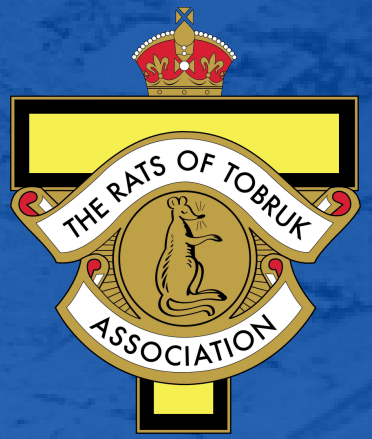




2025 ANNUAL REPORT

WWW.RATSOFTOBRUKASSOCIATION.ORG.AU

**RATS OF TOBRUK
ASSOCIATION INC.**

Vice President's Message

It is my very great honour and privilege to report to members on 2025, a year defined not only by activity, but by goodwill, remembrance and shared purpose within the Rats of Tobruk Association.

We marked the passing of our Patron, Mr William (Bill) Gibbins AM, with deep gratitude for a life lived generously. Bill's kindness and foresight ensured that Tobruk House remains the enduring home of the Rats of Tobruk and their families. His legacy is not simply bricks and mortar, but a place of belonging, fellowship and remembrance. On behalf of all members, I again express our heartfelt thanks to Bill and his family. He will be long remembered and deeply missed.

Throughout the year, the association continued to foster strong bonds between members, families and the wider community. Our gatherings and commemorations were characterised by warmth, respect and an unmistakable sense of pride in our shared history. Tobruk House remained a welcoming place, alive with conversation, memory and camaraderie.

The commemorative events held in 2025 carried particular meaning, as we honoured the legacy of the Rats of Tobruk in a year when their living presence is now entrusted fully to us. The spirit of service, resilience and mateship that defined the Rats was strongly felt and proudly upheld.

I am pleased to report that throughout 2025 the association conducted itself with dignity, unity and goodwill, ensuring that the service and sacrifice of the Rats of Tobruk continues to be honoured, remembered and passed on to future generations.



PAUL DIPNALL
VICE PRESIDENT





Chairman's Message

It is my privilege to report to members a summary of the 2025 year. It was, by most measures, a good year for the organisation. At the AGM, Doctor Nadia Truong was officially presented with the medallion recognising her appointment as the 16th Royal Children's Hospital Rats of Tobruk Neurology Fellow.

The finances were reported to be in good shape and our membership numbers have continued to rise. We do have opportunity to improve members' attendance at events, and accordingly have scheduled our general meetings for Sundays in 2026. I also hope this encourages greater involvement through committee nominations or volunteering at meetings and open days.

A very well attended Tobruk Sunday service began our public activities, followed by an Anzac Day luncheon. We were especially pleased to welcome a group of ADF recruits to Tobruk House for an explanation of the siege, and look forward to this becoming a regular activity.

As 2026 marked the 80th anniversary of the formation of ROTA VIC, a new cover page for the Tobruk House News was introduced and six new panels were added to our permanent 24-panel exhibition. These panels reinforce the story of the siege in the words of the men who were there.

Our annual visit to the Royal Children's Hospital was the best attended for many years and again underlined the wisdom of the original Rats in deeming the Neurology Fellowship their legacy, a connection of which we can be very proud.

I conclude by thanking all members for their support in keeping the story of the Tobruk Siege alive, and by recognising the tireless efforts of your committee members who make it possible.

STUART TOLLIDAY
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

Secretary's Report

Dear Members,

2025 was a year of almost non-stop activity for ROTA, with your committee working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the association continued to thrive.

The year began with the launch of a Polish publication, followed swiftly by Tobruk Sunday and the Anzac Day commemorations. Both events saw record attendance and strong patronage from members, first-time attendees and the wider Port Phillip community.

Throughout the year, the association also hosted trainees from Simpson Barracks and volunteers from the Shrine of Remembrance, each receiving an education on the Siege of Tobruk and the work of the association.

