

MEDIA ALERT: Nurses from Australian Military History. Why Vivian Bullwinkel needs to be celebrated this ANZAC Day.

Vivian Bullwinkel was a nurse, war hero, woman and health advocate who needs to be celebrated this ANZAC Day.

Dear Editor, Vivian Bullwinkel was a nurse, war hero, woman and health advocate who needs to be celebrated this ANZAC Day. For an interesting and fresh angle for ANZAC Day, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward, CEO of the Australian College of Nursing, invites you to look into the remarkable life of Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel AO, MBE, ARRC, ED, FNM, FRCNA and celebrate the incredible contribution she made to Australia's way of life, much like many nurses and front-line staff are doing for the community in response to Coronavirus today. Kylie Ward, a passionate and formidable health leader is leading the charge to have more women remembered for their military service, and Bullwinkel epitomises strength, resilience and honour, and her sacrifice. Kylie Ward is available for interviews. Please contact: Felicity Zadro 0404 009 384 felicity@zadroagency.com.au Please see a video from Kylie Ward here: <https://youtu.be/mpddV6mQgwI>. Please view an article published on LinkedIn here: or read below. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/draft/AgGyKVbIVpl-EQAAAXGIb3-hpzAn1X7PgLkUc-f1Cq8wVkXhabBNh218OvaY27BuT-yuRsg> A little about Bullwinkel In May 1941, Bullwinkel volunteered for the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and sailed for Singapore, assigned to the 2/13th Australian General Hospital. In February 1942, with 65 other nurses, she fled Singapore following an invasion by Japanese troops, however her ship, the SS Vyner Brooke, was sunk by Japanese aircraft two days later. Bullwinkel drifted for hours clinging to a lifeboat before she struggled ashore on Banka Island with other survivor. When Japanese troops arrived, they corralled 22 nurses together and ordered them into the sea, where they machine-gunned them. Sister Bullwinkel, badly wounded and feigning death, was the only survivor. After a long while and as a sole survivor, Bullwinkel got back to the now empty beach. There she found a wounded British soldier from another massacre. They hid out for 12 days, and she cared for the man until he died. Eventually, Vivian surrendered to the Japanese, but made no mention of the massacre. She was interned with other nurses and endured a further three years of hardship and brutality before her release enabled her to tell her harrowing story. Bullwinkel served in Japan in 1946 and 1947 before resigning from the Army as Captain; she re-joined the Citizen Military Forces in 1955 and served until 1970, when she retired as Lieutenant Colonel. Nurses are an important part of our Australian Military History. Why Vivian Bullwinkel is one of our greatest war time heroes By Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN As we approach ANZAC Day, it is important to stop and reflect on the men and women from all over Australia have fought in wars, long over and those still going, for our protection, safety, health and way of life; people who sacrificed so much for our freedom today. Very much how, I believe, future Australians will reflect on the contribution of nurses during our current coronavirus pandemic. The Australian War Memorial is a sacred and special place, telling the hard stories of our past and honouring those who have fought for our country. When a nurse who served and sacrificed for our country is remembered in the Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial, the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is there to lay a wreath. It is a small token of our appreciation and respect for one of our own. Yet I feel we need to do more to honour the nurses, past and present, who served our country. For example, I believe every Australian should know the formidable Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel AO, MBE, ARRC, ED, FNM, FRCNA. Vivian Bullwinkel was the sole survivor of the 1942 Banka Island massacre. Post-war, she was Matron of Melbourne's Fairfield Hospital[5]. Vivian's nursing career began in 1934 when she undertook nursing and midwifery training at the Broken Hill and District Hospital. From February 1939 she worked at the Kia-Ora Hospital in Hamilton, Victoria, before moving to Melbourne to enlist at the outbreak of war and worked for a time at the Jessie MacPherson Hospital[6]. In May 1941, Bullwinkel volunteered for the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and sailed for Singapore, assigned to the 2/13th Australian General Hospital. In February 1942, with 65 other nurses, she fled Singapore following an invasion by Japanese troops, however her ship, the SS Vyner Brooke[7], was sunk by Japanese aircraft two days later. Bullwinkel drifted for hours clinging to a lifeboat before she struggled ashore on Banka Island with other survivors.[8] When Japanese troops arrived, they corralled 22 nurses together and ordered them into the sea, where they machine-gunned them. Sister Bullwinkel, badly wounded and feigning death, was the only survivor.[9] After a long while and as a sole survivor, Bullwinkel got back to the now empty beach. There she found a wounded British soldier from another massacre. They hid out for 12 days, and she cared for the man until he died. Eventually, Vivian surrendered to the Japanese, but made no mention of the massacre. She was interned with other nurses and endured a further three years of hardship and brutality before her release enabled her to tell her harrowing story.[10] Bullwinkel served in Japan in 1946 and 1947 before resigning from the Army as Captain; she re-joined the Citizen Military Forces in 1955 and served until 1970, when she retired as Lieutenant Colonel. Post-war, Bullwinkel spent 16 years as Matron of Melbourne's Fairfield Hospital and continued as Director of Nursing there until 1977[11]. In 1947, she gave evidence of the massacre at a war crimes trial in Tokyo[12]. Post-war, Vivian advocated for better education and conditions for nurses, established and raised funds for the Australian Nurses' Memorial, and later held the role of President of the Royal College of Nursing, Australia. Vivian became the first female member of the Council of the Australian War Memorial and served on various veteran and philanthropic committees to pay tribute to her fallen nursing colleagues.

