



THE VIETNAM VETERANS' NEWSLETTER

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA
SUPPORTING ALL WHO SERVE & HAVE SERVED

APRIL 2025

60 Years on ...



1 RAR ARRIVE IN VIETNAM JUNE 1965

WE HONOUR THE
523 WHO LOST
THEIR LIVES,
AND,
THE ALMOST
2400 WOUNDED
AND,
THE UNKNOWN
NUMBER OF
SUICIDES,

INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE

- WIVES OF TPI VETERANS SHOULD RECEIVE EQUAL HEALTH CARE
- OUR HISTORY CONTINUES WITH THOSE INVOLVED
- VETERANS STORIES

AND MORE....

Next issue
July 2025

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Established in 2001, our team of lawyers provide clients with high levels of personal service and professional representation in a range of legal and commercial matters.



'KCI's experience and expertise has led to them being a respected voice in Military and Commonwealth compensation, advocating for Veterans and families for 27 years'

SERVICES

DVA - Military Compensation

Commonwealth Superannuation (MSBS, DFRDB and Retrospective medical discharge claims)

Asbestos - Dust Disease Tribunal claims.

Industry super claims - income protection - TPD appeals,

Coroner's inquests

claims for Detriment Caused by Defective Administration - CDDA

Our Readers love Vietnam Veterans' Stories, so much so, that when we suggested that we may not be able to continue the Newsletter in this format, you're voices were heard, and we labour on. We first asked readers for their stories in our July 2018 edition, after publishing a story in that issue.

Since then we have brought you more than 60 great stories from veterans, many great poems, and serialisations of stories spread over multiple editions. We will be here to publish them as long as you keep sending them.



Meanwhile we welcome the authors who have contributed to this edition.

We have a new author in **Robert Cavill**, ex 5 RAR who has given us permission to reprint his stories from the **5 RAR Association** website..

Ted Davies joins us again this issue with more 'Memories of a Nasho'.

Welcome back to **John Ingram** with episode 10 of the story of the 'Vung Tau Ferry', HMAS Sydney.

Kel Robinson continues with the history of the early days of the Vietnam Veterans movement, and supporters of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association.

Keep those stories coming in..



VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION of AUSTRALIA Inc.

Incorporating

**Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and
Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW
Branch) Inc.**

**Vietnam Veterans Federation Queensland Branch
Inc.**

Veteran Support Centre NQ Inc - Townsville

**Vietnam Veterans & Veterans Federation ACT
Inc.**

**Vietnam Veterans Federation Victorian Branch
Inc.**

**Vietnam Veterans Federation South Australian
Branch Inc.**

**Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia WA
Branch.**

Vietnam Veterans Federation Committee:

National President	William Roberts OAM JP
NSW State President	TBA
Qld State President	Peter Handy
FNQ President	Barry Martin OAM
ACT State President	Ward Gainey
Vic State President	John Arnold OAM
SA State president	Mal Thiele OAM JP
WA State President	Milton Kirk JP
Research Officer	Graham Walker AM

MEMBERSHIP

**Belonging
Advocacy
Success**

*Membership is due on 1 January each year.
(July 1 for Queensland members)*

Membership to our organisation empowers a team to achieve much within the veteran community, by assisting veterans with claims and applications on a wide spectrum of government provided avenues of compensation and benefits across 3 Acts of parliament.

Each as an individual is ineffective when lobbying governments for change, or to amend an injustice. Together as an organisation, with a strong membership we are able to, and have done, improve pathways for better treatment of veterans.

We survive as an organisation on the strength of our membership, and even if you have won the battle with Veterans Affairs (DVA), there is always the risk of changes in Government policy which may erode benefits and pensions or changes to eligibility entitlements.

We encourage membership from all who support our objectives, veterans, service and ex-service members, as well as war-widows and their families. You don't have to be a member or ex-member of the Australian Defence Forces (ADF). In most instances, anyone may join our organisation, with few exceptions, so why not enquire today.

It is through our membership subscriptions, fund raising activities and many kind donations from our members, and general public, that we are able to continue supporting our fellow Veterans and Service members in need, and meet our increasing welfare and pension workload.

