

## MEDIA RELEASE

2 August 2023

### **New ACN Foundation scholarships to honour the memory and sacrifice of Vivian Bullwinkel and the massacred Bangka Island nurses**

To coincide with this week's unveiling of the statue of Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel AO MBE ARRC ED FNM FRCNA, the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is today announcing details of the ACN Bullwinkel Project Scholarships.

The 22 scholarships will honour the memory and sacrifice of the 21 nurses who were massacred at Radji Beach on Bangka Island, Indonesia, in February 1942, along with the sole survivor Lt Col Vivian Bullwinkel.

ACN CEO Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN said the ongoing funding of the scholarships will support ACN's commitment to establish a legacy for Lt Col Bullwinkel and her nursing colleagues who did not survive the massacre.

Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward said the nurses were doing the work they loved until the very end.

"For two days following their evacuation to Bangka Island, the nurses cared for other wounded evacuees, including women and children, civilians, and soldiers," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

"They were then ordered to walk into the sea and were machine-gunned in the back. Vivian was shot and wounded but lived to share this harrowing story of strength and sacrifice.

"In their memory, the ACN Foundation will invest the Bullwinkel Scholar funding to provide the 22 scholarships in perpetuity.

"Vivian Bullwinkel devoted her life to ensuring the nurses would not be forgotten, and the ACN Foundation intends to carry on her work and legacy.

"We must remember their courage and selflessness.

"We must link the past, present, and future to remember their sacrifice, service, and leadership," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

## **The Bullwinkel Scholarships**

These new scholarships for registered nurses, funded by The Bullwinkel Project, will allow future generations of nurses to lead their contemporary journey in providing exceptional skilled health care for all Australians.

They will be known as The Bullwinkel Scholars.

Twenty-one scholarships are in memory of the nurses, plus one in the name of Vivian Bullwinkel.

Nominations will open in September 2023.

Scholarship recipients will be announced on 16 February 2024, on the anniversary of the day of the massacre 82 years ago.

Each scholarship will be valued up to \$10,000 in perpetuity.

The scholarships will be for ACN Institute of Leadership and Post Graduate courses.

Founding partners include Aspen Medical, Bupa, Serco, Leidos and Boeing.

The Federal Government, via the Department of Health and Aged Care, has matched funding from ACN, donors, and sponsors with a grant of \$1 million.

Full details of the scholarships are available at <https://foundation.acn.edu.au/bullwinkel-scholarship>

## **Background**

On 14th February 1942, 65 Australian Army Nursing Service nurses were evacuated from Singapore on the SS Vynner Brooke due to the pending Japanese invasion. Twelve died when the ship was bombed in the Bangka Strait shortly after leaving port.

Twenty-two of the group made their way to the nearby Bangka Island where they cared for the wounded for two days, including women and children, civilians, and soldiers.

Two days later, on the 16 of February, the Japanese army found the group on the beach, and the surviving soldiers were killed. The nurses were ordered to walk into the sea. Twenty-one were shot and killed, with the only survivor of the massacre Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel AO, MBE, ARRC, ED, FNM, FRCNA. Lt Col Bullwinkel survived after receiving non-fatal gunshot wounds.

After the war, Lt Col Vivian Bullwinkel became Matron of the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital in Melbourne. Lt Col Bullwinkel established the Australian Nurses Memorial Centre (ANMC) with fellow prisoners of war, Betty Jeffrey and Beryl Woodbridge. She continued to advocate for better education and conditions for nurses and was instrumental in transitioning nursing education into the university sector.

Lt Col Bullwinkel was the first female member of the Council of the Australian War Memorial.

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### **Notes to Editors:**

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is the national professional organisation for all nurses and its aim is to ensure that the Australian community receives quality nursing care now and in the future. ACN is a membership organisation with members in all states and territories, health care settings and nursing specialties. ACN is also the Australian member of the International Council of Nurses headquartered in Geneva in collaboration with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF). An organisation not afraid to challenge industry issues affecting the nursing profession or Australia's health care, ACN is a well-connected and educated national body that drives change with people of influence to enhance the delivery of health services to the Australian community. ACN's membership includes nurses in roles of influence, including senior nurses, organisational leaders, academics, and researchers.

### **Social media channels:**

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acnursing>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/acn\\_tweet](https://twitter.com/acn_tweet)

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/australian-college-of-nursing>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/acn\\_nursing](https://www.instagram.com/acn_nursing)

### **CEO - Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN - Bio**



**Kylie Ward. Policy Reformer. Nurse. For-Purpose Leader. Equality Warrior. Adjunct Professor. Transformation Specialist.**

Kylie is the CEO of Australian College of Nursing. She has led a program of transformation at ACN, which has now become Australia's beacon for Nurse Leadership.

She is a major policy influencer, advocate for women, children and equality.