

CHARLIE COMPANY – April 2022

On Monday the 21st of February 5 RAR sent nine General Duty (GD) teams and a HQ element to Brisbane to take part in OP Aged Care Assist.

Shortly after arriving, the GD teams were allocated and sent to their duties at aged care facilities amid the torrential downpour around Southeast Queensland.

Aged care workers provide critical and time-consuming roles for the elderly citizens of our community. COVID 19 around Southeast Queensland has resulted in many aged care facilities seeing severe staff shortages. This along with lockdowns has resulted in residents only receiving minimal social contact and spending significant periods completely isolated. The GD teams have been able to assist by dedicating themselves to companionship and allowing the facility staff to focus on the clinical roles.

Within the first week we had most of the teams out working at facilities from North Lakes to Coolangatta. Amidst the worst weather Queensland has seen in a decade the teams set about giving our senior citizens a semblance of normality. During the first week a resident was visited by her son, Greg Pike who was thrilled to meet some of the new members of the 5th battalion.

'I was in C Coy in 1973/74 and there for the linking with 7 RAR in December 73. My first Battalion! Today I visited my mum and was excited to meet five young diggers from 5 RAR down from Darwin who were providing assistance to the residents of mum's aged care home. To top it off they were from C Coy too. Great job lads and thank you for what you are doing to help our very senior citizens stay safe and happy! Duty First' – Greg Pike, C Coy 5 RAR.

As the rain continued to fall the teams began swapping out their scrabble tiles for ETs as some facilities began to be impacted by the rising waters. For the lower lying facilities, the teams linked in with emergency services to facilitate the movement of residents at risk to the floods. Having the GD teams on hand to work with emergency services enabled the facility staff to focus on the clinically high-risk patients. The teams have proved to be extremely valuable in these times of staff shortages, COVID 19 and floods.

LT Rowe

SOLDIERS RESCUE AGED CARE RESIDENTS

Soldiers from the 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR), helped evacuate more than 100 aged care residents from two facilities in Brisbane yesterday during the worst of the flood emergency to hit the Queensland capital.

The 5 RAR riflemen used their four-wheel-drives to take vital medication to the facilities and then ferried residents to dry land and into the arms of awaiting loved ones.

The soldiers, from Darwin, are part of the ADF support to the aged care sector, and had been doing general duties in the facilities in Brisbane.

5 RAR section commander Corporal Alexander Johnson said the team had seen residents and staff struggling through waist-high water and realised they could use their vehicles to speed up the evacuations.

"We were already helping Queensland Fire and Emergency services move a small boat across the water, but we found a route for the four-wheel-drives that allowed us to really speed the process up," Cpl Johnson said.

"The two vehicles were moving people and supplies from 9am in the morning until about 5.30pm that afternoon and we must have helped evacuate at least 100 people during that time," he said.

The Brisbane facilities were without power and the ground floor of one of the aged care centres was filling with water.

Private Xi Rui Chen, who worked directly with emergency service and police personnel on the day, said it was rewarding to be part of the evacuation effort.

"The emergency services resources were stretched thin, so for us to be able to contribute was both rewarding and challenging," he said.

“But seeing the relief in people's faces when they were reunited with their loved ones was very satisfying.”

With the floodwaters in Queensland now receding, the 5 RAR contingent are now turning their efforts to helping with the clean-up.

Lieutenant Geoff Long
Department of Defence Website



Soldiers from 5 RAR assist residents of aged-care facilities evacuate during Operation Flood Assist 2022 in Brisbane.