In August, the commemoration of the Relief of Tobruk service was conducted in an expanded and strengthened format. Following the inspiration provided by the last Australian Rat of Tobruk, Tommy Pritchard, we honoured the Rats in a particularly significant way, with the Prime Minister providing an address for the occasion.

In October, the association celebrated its 80th anniversary with an afternoon tea and the unveiling of new interpretive panels. These panels, themed In Their Own Eyes, tell the story of the siege through the words and experiences of those who were there.

The year concluded with a highly successful Christmas function. Within this annual report you will find a detailed breakdown of the association's financial position, as well as information on the new school education program launched during the year.

In closing, I thank my fellow committee members, particularly the three Executive members who served alongside me: Glenda Garde, Stuart Tolliday and Paul Dipnall. Your guidance, support and counsel have been greatly appreciated. May 2026 bring continued success for ROTA.

Yours,



Lachlan E Gaylard
Secretary

Committee member	Meetings eligible to attend	Meetings attended
Paul Dipnall	9	7
Stuart Tolliday	9	9
Lachlan Gaylard	9	9
Glenda Garde	9	8
Gayle Sherwell	9	9
Tony Codd	9	9
Karolina Secvikova*	7	1

*Karolina Secvikova rejoined the committee in May 2025.

VALE

The association lost a number of members this year, all of whom will be acknowledged in the membership Report. However, we wish to take this opportunity to highlight three members who made particularly significant contributions to the association.

William 'Bill' Gibbins AM

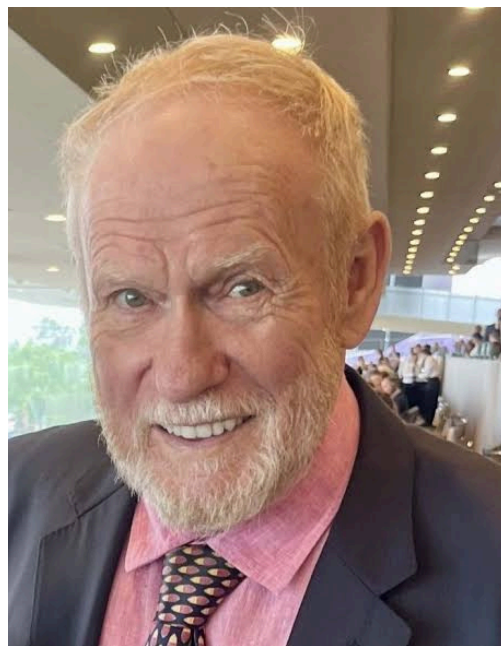
Patron and Life Member of the Association. In 2007, at a time when the future of Tobruk House seemed uncertain, Bill's extraordinary generosity ensured that the Rats of Tobruk could continue to meet in the hall they loved, creating a place of friendship, remembrance, and belonging that has endured ever since. His kindness, humility, and unwavering support touched the lives of many, and his legacy will forever be remembered with gratitude and affection by the association and all who knew him.

David Bullard OBE RFD ED

David served for many years as the association's honorary solicitor on a pro bono basis and was made a Life Member in 2019 in recognition of his outstanding service. A distinguished solicitor and army officer, David served over three decades in the Australian Army, rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and was recognised with numerous honours, including appointment as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. He held the Tobruk veterans and the work of the association in the highest regard.

Graham Gibson

A dedicated Life Member, Graham served the association in many roles, including Secretary, Vice-President, Editor of Tobruk House News, and President. His tireless commitment guided the association through challenging times, leaving a lasting legacy. The Committee extends heartfelt condolences to his wife Rosemary and family.



2024 Annual General Meeting



The 2024 AGM was held at Tobruk House on Sunday, 23 February, attracting a large turnout of members and representatives from the Royal Children's Hospital. The 2024 Annual Report was presented and approved. Professor Mark Mackay, Director of Neurology at the Royal Children's Hospital, highlighted the value of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship. ROTA Vice President Paul Dipnall presented Dr Nadia Truong, the 2025 Fellow, with the fellowship medallion and made her an honorary member of the association.