In 1992, she returned to Banka Island to unveil a shrine to the nurses who died there. Vivian overcame the atrocities of war with heroism, strength and tenacity. Her incredible achievements and commitment to caring for the sick and wounded are an example to all nurses, and Australians alike, and should not be forgotten. Her story, and those similar, need to be told so that we understand as Australians the full contribution of men and women who served and continue to serve. We need to ensure our children and future generations don't forget the contribution that women made to our history. Their stories are important to understanding who we are as a nation. It is important that the story of such a great woman, nurse, leader and Australian is woven into the fabric of all those who talk about our history. We have asked ourselves; how do we keep her memory alive? One such avenue is to ensure we have a physical reminder of Vivian Bullwinkel in the grounds of the Australian War Memorial. ACN is on a quest to fund a commemorative sculpture as a timely tribute to Vivian, one that takes its rightful place at the Memorial so future generations can remember her sacrifice and recognise all Australian nurses who have lost their lives or survived the atrocities of war whilst serving their country. We want to have Vivian front and centre of our remembrance. If you would like to contribute to building the sculpture, we would greatly appreciate your support. [Click here](#). I take inspiration from the life of Vivian Bullwinkel; she is a beacon of strength, resilience and honour, and her sacrifice and work shall not be forgotten. Lest we forget. More on Vivian Bullwinkel Vivian Bullwinkel was appointed to the Order of Australia (AO) on 26 January 1993, appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) on 1 January 1973 and awarded the Royal Red Cross Medal on 6 March 1947 for service to the veteran and ex-prisoner of war communities, to nursing, to the Red Cross Society and to the community. She was also the winner of the Florence Nightingale Medal (National Library of Australia, 2020)[13]. [1] <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/fiftyaustralians/5> [2] <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/fiftyaustralians/5> [3] <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/fiftyaustralians/5> [4] <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/fiftyaustralians/5> [5] <https://trove.nla.gov.au/people/783063?c=people> [6] <https://trove.nla.gov.au/people/783063?c=people> [7] <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/fiftyaustralians/5> [8] <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/fiftyaustralians/5> [9] <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/fiftyaustralians/5> [10] <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/fiftyaustralians/5> [11] <https://trove.nla.gov.au/people/783063?c=people> [12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vivian_Bullwinkel [13] <https://trove.nla.gov.au/people/783063?c=people> (21 April 2020)

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