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### Obituary

by  
Vivian Statham (nee Bullwinkel) AO, MBE, ARRC, ED,  
Florence Nightingale Medal, FRCNA

Vivian Statham (nee Bullwinkel) was one of the most significant figures in Australian Nursing. Having completed nursing training in Broken Hill in 1938 and midwifery in 1939, she enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service in 1941 and was posted to the 13th Australian General Hospital in support of the Australian 8th Division in Malaya. While being evacuated, the ship, 'Vyner Brooke', on which she was travelling was sunk by the Japanese and, with the exception of Vivian Bullwinkel, the survivors were massacred on the beach at Banka Island. Shot above the hip, she feigned death and then hid in the jungle before surrendering to the Japanese 12 days later. She was a Prisoner of War between 1942-1945. She left the Australian Army as a Captain in 1947, rejoining the Civilian Military Forces in 1955, and achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel at the time of her retirement in 1970.

After the War, she toured Victoria with Betty Jefferies raising £240,000 for a Nurses Memorial Centre in Melbourne. She became Vice-President of the centre's council. She was the first woman to be made a trustee of the Australian War Memorial and the first to be appointed to the Court of Directors of the Royal Humane Society. She was Patron of a number of associations and has served as a council member for many nursing, ex-service and humanitarian organisations.

She has been Assistant Matron at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Director of Nursing at Fairfield Hospital and President of the Australian College of Nursing. On her retirement from Fairfield, the Board of Management of the hospital named their new nursing school the "Vivian Bullwinkel School of Nursing".

She was made a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for her services to Nursing, received the Imperial Award of Associate of the Royal Red Cross and the Army Efficiency Award. She was awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal by the International Red Cross - only 36 of these awards may be made worldwide every two years. In 1993, she was made an Officer of the Order of Australia, the citation stating that "Her heroism, courage and humanitarian achievements are unique."

In 1992, she was made an Honorary Life Member of the Australian Red Cross Society and the following year received the same distinction from the Australian Military Medicine Association. The Australian Military Medicine Association was honoured to have Vivian Statham as their Keynote Speaker at the 1994 National Conference.

Vivian Statham had retired to Perth where she recently died on 03 July 2000, aged 84. She unfortunately suffered a heart attack following surgery at a Perth hospital. A unique Australian, Vivian Statham made a major contribution to nursing and military medicine. She will be sadly missed.