribution to an organisation they care about and respect.

For more information or to request an information pack, please contact Irene Jones on **(08) 7002 0880** or [ijones@theroadhome.com.au](mailto:ijones@theroadhome.com.au).

## Find us Online!

[www.theroadhome.com.au](http://www.theroadhome.com.au)



# The Power of Art Therapy – A Young Veteran’s Story cont’d

The weekly canvas painting classes have been able to create an escape for Cameron and his fellow veterans.

“You get so absorbed in painting, it takes away every thought. I find it extremely calming and therapeutic,” Cameron said.

Having come a long way, last month Cameron joined the Carer and Consumer Advisory Group at the Repat Hospital and as the youngest member has become a voice for contemporary veterans and an advocate for art therapy.

“I am able to give a lot of insight into younger veterans and our perspective, what our needs are and how we can be better managed and helped.

“I will continue to push the benefits of art therapy, as well as the importance of research in this area for current and future generations of veterans.”

As for the future, Cameron is following in the footsteps of his mentor Russell and has been accepted into a Bachelor of Architectural design at The University of South Australia, starting in March 2016.

Cameron will continue contributing to the Carer and Consumer Advisory Group and assisting with the view of the contemporary veterans.

“Russell boosted my confidence in my artistic abilities. He has been a wealth of knowledge for me, as he pursued a different lifestyle after the Vietnam War, which is exactly what I want to do.”

The Repat Foundation – The Road Home would like to thank Cameron for sharing his story with us and wish him the best of luck in what is no doubt a bright future ahead!

## Discover the Spirit of ANZAC

Discover Australia’s history of courage, service and sacrifice from the First World War to the present day.

The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience tells the story of Australia’s involvement in the First World War and the ensuing Century of Service of our armed forces, bringing the Anzac legacy to life.

Visitors will be able to explore recreated scenes of Gallipoli, the Western Front, Sinai and Palestine and discover the incredible acts of bravery of our service men and women.

Visitors have said...

“This was one of the most moving and engaging exhibitions I’ve ever seen”, “Our family was left speechless”, “This was an amazing, moving, extraordinary exhibition detailing the Anzac story”.

This is your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to walk through recreated First World War environments featuring more than 200 genuine artefacts from the Australian War Memorial.

The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience is touring nationally, visiting Adelaide from 8 - 20 March 2016 at the Adelaide Showgrounds.

Book your FREE tickets at [www.spiritofanzac.gov.au](http://www.spiritofanzac.gov.au) to secure your preferred session.

Follow us on social media to track our journey around the country with #spiritofanzac: [www.facebook.com/SpiritofAnzacCentenaryExperience/](https://www.facebook.com/SpiritofAnzacCentenaryExperience/)



**SPIRIT OF ANZAC**  
CENTENARY EXPERIENCE



# Finding the Perfect Prosthetic Fit

The Repat Foundation – The Road Home is proud to support Adam Holden and his team at Orthotics and Prosthetics SA (OPSA) who thanks to community donations have recently welcomed a new piece of equipment that allows a more timely production of personalised prostheses.

With each of his patients at The Repatriation General Hospital, Adam takes the time to tailor the prosthesis to their needs and expectations, following them up on their journey and offering support and guidance.

“We support patients just after they have their amputation and then spend the time designing the prosthesis based on their needs and follow them through rehab as they get used to wearing it,” Adam said.

“Every prosthetic prescription we make for a client is tailored to their needs, what they are doing now and what they anticipate doing in the future.

“We put a lot of effort into getting the right prescription straight up for the individual.”

Having access to this new piece of equipment called the ‘Lasar Posture’, Adam can now find the perfect prosthetic alignment for each of his patients in one go.

“Previously I was working out the alignment manually by doing a pre-assessment to check the patient’s range of motion and individual strengths,” Adam said.

“From there it was a lot of asking the patient questions and based on how they are feeling altering the prosthetic manually. This was harder for the older population who sometimes don’t notice these small changes.

**“The Lasar Posture takes the guess work and assumptions that we used to make out, in order to get the best alignment for the client.”**

One man who is indebted to Adam and the Lasar Posture is 29-year-old Chris Harvey who lost his right foot in a motor sport accident.

