

Iluka/Woombah Veterans & Supporters Hub

Memorandum of Understanding

The Purpose of the Gathering and Why Our Model Works

How the Hub Came About

The Hub was created by the founding veteran Bruce McIntosh in response to key findings from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, as well as the extensive research he personally carried out in 2021. During that time, he travelled throughout Queensland, New South Wales, and the ACT, visiting numerous country towns and major city veteran organisations. He met with veterans from all backgrounds and listened closely to the issues that affected them — their frustrations, their struggles, and the gaps in support that many felt every day.

Those conversations provided a clear and confronting insight into the challenges many veterans continue to face. It became unmistakably clear that what was missing was a truly independent, veteran-focused hub — a place free from pressure, politics, or affiliation. A place where every veteran could feel safe, respected, welcomed, and supported without judgement or expectation.

That is why the Iluka/Woombah Veterans & Supporters Hub was created: to ensure no veteran in our region ever feels forgotten, isolated, or without a place to belong.

Staying True to Our Purpose - The Gathering

The Iluka/Woombah Veterans Gathering exists for one purpose only: **to provide a positive, pressure-free environment where veterans feel welcome, supported, and never forgotten.** Every decision we make, every activity we run, and every partnership we form is built around this single objective.

Our entire approach is built around:

- No pressure
- No obligation
- No expectations
- No judgement

Veterans can come as they are, stay as long as they like, and participate only if they choose to. This is the heart of the Gathering. There are no membership fees, only the assurance that every veteran who walks through our doors is welcomed, valued, and supported without expectation.

THE GATHERING

- **Morning tea/coffee and lunch** is free because this is our way of honouring our veterans — not with words alone, but through action. We remove every barrier so veterans can simply turn up, feel welcome, and know they are valued. By providing this at no cost, we ensure that no veteran ever feels pressured, judged, or unable to participate due to financial circumstances. It reflects our belief that dignity is not something veterans should earn — it is something they already deserve. Offering a free meal is a small gesture with a big message: *you matter, you belong, and you are among people who genuinely care.*
- **Our Salute to Veterans and Serving Members**
The heart of our Gathering is our salute to our veterans — past and present — and to the current serving members of the ADF whose families are part of our Hub. This moment is deeply meaningful. By honouring those who serve, we also reassure them that their families are supported, cared for, and surrounded by a community that stands with them. This strengthens their wellbeing, gives them peace of mind, and reminds them that their service makes their whole community proud.
- **What's happening across our local region** — upcoming events, community activities, and opportunities to connect. This includes updates on our **Coffee Day**, our **Outing Day**, and visits to other veteran organisations
- The **finances and raffle section** is another way of engaging with one another and having a bit of fun at the same time. It also provides an additional way to raise funds for our annual Christmas Party. There is absolutely no pressure on our veterans or veteran supporters to take part — it is entirely

up to the individual. Everything we do remains voluntary, light-hearted, and focused on creating a positive, enjoyable atmosphere for everyone.

Our monthly Coffee Days, outings, and visits to other veteran organisations are vital as they further strengthen wellbeing, build friendships, and create a sense of belonging and an atmosphere of genuine connection. These moments give veterans the chance to relax, share stories, and enjoy the comfort of being among people who truly understand their journey.

BBQ – Sausage Sizzle (Purpose and Operation)

To operate properly, the Sausage Sizzle requires a **dedicated team of volunteers** who are willing to set up, cook, serve, handle money, and pack down. Without a committed team, it becomes difficult to run consistently.

However, the Sausage Sizzle has four key reasons to operate:

1. To meet other veterans in the community and let them know about our Monthly Gathering, while also connecting with potential Veteran Supporters who may wish to be involved.
2. To provide a relaxed meeting place where our veterans and veteran supporters can continue building friendships, strengthen connections, and enjoy each other's company.
3. To look after our own. There is no charge for drinks or sausage sandwiches for veterans and veteran supporters who attend. It is our way of giving back and creating a welcoming, pressure-free environment.
4. To cover costs and raise funds to support the Gathering and our activities. The Sausage Sizzle helps us remain self-sufficient without placing pressure on veterans, but it is important to note that **the main purpose of the BBQ is still Points 1 and 2 — meeting veterans, welcoming potential supporters, and strengthening friendships.**

We have **Council approval** to operate outside the front of IGA, and we are **covered by Club Iluka's insurance** as part of our Sub-Hub status. This allows us to run the BBQ safely and legitimately.

Why we are a Sub Club of Club Iluka

We are a Sub-Club of Club Iluka for one simple reason: **to ensure our veterans have a safe, protected, and properly supported place to gather.** Becoming a Sub-Club gives us the structure, governance, and insurance coverage needed to operate responsibly while keeping everything free, pressure-free, and open to all veterans.

Being a Sub-Club provides us with:

- **A safe venue** where veterans can meet regularly
- **Insurance coverage** that protects our veterans, volunteers, and activities
- **Governance and transparency**, ensuring we operate ethically and responsibly
- **The ability to run raffles and fundraising** to support our veterans
- **A stable home base** that gives veterans consistency and security

Most importantly, **being a Sub-Club protects our independence.** It allows us to operate solely for the wellbeing of veterans — without being tied to, directed by, or influenced by any other organisation. Our identity remains clear and simple: **We exist for veterans, not for politics, not for agendas, and not for anyone else's expectations.**

While we are a Sub-Club of Club Iluka, **we do not align ourselves with any other organisations under the Iluka/Woombah Veterans & Supporters Hub banner.** Our role is to support veterans and to make them aware of the organisations, services, and activities available to them. From there, each veteran chooses what they want to be involved in — or not.

