



# Follow the guide

Anne Wood took to Guiding like a duck to water, back when she was eight years old. A lifetime later, she tells MICHELLE THOMAS what a difference the movement has made to her.

GIRL Guides began in Australia in the 1920s, back when girls were supposed to be pursuing ladylike activities such as sewing. Learning bushcraft and having adventures outdoors was considered a little daring, but was embraced by subsequent generations of girls as a chance to reach new goals.

Times have changed, but Guiding still has relevance to girls today, according to long-time Guide leader Anne Wood.

"I really do believe that girls should have a movement of their own, which they do with Guides," she said.

"They achieve life skills, do camping and outdoor activities, cooking, badge work. It can help girls achieve what they aim for."

Anne has been involved in the organisation since joining Brownies in England as an eight-year-old. She has personally started three units over the years, and has been leading in Nowra since 1994.

When a new set of leaders is sworn in next year, she hopes to finally retire, after two failed attempts to do so.

"I've retired twice, but it's never stuck," said Anne with a laugh.

"This time it's for good."

When Anne joined Brownies in 1948, it was a very popular activity for little girls.

"After the war, parents wanted their children to do something nice," said Anne.

She continued on into Guides, then became a Sea Ranger. She became a leader of the local Brownie pack at 18

and – after marrying her husband John in 1961 and migrating to Australia – she decided to find a new Guide family in her new country.

"We didn't know a soul in Australia, so I went off to Guide House in Clarence Street and asked about helping out with the Guides in Gladesville, where we lived," she recalls.

"I was told there wasn't a unit there and would I like to start one? I did, and it's still going strong to this day."

She repeated her success every time the family moved – to West Wollongong and then Mangerton – in between working as a hairdresser and raising two children.

The family moved to Nowra in 1979, and Anne was occupied for a time working for Chesalon Nursing Home and Home Care Services.

Her involvement with Guides sparked up again in the early 1990s, and there have been many highlights since then, including winning tickets for the Guides to the Sydney Olympics and successfully recruiting new leaders this year after being told the unit would have to shut their doors.

"It's been a very interesting life," said Anne.

"Helping girls grow into confident, self-respecting responsible community members is our mission statement, and it's very fulfilling as leaders to do so."



**FULFILLING:** Guide leader Anne Wood will be hanging up her badges after spending most of her adult life helping girls achieve their goals.