The 2025 committee was elected unopposed. Past President Bruce Bingham and Marlene Bingham stepped down and were awarded life memberships in recognition of their outstanding service.

Tobruk Sunday

Brilliant sunshine welcomed around 100 attendees to this year's Tobruk Sunday service, with a marquee and PA system generously provided by Port Phillip Council.

Vice President Paul Dipnall gave the welcome, and former President Major Bruce Bingham (Retd.) acted as MC, with Padre Don Kaus leading prayers. Guest speaker Major General Professor Jeffrey Rosenfeld AC, OBE (Retd.) spoke about the medical corps' role and challenges during the Siege of Tobruk. Flag bearers were acknowledged, and Helen Robinson and Gayle Sherwell recited the Tobruk Requiem and This Was Tobruk. Myfanwy Coghill sang the national anthem, and the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums Band performed before attendees enjoyed afternoon tea in the hall. The service was a moving tribute to those who served.



ANZAC Day

Tobruk House welcomed members and the Port Phillip community for the Anzac Day luncheon, preceded by a broadcast of the Melbourne Anzac Day march. Seven unit banners were carried by members, many of whom had marched themselves.

Over 100 guests enjoyed a luncheon prepared by volunteers, accompanied by a stirring performance from the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums. Attendees included Bob Hare and Barry Walker, sons of Captains Arthur Hare MC and John Walker, keeping their fathers' stories alive.

A highlight was a presentation from the Royal Australian Corps of Transport Association, featuring the statuette Mateship, symbolising the bond between ex-service organisations. The event provided a meaningful opportunity for members to gather, reflect, and share memories of service and the legacy of the Rats of Tobruk.



Shrine of Remembrance Service

The Commemoration of Relief in Tobruk was held at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance, drawing a large attendance and supported by marquee seating on the WWII forecourt. The service featured a banner procession led by the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums.

Addresses were given by Senator Raff Ciccone, who read a message from the Prime Minister, and Major General Jason Blain DSC AM CSC, who spoke of the tenacity of Australian troops and an act of compassion shown by an Australian medic.

Wreaths were laid by the Rats of Tobruk Association, the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation, government and service representatives, ex-service organisations, and Tobruk-related units.



ROTA & RCH Afternoon Tea

Twenty-eight ROTA members and friends attended the Royal Children's Hospital for the annual presentation on the work of the Neurology Department and the Rats of Tobruk Fellowship, including a guided tour of the RCH archives.

Ryan Brown, CEO of the RCH Foundation, welcomed attendees and reflected on the recent Shrine service, before Associate Professor Mark Mackay spoke about the history and importance of the fellowship.

2025 Fellow Dr Nadia Truong outlined her current work, including the RCH's world-leading gene substitution research, which generated strong interest and questions from attendees and will be a focus of the group's visit next year.



80th Birthday Celebration

A birthday afternoon tea was held at Tobruk House on 5 October to mark the 80th anniversary of the Victorian branch of the Rats of Tobruk association, opening with The Ode spoken by Chairman Stuart Tolliday.

Secretary Lachlan Gaylard spoke on the history of the association and research into public awareness of the Siege of Tobruk, while Chairman Stuart Tolliday outlined the expansion of the association's exhibition panels with new material drawn from soldiers' own words.

More than 70 guests enjoyed afternoon tea and a donated birthday cake, and warmly welcomed the new panels.



Schools' Program Report 2025

The ROTA Schools' Program commenced strongly in 2025, with a number of primary schools accepting our offer to present a Rats of Tobruk Award to a Year 6 student transitioning to secondary school. The program represents a meaningful expansion of our existing primary schools award initiative and has been warmly received by participating school communities.