Should you be able to help with a donation, or leave a bequest in your Will, it would be extremely beneficial and greatly appreciated.

We thank you for your kind support. ■



JOHN HOUGH AWARDED OAM IN 2025 HONOURS

Congratulations to John "Grumpy" Hough on being awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the Australia Day Honours list. "Grumpy" is a long term member of the VVF who has done some amazing things over the years. "Grumpy" is a past President, foundation member of the Veterans Off Road Group (VORG) and the instigator for the establishment of our Bush Retreat, Camp Andrew Russell on 20 acres of land a local farmer donated to us. We have now spent in excess of \$1M on improvements to this camp along with a large number of donations for equipment from "Grumpy". This recognition is well deserved and one which John can be very proud of. Below is the citation for John's award.

Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division Mr John Leonard Hough For service to veterans. Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia • President, 2013-2015. Vietnam Veterans Federation of South Australia • Founding President, Off-Road Group, 1997-2014. • Establishing Member, Camp Andrew Russell Veterans Retreat, since 2002. Awards and Recognition include: • Various Service Medals, including the Defence Force Service Medal.

We congratulate John, on his award of the OAM in the General Division, and on behalf of the Federation, may I just say it is indeed a well deserved award for everything you have done for veterans, and especially Vietnam Veterans. Well done that man!

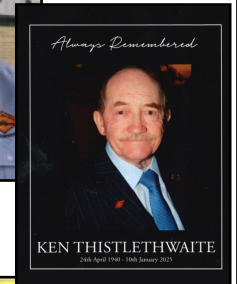
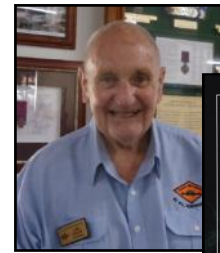
*William (Bill) Roberts OAM JP
VVFA National President.*



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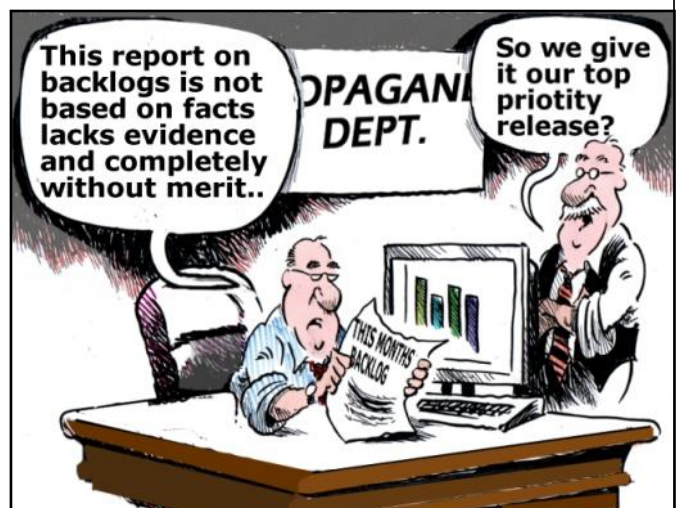
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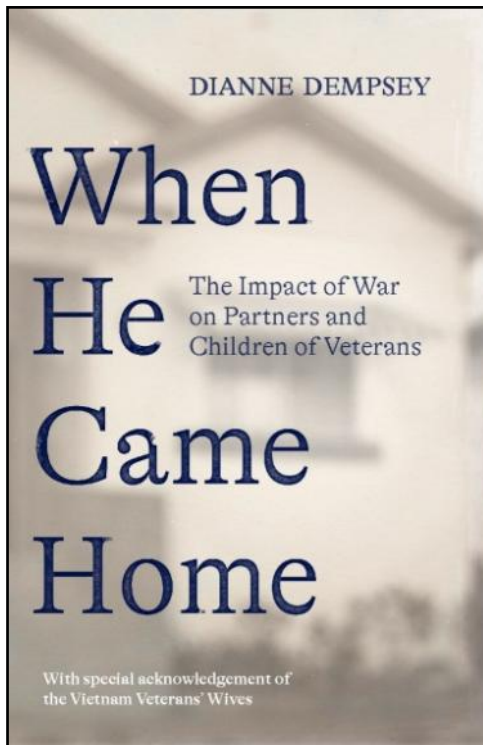


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How did our families cope when we came home?

