

75th Birthday Parade - Corps of the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Welcome Address

Friday, 1 December, 2017

Parade Ground, Australian War Memorial

Wing Commander (Ret'd) Sharon Bown

MAJGEN Burr, Deputy Chief Army, Distinguished guests.

To the men, women and families, past and present, of the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

On behalf of the Director, Dr Brendan Nelson and the Chairman of the Council, Mr Kerry Stokes, Welcome to the AWM on this momentous occasion – the 75th Birthday Parade of the Corps of the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

In conducting my research to deliver speeches such as this, I have the very privileged access to Australia's finest military historians. Men and women who work tirelessly to aid the Memorial in its mission to assist Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact upon Australian society. Men and women who work to ensure that your record of service is recorded, and preserved in perpetuity.

Despite that incredible privilege, I decided that I would I speak with those whose work was dependent upon the skill of RAEME tradesmen. I didn't have to search too hard.

Over a family dinner one evening, I mentioned to my husband – an Army helicopter pilot and veteran of 27 years' service, that I would

be delivering the welcome address for the upcoming RAEME 75th Birthday Parade.

I kid you not, but his face lit up as he began to tell me stories of his time as a Chinook pilot and his close work with RAEME. He told me that:

“RAEME is outstanding. If you are looking for Bluebell out in the field, look for the red, yellow and blue tri-colour above the largest taj mahoochie around. Even if the temperature is 40 degrees in the shade, there you’ll see a bunch of proud soldiers, who somehow have ice-cold goffas and gumpy. They are some of the Army’s smartest soldiers, who work hard but don’t believe in doing it hard if they can help it.”

As a former Nursing Officer of the Royal Australian Air Force, I began to think that a soldier with an ability to create such a level of comfort in the field, should have joined the Air Force!

As if reading my mind, he went on to add:

RAEME tradies are the first up in the mornings, to get the vehicles, equipment, or helicopters working... and they work late into the night to ensure they are serviceable for the next day. RAEME personnel drive trucks, armoured vehicles, crew aircraft, man machine guns and can fix them all when they stop working. If you bog your Bushmaster in a river, they will turn up with a Heavy Recovery Vehicle. If your APC needs a powerpack change, they will turn up in an Armoured Recovery Vehicle with a new one and do a change-out in the field. If your aircraft radio has nothing but hash coming through, they’ll chase squiggly amps until it is fixed. Those guys can walk on water.”

His final piece of advice was that I must finish my welcome to you today, with the RAEME motto:

‘Arte et Marte.’ – Latin he tells me for **‘Twist to Open’**.

So to our friends who are here today – on behalf of the Australian War Memorial – Welcome to the spiritual home of Australia's fighting men and women. Welcome to your home.

To those amongst you who claim a proud association with RAEME let me finish with the true translation of the RAEME motto: **With Skill and Fighting.**

Thank you and welcome to the Australian War Memorial.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/speeches/75th-anniversary-royal-australian-electrical-and-mechanical-engineers>