The award recognises students who reflect the values exemplified by the Rats of Tobruk: service, courage, respect, integrity and resilience. It is intentionally not an academic prize. Rather, it acknowledges strength of character, conduct and quiet leadership. In doing so, the program seeks to inspire younger generations while ensuring that the story and spirit of Tobruk remain alive in contemporary school communities.

At the conclusion of 2025, ten schools had conducted award presentations as part of the program, with a further five schools formally committing to participate in 2026. This steady growth reflects the strong reception of the initiative and provides a solid foundation for its continued expansion in the years ahead.

At Murrumbeena Primary School, the award was presented at the school's whole-of-school graduation ceremony. The award bears the name of VX41310 George Anderson, a former student of the school in the 1920s whose family lived nearby. Although he survived the Siege of Tobruk, he was later killed in action in New Guinea in 1943, aged just 24.

The 2025 recipient, Amelia H., was described by the Principal as a student who embodies quiet courage and determination, consistently placing the needs of others before her own. She demonstrates initiative, compassion and responsibility, offering support without seeking recognition. Following the ceremony, Amelia's parents shared that she had undergone cancer treatment as a toddler, making the acknowledgement of her resilience particularly meaningful.

At Warrandyte Primary School, a school with a longstanding connection to the Rats of Tobruk, the relationship continues to deepen. The school's multi-purpose hall is named Tobruk Hall, and Year 6 students annually visit Tobruk House to learn directly about the Siege and their local connection to its veterans.

The 2025 award at Warrandyte was presented to Arthur W. He was commended by his teacher, James Schultz, as a student who consistently strives to do his best. Polite and kind-natured, Arthur treats peers, staff and the broader community with respect. He shows diligence in his role as House Captain and is regarded as both a capable sportsman and a student of good humour and strong character.

Members are encouraged to actively support the continued growth of the schools' program, whether by identifying potential schools within their local communities, assisting with presentations, or contributing to its modest financial requirements. The strength of this initiative lies in member involvement.

Participating and Committed Schools (2025–2026)

- **Chiltern Primary School** - 'Francis Banna - Tobruk Award'
- **Murrumbeena Primary School** - 'George Anderson - Tobruk Award'
- **Middle Park Primary School** - 'N. T. Ellard - Tobruk Award'
- **Albert Park Primary School** - 'Tobruk Award'
- **Morawa District High School** - 'Ronald Zappelli - Tobruk Award'
- **Heywood Consolidated School** - 'Ken Sherwell - Tobruk Award'
- **Mount Waverley Heights Primary School** - Name TBC
- **St Joseph's Catholic Primary School** - 'James Knight - Tobruk Award'
- **Dana Street Primary School** - 'Bill Tolliday - Tobruk Award'
- **Ascot Vale West Primary School** - 'Lance Barrett - Tobruk Award'
- **Morwell Central Primary School** - 'Tobruk Award'
- **Watsonia Primary School** - Name TBC
- **Carlton North Primary School** - 'Neil Barrie - Tobruk Award'
- **Sunshine Heights Primary School** - 'Forbes - Tobruk Award'

Financial Report

Dear Members,

2025 was a year of unprecedented activity for the association, marked by significant commemoration, expanded programming and careful forward planning.

The financial year was shaped by substantial project expenditure. This brought together the one-off Shrine service, the 80th anniversary celebrations of the association, and the associated costs of installing new educational panels, graphic design, equipment hire, and preparatory works for 2026 and the 85th anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk. These were not routine expenses, but purposeful commitments to ensuring that our commemorations were conducted with appropriate dignity and that our educational presence was strengthened. Total expenditure for these projects amounted to \$8,435.98.

The association also incurred a 30 per cent increase in insurance premiums, an unavoidable rise reflective of broader market conditions. While beyond our control, this increase has had a material impact on operating costs.

Encouragingly, prudent economic decisions made by the committee have begun to yield tangible results. The installation of a modern hot water service last year resulted greatly assisted in a 32 per cent decrease in consolidated utilities, demonstrating the benefit of sensible capital improvements. Nonetheless, broader economic pressures continue to affect goods and services across the board, and routine maintenance requirements for Tobruk House have increased accordingly.