Worth reading to better understand what it was like for the wives and children.



AVAILABLE FROM

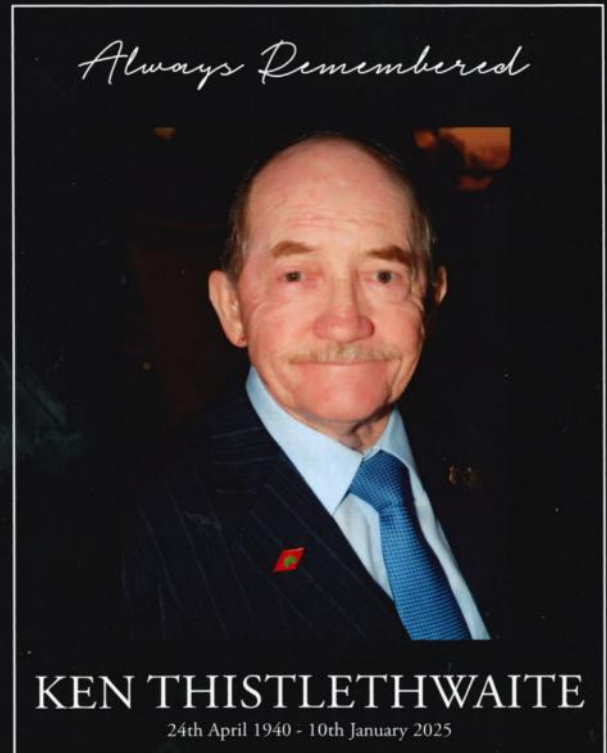
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RIP KEN THISTLETHWAITE

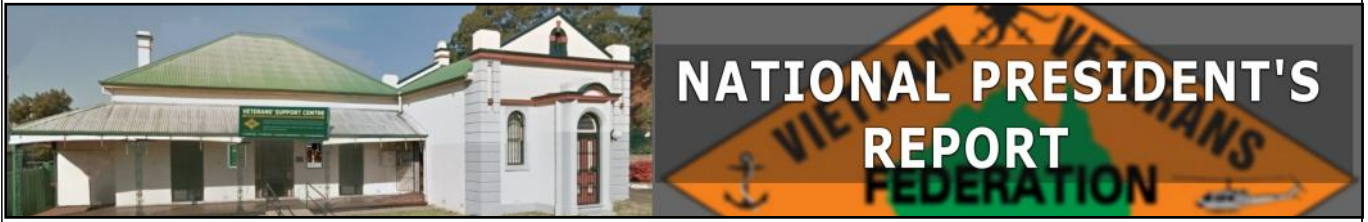
It is with great sadness that we advise of the passing of Ken Thistlethwaite aged 84.

Ken served in Vietnam initially with 101 Field Workshop from May 1966 to October 1966, and later with 6RAR from October 1966 to May 1967. Beyond his military service, Ken was a stalwart of his local community. He was a proud and active member of the Penrith RSL Sub-Branch for an impressive 55 years, demonstrating his enduring dedication to supporting veterans and fostering camaraderie.

Ken also contributed significantly as a Committee member of the Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc., for many years.

He will be sadly missed by all who came to know him. Sincerest condolences to his family and friends and veterans.

See Ken's listing in our Last Post pages beginning on page 80



I hope that everyone had a happy and enjoyable 2024 Christmas and that the year 2025 will be kind to us all in every aspect of our lives. As we ‘Vietnam Veterans’, and some of our partners, are now in our “elderly years” we treasure every year that passes and try to enjoy them to the fullest, with some difficulties of course(lol).

What has impressed me over the past few years is the continuing commitment of our “elderly” volunteers who have been undertaking the voluntary work for the Federation Branches Nationally and for our affiliate VVPPAA and its Sub-Branches in NSW., for well in excess of twenty 25 years - in some cases much more - in assisting with Advocacy, welfare, wellbeing and administrative functions.