“Unfortunately I was in the wrong place at the wrong time – I was a pedestrian when a car lost control and hit me,” Chris said.

“There was no saving my foot – I had the amputation the same day and then was in intensive care for 36 hours before being transferred to the Repat Hospital.”

Adam worked with Chris to select and prescribe a prosthetic foot that would meet his existing needs that would allow him to return to work and also continue with the lifestyle he had grown accustomed to before the accident.

“I started out with a different foot but I really needed something I could wear while I was doing work, as I do high pressure water blasting to remove concrete with water. Adam was able to accommodate my needs,” Chris said.

Using the new Lasar Posture machine Adam was able to achieve the highest outcomes from an all-purpose prosthetic foot for Chris that would suit his needs now as well as the expectations he had for the future.

“We want our patients to feel safe and stable. With each patient we do key indicators and outcome measures to test at what range they are at with their fitness and what they need from their prosthesis,” Adam said.

“For Chris the biggest driving factor was the type of work he does. He needed something that was robust, waterproof and something he could push against. We were able to achieve the highest level of prosthesis best suited for him.”

Fourteen months after his amputation Chris was able to return to work and is now back to doing everything he loved before the accident.

“Since this new prosthetic everything has gotten better and easier, I am very happy where I am at!” Chris said.



Adam (L) and Chris (R) on the Lasar Posture.

# A Veteran's Legacy Lives On



A young Bill as an Australian soldier in World War II.

Bill Schmitt was only 23 years old when he enlisted as a soldier in World War II. Despite bearing witness to the horrors of war, on his return to Adelaide in 1945 the ever positive Bill became an advocate for veterans' health and a beloved supporter of The Repat Foundation (now The Repat Foundation – The Road Home) until he sadly passed away earlier last year at age 97.

In 1942 Bill was captured by Japanese soldiers in Java and forced to spend three-and-a-half years as a prisoner of war, something his daughter Sue says he rarely spoke about.

"Dad suffered war neuroses and his body nearly gave up on him with the horrendous conditions he was kept in," Sue recounts.

**"It's so hard to understand having never experienced anything like that myself but he never complained. He just got on with his life and he forgave."**

Bill's journey with The Repat Foundation – The Road Home began when he was first admitted to The Repatriation General Hospital in 1945 after returning from war weighing only 42 kilograms.

At the time, Bill was unaware this would be the beginning of a bond with The Repat Hospital's medical staff and fellow veterans that would last his entire lifetime.

"Dad soon discovered The Repat was the place for him, and he was so loved by all," Sue said.

In 2002, after collapsing unexpectedly, Bill was diagnosed with stomach cancer and refusing to be treated anywhere

else was admitted to the Repat Hospital.

"Dad was insistent he receive treatment at The Repat Hospital – he felt so comfortable there, surrounded by people who understood him," Sue said.

After a successful operation Bill went on to live 13 gloriously healthy years surrounded by his family and even travelled back to Japan with Sue, the country where it all began for him so many years ago.

"At the time I asked Dad whether being in Japan brought back bad memories, and he said these aren't the people who did any harm to him, they were all dead and gone," Sue said.

That was the forgiving and easy-going nature of a beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather that was determined to live life to the fullest despite his war experiences.

"Dad always said that it was better to wear out than rust out – he always had a positive attitude."

It was only at 96 years old, that Bill gathered his family around to tell them he couldn't live independently anymore and he wanted to return to The Repat.

Immediately admitted to Ward 2 of the hospital in April, a month later Bill moved to residential care at VITA where he spent the last year of his life, right next door to his beloved hospital.

"He was very happy there," Sue said.

To this day Bill's legacy and dedication to veterans' health continues to live on through his daughter Sue who like her father continues to support medical research through The Repat Foundation – The Road Home.

"Dad and Mum were both actively involved in various trials and research conducted at The Repat throughout the years.

"Whilst devastated about the hospital closure, Dad wanted the amazing research and care for veterans to continue."

A Member of the Order of Australia and a champion of veteran affairs, Bill's dedication and passion for research in support of veterans and their families will continue to live on through The Repat Foundation – The Road Home.



Bill with his great grand-daughter Imogen.

# Reflecting on Vietnam – A Red Cross Girl's Story

At the age of 26, Jean Matthews was in love with 5,000 men.

