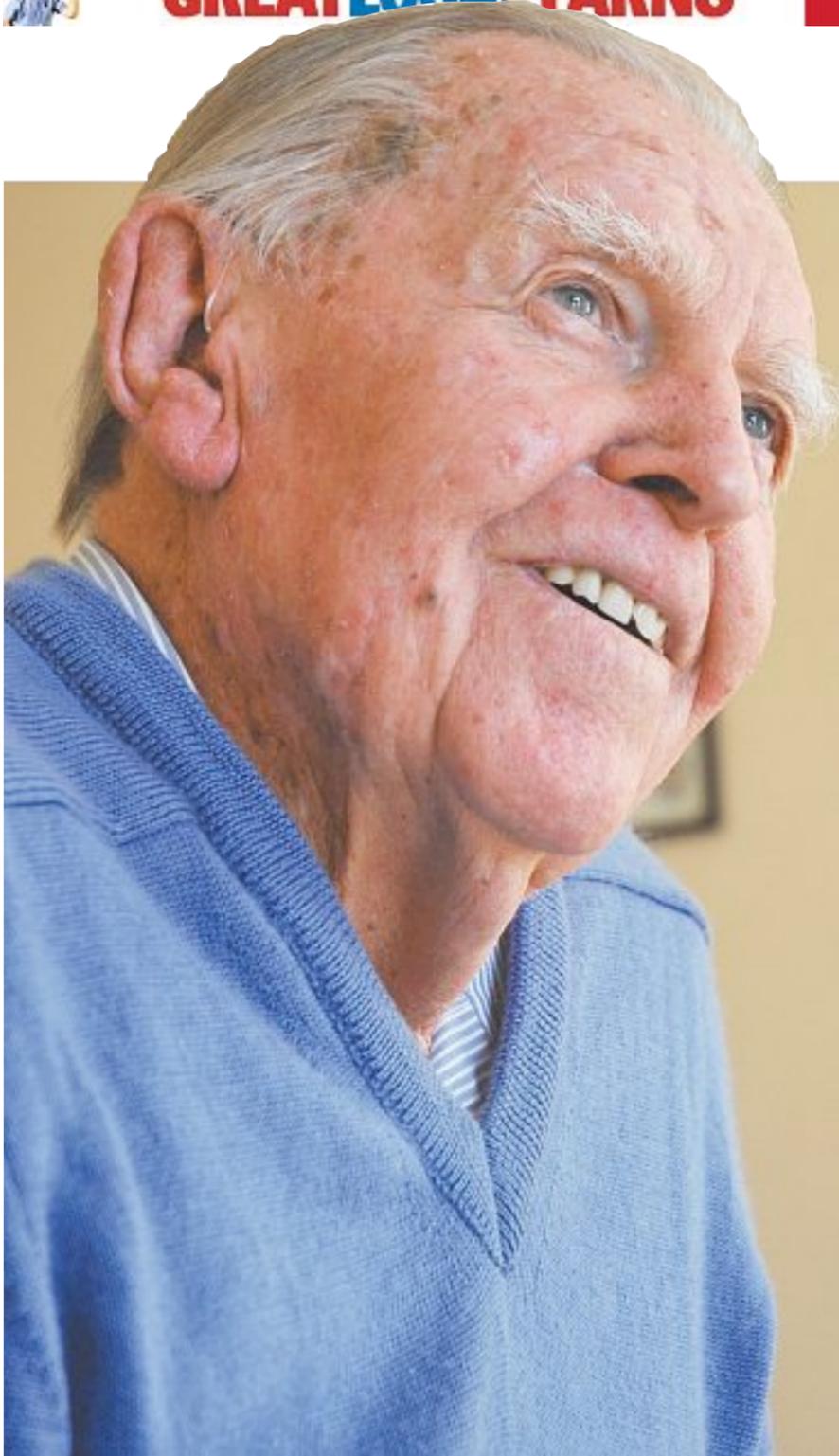




Heroic action was at a cost



DOUG Bain's membership of a top-secret unit in World War II has come at a terrible price.

He was known as one of the Mustard Gas Men, armourers who handled chemical weapons imported to Australia from the UK and the US between 1942 and 1946.

Doug, now 85, and living at Sawtell, was a leading aircraftsman with the RAAF and his exposure to this cocktail of chemicals has caught up with him in the form of several cancers and an increasing lack of mobility.

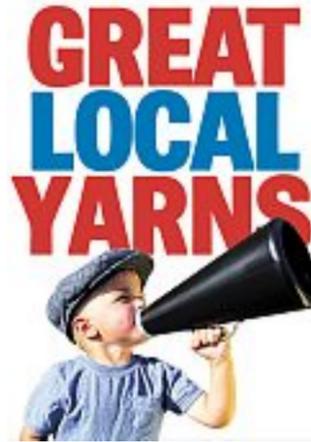
He has been in and out of hospitals and is on a disability pension.

He and his mates served at a weapons storage facility at the old Glenbrook railway tunnel in western Sydney.

Doug was among surviving members of the Chemical Warfare Armourers who attended a plaque-laying ceremony in Sydney last Remembrance Day to commemorate those who looked after our chemical weapons stocks during the war.

It was recognition the men had waited 64 long years for. Now, their brave service is finally recognised.

The plaque reads: 'In recognition of the RAAF Chemical Armourers and other personnel who worked with mustard gas chemical weapons in the Glenbrook Tunnel 1942 to



1946'.

"It meant a lot. It meant I hadn't wasted my time," Doug said. "We were a secret organisation and we were sworn to secrecy."

When the *Coffs Coast Advocate* paid a visit this week, Doug produced the latest edition of *Air Force News* which pays tribute to the work of the Mustard Gas Men.

The article notes the weapons they handled were vital to the defence of our nation.

According to intelligence reports at the time, Japanese troops were carrying an array of chemical weapons with them as they marched through South-East Asia. History showed they would probably be willing to use them.

Doug's unit was responsible for releasing the excess pressures which continually deve-

loped in the bombs and bulk storage drums.

The bungs were unscrewed and lethal mustard gas vapour was released, exposing the men to shocking burns.

Unfortunately, they weren't able to wear the anti-gas gear designed for the cooler UK climate because of the hot conditions.

After the war, the RAAF's director of armaments described their service as outstanding and noted their 'arduous and dangerous duties'.

Doug reflects on his war service with pride and he's also a staunch member of the Sawtell RSL sub-branch. Even though he's found it increasingly difficult to get around he still manages to visit veterans who are on the sick list.

His concern for fellow ex-servicemen is shared by Richard Kelloway, a local RSL and Air Force Association advocate and pensions officer.

Doug is one of the many veterans Richard has helped in our area.

"I help veterans to secure the disability pension by helping him or her relate their service to their medical condition," Richard said.

"If a veteran's condition and service fit the categories, then the pension is forthcoming.

"I am pleased to be able to give something back to people who have given so much to their country."

DUTY CALLED: Doug Bain was sworn to secrecy during his service to the nation in World War II.

PHOTO: BRUCE THOMAS



THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN: Chemical warfare armourers at Glenbrook in 1944. Note Doug Bain's name on the embankment.

PHOTO: SUBMITTED