Without the assistance of our volunteers, and some paid Advocates/Staff, the Organisation would not have been able to have provided and undertaken these activities, that it has from its very beginning, in a professional and timely way in support of our vulnerable Veterans’ and their families, and continuing to do so to this day.

Together we have established our Organisation (VVFA/VVPPAA) as one of the leading and respected Organisations nationally in providing Advocacy, welfare/wellbeing, entitlements and other Veterans’ and family related issues and concerns. We, together with a number of other Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) will continue to provide our services and support to the Veterans and family communities and to ensure that they continue, and are given, any additional entitlements or support in recognition for their services to a grateful nation.

I am personally and sincerely proud and have great admiration for **all** our volunteers for the commitment, loyalty and care shown by them in support of their fellow veterans and their families for so many years - and still doing so - in spite of their own disabilities. I am sure that our former and Late Presidents Phil Thompson OAM and Timothy (Tim) McCombe OAM would have joined with me in expressing the same views.

As I mentioned at the beginning many of our ‘long serving’ volunteers are now ‘elderly’ and in a number of cases are undertaking several additional roles to make up the shortfall for those who have passed-on or left the organisation for other reasons. We have over the past few years attempted to encourage some of the ‘younger’ veterans to become volunteers to undertake Advocacy or Administrative roles, unfortunately without much success. However, we are still trying, so if anyone is aware of a ‘younger’ veteran who may be interested in being a volunteer please encourage them to call the ‘Granville Office’ on (02) 9682-1788.

Once again to **all** our Volunteers who have supported the VVFA/VVPPAA from its beginning and to this day, I would like to say, on behalf of the Federation, a very big and sincere **thankyou** to you all, without your help we could not have assisted our veteran and family communities in the way we have done for so long – WELL DONE EVERYONE.

William (Bill) Roberts OAM
National President – VVFA
Act President – VVPPAA NSW

Request for the granting of the Gold Card to the wives of TPI Pensioners.

In support of a letter to Senator Jacqui Lambie from John Bradford.

In a submission dated 12 August 1996, the Vietnam Veterans Federation argued for the granting of the Gold Card for the wives of TPI pensioners.

The submission included 46 letters from the wives of Vietnam veteran TPI pensioners suffering war trauma. The letters graphically described the distress they suffered looking after their veteran husbands.

The submission also included reports supporting the request from eminent psychiatrists.

This evidence showed that these wives were, like their husbands, war casualties and therefore worthy being granted the Gold Card.

There followed over time other similar submissions.

The recent Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide highlighted the significant impact that the mental health and well-being of veterans have on their families. The Commission emphasized the need for better support systems for the families of veterans, recognizing that they often face unique challenges and stresses.

This 'better support' we believe should include the granting of the Gold Card to the wives of war veterans receiving the TPI pension.

Bill Roberts OAM JP
National President
Vietnam Veterans Federation

Only When I'm Dead

I wandered about, lost, from that long drawn out war
Sometimes a sound, a smell, something someone said
Would feel like the breaking of a festering sore
And stir up confusion in my aching head

My wandering ceased, lost in time and space no more
I'd found someone who'd listen and laugh with me
At peculiar things, others couldn't see what we saw
We married, had kids, and lived and worked, so lovely

My wandering returned, a thundercloud struck me from inside
The flashbacks, the cold sweats, always at night
Waking the kids, screaming at nothing, poor wife, how she cried
Couldn't work they said, something in my head wasn't right

I wandered about with weakened back and painful leg
And tinnitus and other shit without known cause
And the fight with DVA, (did they expect us to beg?)
With me disabled and her doing all the chores

I wandered about, lost, as time passed us by, without a pause
Poor wife, now sorer of limb than I, and she in constant pain
The burden of her care for me, I'm sure the cause
But I have free health cover that she can't attain.

I am wandering about, thinking how unfair
She's a casualty of war when all is done and said
So surely she should qualify for really equal care
But her healthcare will be equal only when I'm dead.