The association also resolved to expand the scale of its charitable giving. This decision resulted in a 141 per cent increase in donations, including support for the Royal Children's Hospital, Legacy Melbourne and initiatives delivered through our new schools' program.

In light of the above, the consolidated accounts recorded an overall deficit of \$9,470.78. A deficit is always cause for reflection. It is not a position in which the association takes pride. However, it must be understood in context. The result reflects deliberate expenditure on major commemorative activities and future preparedness, rather than structural weakness.

The association's underlying financial position remains stable, it is not anticipated that expenditure in the forthcoming financial year will be of a similar magnitude, as the principal commemorative and preparatory costs have now been met. With membership continuing to grow and expenditure subject to close oversight, the committee remains confident in the sustainability of our operations and committed to responsible stewardship of members' funds while honouring the legacy of the Rats of Tobruk.

Yours faithfully,



Lachlan E. Gaylard
Acting Treasurer



ROTA Inc. Consolidated

	Notes	
	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Balance at 01/01	\$ 144,956.50	\$ 140,839.68
Income		
Interest	\$ 4,430.45	\$ 5,078.22
Hall Hire fees	\$ 700.00	\$ 450.00
Catering	\$ 7,175.97	\$ 7,746.50
Donations	\$ 1,306.00	\$ 970.44
Merchandise	\$ 3,143.01	\$ 2,825.19
Annual Subscriptions / Joining Fees	\$ 12,350.00	\$ 13,570.00
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ 29,105.43	\$ 30,640.35
Expenditure		
Administrative costs	\$ 3,497.81	\$ 3,433.85
Bank Charges	\$ 15.60	\$ 20.80
Tobruk Sunday	\$ 557.34	\$ 2,259.83
Professional fees	\$ -	\$ 7,873.50
ROTA mobile phone	\$ 62.50	\$ 66.00
Catering costs	\$ 1,743.26	\$ 1,779.95
THN	\$ 2,238.00	\$ 2,535.00
Merchandise	\$ 3,307.36	\$ 3,200.02
ANZAC Day	\$ 1,166.47	\$ 1,005.27
WIFI	\$ 195.21	\$ 676.76
Misc	\$ 1,012.94	\$ 745.00
Donations	\$ 7,075.70	\$ 2,927.55
Christmas Party	\$ 1,418.33	\$ -
Project Expenditure	<i>1</i> \$ 8,435.98	\$ -
	\$ 30,726.50	\$ 26,523.53
Balance at 31/12	\$ 143,335.43	\$ 144,956.50
Deficit / Surplus for 2025	-\$ 1,621.07	

Notes

- 1- Project Expenditure comprises the consolidated costs incurred by the Association for the Relief of Tobruk commemorative service at the Shrine of Remembrance, the Association's 80th anniversary celebrations, and the development of the new In Their Own Words panels, including all associated expenses such as equipment hire, graphic design, and printing.

Patriotic Building Fund

633-00 198 471 591

	Notes	
	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Balance at 01/01	<u>\$ 30,132.00</u>	<u>\$ 42,307.39</u>
Income		
Interest	\$ 1,228.15	\$ 1,893.92
	<u>\$ 1,229.00</u>	<u>\$ 1,893.92</u>
Expenditure		
Gas	\$ 634.43	\$ 867.67
Electricity	\$ 442.46	\$ 1,104.99
Water	\$ 723.35	\$ 710.80
Hall Maintenance	\$ 817.85	\$ 2,216.50
Insurance	\$ 3,842.00	\$ 2,955.00
Purchase of Furniture & Equip	\$ 895.03	\$ 53.35
Repairs	\$ 1,227.59	\$ 6,161.00
Cleaning	\$ 496.00	\$ -
	<u>\$ 9,078.71</u>	<u>\$ 14,080.31</u>
Balance at 31/12	<u>\$ 22,282.29</u>	<u>\$ 30,132.00</u>
Deficit / Surplus for 2024	<u>-\$ 7,849.71</u>	

Membership Report

We are delighted to report that our membership has grown to an impressive 760 members. This total includes 89 new members as well as several former members who have chosen to rejoin after previously allowing their subscriptions to lapse. While only a very small number of members are actively engaged in our activities, the vast majority continue to support the association through their annual subscriptions. In 2026 we will focus on encouraging greater participation at Tobruk House, fostering stronger connections and ensuring our members can more fully engage with the life and legacy of the association.