If the Hub were to join or align with another organisation, it could unintentionally place pressure on veterans who do not wish to be associated with those groups. That would go against our core values of independence, respect, and personal choice

By remaining independent, we protect that freedom of choice and ensure no veteran feels pressured, excluded, or influenced by the preferences of others. Our independence is essential to maintaining a safe, neutral, and respectful environment for all.

Remembrance services

Remembrance services are deeply personal because every veteran carries their own memories, experiences, and emotions connected to their service. No two journeys are the same, and no two veterans reflect in the same way. For some, these services bring pride; for others, they stir difficult memories. This is why we respect every veteran's right to choose how, where, and with whom they commemorate. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to remember — only what feels meaningful to the individual. Our role is simply to honour their choices, support their wellbeing, and ensure they always feel respected and never forgotten.

The Hub will always have a representative present to **lay wreaths** at our local cenotaph, as well as at any other cenotaphs our Iluka/Woombah veterans attend. This is our ongoing commitment to honouring all who served and ensuring every veteran knows they are remembered and respected by us, wherever they choose to commemorate

Monthly Committee Meeting - Ensuring Everyone Has a Voice

To ensure every veteran and supporter has a voice, you have the right to raise any suggestion or any issue that may concern you at our Monthly Committee Meeting. This is the proper place for open discussion, respectful conversation, and fair decision-making. Our committee exists to listen, to consider all viewpoints, and to make sure every matter is handled transparently and without bias. No one is ever excluded, and no concern is ever dismissed — your voice matters, and this is your forum to be heard.

If you do not voice your concerns through the proper channels — regardless of what those concerns may be — and instead speak negatively about the Hub or those involved in the Hub outside our group, then we cannot move forward as a united community. This behaviour can cause division and undermine the very purpose of the Hub. It also means you are not upholding the values we stand for. We expect honesty, respect, and accountability, and that means raising issues directly, not spreading them elsewhere. Even if your concern relates to us personally, we deserve the right of reply — either to explain why certain decisions are made or, on the other hand, to thank you for raising something that may help us improve the wellbeing of our veterans.

The Sunday Raffle Exists for One Reason

The Sunday Raffle is not a business activity. It is not a fundraiser for personal gain. It is not designed to pressure anyone.

The raffle is the simplest, least intrusive way to support the costs of running a safe, welcoming space for veterans. Even a raffle can create a little pressure, and we acknowledge that. But compared to running sausage sizzles, barbecues, or other labour-intensive fundraising, the raffle is the least demanding option for our volunteers and our veterans

Where Your Raffle Money Goes

The funds raised from our raffles go directly back into supporting our veterans and strengthening our community, it helps us:

- Provide **Morning tea/coffee and lunch** at our Monthly Gathering at no cost to our veterans
- **Run our monthly Coffee Days** Creating a relaxed, welcoming space for veterans to connect and support one another.
- **Organise outings and activities** Helping build friendships, wellbeing, and a sense of belonging.
- **Support our annual Christmas Party** Ensuring every veteran and supporter can enjoy a special end-of-year celebration.
- **Provide plaques, certificates, and recognition items** So veterans and supporters know they are valued and never forgotten.
- **Assist with small operational costs** Allowing us to keep the Hub running smoothly without placing pressure on our veterans

Importantly, it also brings local businesses into the picture. Their involvement through gift vouchers, free coffee days creates a genuine community partnership where businesses support our veterans, and in turn, we promote and support those businesses. This engagement strengthens local relationships, boosts visibility for small businesses, and ensures that the benefits flow both ways — all while keeping the focus firmly on supporting the Gathering.

Woombah Christmas Event is only held once a year and I believe it is a great fund raiser but most important we are there enjoying the carols and the Christmas spirit and with the local residents

Why our “You are not Forgotten” Plaques are Important.

The *You Are Not Forgotten* plaques we give out are a personal reminder to our veterans and veterans families that our veterans service still matters, that they are valued, and that their community has not forgotten them. For many veterans, it becomes a deeply meaningful keepsake — something they can hold, display, and pass down through their family as a symbol of dignity, recognition, and respect.

Veteran Supporters

By being a Veteran Supporter, you help our veterans feel that their service was not in vain and that their sacrifices are still recognised and appreciated today. Your presence sends a powerful message — that their community stands with them, values them, and has not forgotten what they gave.

Why We Hand Out Certificates of Appreciation

We hand out Certificates of Appreciation to our veteran supporters and to the local primary school children because recognition matters. These certificates are a simple but powerful way of acknowledging the people who stand beside our veterans and help keep the spirit of remembrance alive.

- **For Veteran Supporters**

Our supporters play an important role in strengthening the wellbeing of our veterans. They help create a positive, welcoming environment, **assist with activities**, and contribute to the sense of community that makes the Gathering what it is. **The certificates are our way of saying “thank you” — your support makes a real difference.**

- **For Local Primary School Children**

At the end of each year, we also present Certificates of Appreciation to the Year 6 students who are moving on to high school. These certificates recognise the children for their participation in remembrance services and for honouring our veterans throughout their time at Iluka Primary School. This recognition can be very powerful for the wellbeing and future of these young people. It:

- Encourages pride and confidence
- Reinforces the importance of respect, service, and community
- Helps keep the ANZAC spirit alive in the next generation

It lets them know that their efforts matter, their respect is noticed, and their contribution to remembrance is valued.

Our Core Message

At the end of the day, everything we do — the raffle, the vouchers, the outings, the partnerships — exists for one reason: **To ensure veterans have a place where they feel welcome, respected, supported, and never forgotten.**

That is the purpose. That is the mission. That is the Iluka/Woombah Veterans Supporters Hub