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Anzac Day apart but together at Brisbane War Widows units

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WIDOWS' NEWS

Anzac Day apart but together at Brisbane War Widows units

Residents of the two Australian War Widows Queensland unit complexes in Brisbane were able to mark Anzac Day together with solemnity, despite traditional Anzac Day commemorations being cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Two music educators, Alastair Tomkins, from Sheldon College in the city's east, and Jamie Rule, from the north's Mueller College, went to the unit complexes, at New Farm and Redcliffe, respectively, to play the Last Post and Reveille as part of Anzac Day ceremonies there.

Around 25 War Widow tenants spaced themselves around lawns at the Marina Court, New Farm, for a ceremony; they were joined by other war widows from New Farm, some Legacy members and two officers from the Fortitude Valley police station.

Meanwhile, a small ceremony was held at the Redcliffe unit complex with 23 residents attending.

Australian War Widows Queensland State president Jenny Gregory laid a wreath at Marina Court.

Mr Tomkins said the idea to take the Last Post and Reveille to communities that were isolated by COVID-19 restrictions grew out of his plans to play in his own driveway at dawn. He formed Music for Mateship, an organisation of musicians formed to bring music to people isolated by the pandemic on Anzac Day.

He put feelers out and played the Last Post and Reveille at New Farm and another set of units that housed some Korean and Vietnam veterans and, when Australian War Widows Queensland expressed interest, he arranged for Mr Rule to play at Redcliffe and to play at New Farm himself.

For a brass musician it's (Last Post and Reveille) the shortest gig you might do but it's also possibly the most emotional gig you ever do,' he said. 'Doing this seemed to be the right thing to do and I felt as though I was giving back to the community.'

Marina Court residents told media said they usually gathered in a local park for Anzac Day services, but this year was very different.



Thelma Hughes, 91, who used to march on Anzac Day, wore her Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force blazer and said listening gatherings were a fitting way to pay respect.

Alastair, Betty Woodfield, 90, said: 'It's hard, but this is the best way we can do it.'

Sgt Gordon Tomkins played the Last Post (Photo: Susan Ross)

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the most emotional gig yet. 'I never, being this close to the right thing to do and felt as though I was giving back to the community.'

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Back

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