These men were Australian and New Zealand soldiers conscripted to fight in the Vietnam War and Jean loved each and every one of them while fulfilling her duties as a Red Cross girl living in Vũng Tàu, Vietnam in 1966.

"I adored every smelly, dirty, mildewy, exhausted fellow, coated in the red mud of Nui Dat or the sand of Vũng Tàu," she said.

Today Jean understands the complexities of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), having met many who were exposed to traumas that have haunted them over the years. She is now a strong supporter of research into PTSD and encourages the community to support The Repat Foundation – The Road Home to give back to our veterans.

"I worked as a journalist at The Advertiser at the time when the Vietnam War was its biggest story, but being a woman I know I would have been laughed out of the office if I had asked to go. Remember, this was 1966," Jean said.

"I heard about the opportunity of becoming a Red Cross girl and I applied and was lucky enough to be chosen. It was the most inspiring year of my life.

**"War is a horrible thing, but in that year, I lived life more intensely and experienced such incredible acts of human kindness. It enlivened and enriched me for the rest of my life."**

Jean's job as one of two Red Cross girls was to do the simple, non-nursing jobs such as supplying the soldiers admitted to hospital with pyjamas, a comb and a toothbrush. She also would write letters for the soldiers who could not write home themselves. Her aptly titled memoir she wrote under the name of Jean DeBelle Lamensdorf in 2006, 'Write Home for Me – A Red Cross Woman in Vietnam', was a worldwide success.

"Sometimes these letters told a family that their son was sitting up, in an air-conditioned hospital, just to paint a picture that he was ok and in safe hands. A lot of the soldiers' letters wouldn't provide any details of the war but would ask questions like – did you ever buy the new car that you've been talking about? How is the dog?"

For Jean, her involvement with Ward 17 at Adelaide's Repatriation General Hospital is an interesting and touching story.

Upon arrival in Vietnam, Jean spotted a publicity photograph of a soldier in the Saigon press office. A photograph that has



"People with PTSD are plagued with nightmares and it is just not well understood. This is why the research is so important."

stayed with her forever.

"I looked at the eyes of this guy...he was exhausted, he was dirty, he was not really there," she said.

"I asked if I could keep the photograph and ended up putting it on my wall when I got a permanent bedroom in Vũng Tàu. The whole year I was there I didn't know who he was but to me, he represented all the men I was helping."

In researching her book 40 years later, Jean learned that the man in her photo was Barry Harford from Broken Hill who had been one of the 'bravest of the brave,' a tunnel rat.

"Those heroic men would drop into a carefully camouflaged tunnel not knowing what they would face when they opened it – it could have been a barrage of bullets or a deadly scorpion.

"I learned that Barry had been troubled with demons all his life as a result of war and that he spent a lot of time at Ward 17. I was very fortunate to be able to meet the man whose face kept me driven through my time in Vietnam."

Jean is passionate about finding ways to support our veterans and also thrilled the research is being extended to help emergency first responders.

"People with PTSD are plagued with nightmares and it is just not well understood. This is why the research is so important," she said.

"In Vietnam I didn't walk in the soldiers' boots, but I walked alongside them and I can talk their language, so I know that we must support them. The soldiers and the emergency first responders deserve to be everyone's heroes."

# Improving Outcomes for Prostate Cancer



Dr Foreman would like to say thank you for your support!

“Our results have identified that a significant number of men who appeared to have a less aggressive cancer at diagnosis, were in fact underestimated. Despite this however, the clinical outcome was identical for the two groups. We were able to present our findings at an international Urology conference in Melbourne in October 2015.”

In order to refine the strategy of identifying men suitable for active surveillance, Darren is currently involved in the PRIAS trial at the Repatriation General Hospital, which is a multicentre international study evaluating criteria to improve identification of men suitable for active surveillance.

“The difference in quality of life between active surveillance and receiving treatment can be vastly different, and it is really important we identify the right patients for active surveillance, and equally we need to correctly identify those patients who will benefit from immediate treatment.”

“Prostate cancer is the second largest cause of cancer death in men behind bowel cancer - it is a major problem. Through my study I want to be able to improve the information given to patients to ensure they can make an informed decision about treatment choice.”