Remembering Our Affiliate Members – VALE 2025

Donald Maling
Vivien Ellard
David Bullard
Ian Weller
Graham Gibson
Tony Smith
Hazel Wilson
Shirley Davey
Bill Gibbins
Bob Gannaway

New Members for 2025

Eric Greer, Ryan Brown, Natalie Andrews, Peter Chenoweth, Kevin Schultz, John O'Hogan, Leonie Miller, Gavin Miller, Frances Evans, Steven Prostamo, Craig Stephens, Abramo Lerado, Jeffery Rosenfeld, Grant Reeves, Marita Madden, Adrian Threfal, Robert Webster, Brett Kempster, Judith Pearce, Erica McKenna, Daniel McKenna-Reid, Benjamin Pollard, Alicia Exell, Michael Collison, Jeffrey Collison, Leanne Young, Stephen Brazenor, David Keller, David Killen, Samuel Fowler, Peter Ralph, Jill Shanahan, Georgina Dudzinski, Kylie Ma'a, Bradley MacDonald, David Newcomb, Jack Saggars, Andrew Saggars, Amanda Shelton, Sam Walker, Luke Miles, Anita Payne, Justin Warner, Jennifer Carlisle, Bruce Knight, Janet Roussety, Rohan Carlisle, Margaret MacKenzie, Carol McLachlan, Richard Devonshire, John Hill, Dorothy Exell, Ian Murray, Norma Sutcliffe, William Mooney, Wyane Baker, Darren Waters, Hugh Watt, Max Nepean, Maureen Nepean, Brian Collins, Harry Pettman, Kylie Pettman, Ken Crompton, Carol Cunningham, Nicholas Hurley, John Cornelius, Kerry Cornelius, Bernadette Potter, Michelle Bingham, Craig Bingham, Scott Barrass, Alexander Hunt, Peter Johnson, Wendy Carew, Inty Smith, Sue Buckner, Robyn Hahn, David Raymond, Myfanwy Coghill, Heath Pickett, Stephen Duffield, David Jarrett, Glen Curran, Gregory Balkin, Kerri Hardman, Laura Buck, Stewart Middleton, Ian Payne.

Ten Year Members In 2026

John Sunter, Faye Macfarlane, Robert Young, Ronald Young, Maureen Rush, Joy Jorgensen, John Shea, Jillian Cox, Anthony Cox, Wayne Trenear, Kaye Lee, Tracey McIlroy, Errin Begley, Deni Gliddon, Hugh Whittle, Robert Baker, Catherine Cox, Graham Gaby, Donna McIntyre, Bernice Short, Suzanne Kirby, Geoffrey Schubert, Stuart Gouldthorp, Doreen Chenoweth, Brendon White, Bruce Bingham, Brian Wallis, Heather Harcus, Corina Urwin, Carol Vince, Sally Shilling, Paul Knersch, Elizabeth Napier, Cheryl Hayes, Peter McIntyre, Damien Henty-Anderson, Colin Watts, Penny Curtis, Jim Wallace, Roslyn Hogan, Christine McDonald, Jennifer Green, Bruce McDowell, Kenneth Ashton, Peter Walpole, Linda Chapman, Thomas Oram, Pauline Sparks, Elayna Bell, Brent Clarkson, Billie Fogarty, Felicity Batchelor, Allen Shatten, Noel Shelton.





TOBRUK HOUSE
44 VICTORIA AVENUE, ALBERT PARK VIC