Grateful to community support which has allowed the continuation of his research, Darren is confident the future will lead to prostate cancer patients making better informed decisions about their own treatment options.

“It’s really touching that people care so much to support our work.”

With the support of The Repat Foundation – The Road Home, Senior Visiting Urologist Darren Foreman is working on improving treatment options for men with low risk prostate cancer.

Darren works with the South Australian Prostate Cancer Clinical Outcomes Collaborative (SA-PCCOC), based at the Repatriation General Hospital, and has been studying active surveillance, a concept of prostate cancer management that involves identifying men with low risk prostate cancer and observing them on their journey.

“We know that prostate cancer varies between slow growing and aggressive types. Active surveillance involves trying to identify the less aggressive cancers and following these men rather than treating them immediately,” Darren said.

“We follow these patients with regular PSA tests, clinical monitoring of their prostate, and appropriate imaging, and if there is any sign their disease is progressing we proceed with active treatment.”

Darren explains the side effects of curative treatments for prostate cancer may result in a decreased quality of life for patients, including incontinence and impotence. His study is evaluating whether a period of observation is safe in men with low risk prostate cancer. Ideally, we would like to be able to identify the group of men who will never require treatment for their indolent prostate cancer. This will take time, and studies like this are important in adding to this body of knowledge.

“Our study involves comparing the pathological outcomes of a group of men who began on active surveillance and progressed to treatment, with a group who immediately proceeded to treatment after diagnosis with similar disease characteristics.”

“We actually found there was a higher proportion of men whose cancer was spreading outside the prostate in the active surveillance group than there was in men who were treated immediately after diagnosis.”

# Fun for All at ABC Gardeners Market

On Saturday October 10 2015 the Repat Foundation – The Road Home were lucky enough to be chosen as the host charity for the inaugural ABC Gardeners Market, raising over \$13,000 for veterans’ health, emergency first responders and their families.

Held twice yearly, the event at ABC Collinswood Studio Carpark from 8am-1pm saw 6,000 people through the gate enjoying the sunny weather and basking in an abundance of plants and gardening goods.

Guests visited over 90 unique stalls, enjoyed a number of delicious breakfast options and were entertained by live ABC radio, The Army Band, Bumbles the Clown, a photobooth and face painting for the kiddies!

The Repat Foundation – The Road Home extends a warm thank you to all who generously gave on the day, the money raised will fund vital research into veterans’ health and wellbeing, emergency first responders and their families.



# A Day at The Races!

Guests frocked up once again for The Repat Foundation – The Road Home’s Alf Gard Race day held on November 21 2015. A huge success, the day raised over \$3,100 for research into the health and wellbeing of veterans, emergency first responders and their families.

A great day was had by all 132 race-goers who were treated to a table raffle, silent auction and Australian Jockey John Letts as their very own MC.

Thank you to all those who supported the event, and we look forward to seeing you again this year! A big thank you to Ann Braybon for all her hard volunteer work that made this event such a success!



# We Will Remember Them

Thank you to all who attended The Remembrance Business Breakfast at the Adelaide Convention Centre on Friday November 6 2015. This annual event provides an opportunity to acknowledge and honour our veterans, past and present.

We were lucky enough to be joined by special guest and keynote speaker Australia's former Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison AO.

A number of local dignitaries also attended the breakfast honouring and remembering our nation's heroes. These included The Hon. Jack Snelling MP, SA's Minister for Health, Commissioner Grant Stevens, Commissioner of Police, South Australia Police and The Repat Foundation Ambassador Dr Gill Hicks MBE and Patron Graham Cornes OAM.

Thanks to our Gold Sponsors: Flinders University and South

Australian Defence Industry Leadership Program, Silver Sponsors: NOVA Systems, Lockheed Martin and BAE Systems, and Bronze Sponsors: The Defence Industry Association of South Australia and Veterans' Heart Clinic.

The 2016 Remembrance Day Business Breakfast will be held on Friday 4 November – stay tuned!



## Patrons

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## In Memory

The Repat Foundation – The Road Home gratefully acknowledges donations in memory of:

- Dawn Palmer
- Elsie Blackmore
- Gordon McCulloch
- Colin Black
- Jean Fisher
- Joan Wyatt
- Lasca Kennedy
- Peter Haywood
- Rhonda Wilson-Smith