(Bob Freshfield OAM 9/2024)

A LETTER TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE



VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

SUPPORTING ALL WHO SERVE, AND HAVE SERVED

VVFA Inc

President: Bill Roberts OAM JP

Hon.Secretary: Ron O'Connor JP

The Hon Mark Butler MP
Minister for Health and Aged Care
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Principal Office
PO Box 2038
Port Adelaide, SA, 5015

The youngest Vietnam veteran is round 75 years of age, many are much older.

It is an age where one's own death comes into view.

What worries most of us is not the inevitability of death, but how it comes upon us.

We are therefore interested in the availability of palliative care should our life end in suffering.

We were most disappointed to learn that delayed access to specialist palliative care is a major issue. Indeed, we have been advised that specialist palliative care has been available on average for only 15 days before death. This is a ridiculously short time.

We have also been advised that Australia has only about half the number of specialist palliative care physicians our population needs.

We are concerned that this deficiency not only may cause veterans increased suffering but, more tragically, leave the task to unprepared families.

We ask that the specialist palliative care system be expanded to provide a satisfactory service.

Bill Roberts OAM
National President
Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia

RSL NSW and that Veterans Support Fund offer

For a long time, NSW RSL sub branches have been sending their members to our Granville headquarters for help with their disability pension claims.

In return, NSW RSL sub branches have been making donations to our Granville office to support our work in looking after vulnerable veterans and their families.

This arrangement has worked well for some 40 years.

Recently, however, NSW RSL headquarters has decided a change was needed and established a “Veterans’ Support Fund (VSF)”. Granville was invited to participate in the scheme back in October 2023.

Now the sub branches must give those donations to a pool controlled by NSW RSL headquarters. The sub branches label their donations showing where they want them to go.

Seems an unnecessary step, but as long as the donations get to the desired recipient, no harm done.

But here’s the catch.

Granville must sign a contract with NSW RSL headquarters with conditions that are intrusive and unacceptable. For instance, it would give NSW RSL headquarters the right to audit our Granville operation any time they chose and force us to favourably advertise the RSL as the preferred sponsor of its works.

Sounds loonie doesn’t it. The donations system worked well for everyone for 40 years, now NSW RSL headquarters wants to push its way in, and control it by imposing onerous conditions on the recipient

They have tried the same game with other organisations such as **Australian Veterans’ Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT)**.who, like ourselves, have negotiated the contract in good faith, and have had to reject it, with the result 10 students missed out on receiving scholarships. **The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway** has also found itself tangled with the impasse. It is sad that they too, have not received funds due to the onerous agreement imposed.

We too shall reject the contract if reasonable changes are not made. Nothing more has been heard from RSL NSW since November 2024. That makes three organisations that we know of, including us, that have not signed the RSL NSW VSF agreement. There may be others.

Sadly, we were unaware initially of this NSW RSL headquarter two-clever-by-half intervention and assumed the amount donated by the RSL sub branches specifically for Granville, a sum of \$164,000, would be sent to us without conditions. Believing this we engaged an additional paid Advocate. Now we must work out a way to pay for this addition without the newly restricted NSW RSL sub branch donations.

How could it come to this.

FROM THE EDITORS DESK

THAT DVA BACKLOG!

For several issues now, I have been reporting on the true nature of the 'backlog' of veterans' disability claims awaiting determination.

The DVA web-site starts off by telling us: 'Of the 41,799 backlog of claims, identified in the Royal Commission's interim report, as at 31 January 2025, 98 per cent have now been completed.'

DVA has made other similar statements over time.

It sounds comforting; the backlog seems at last under control.

The trouble is the statement, by itself, gives a false impression.

The complete picture is far from comforting.

DVA has redefined the word 'backlog' to mean only those claims not yet allocated to a determining team.

BUT the determining teams have over 70,000 claims piled up awaiting their attention.

The plain truth is that it doesn't matter

whether claims have not yet been allocated or they lie waiting in a determining teams' in trays, if claims are not finalised they must be part of what everyone except DVA would call 'the backlog'.

That real backlog, as at 31 January stood at 81,656. Tragically it's not diminishing, being above 80,000 for months.

The real backlog is certainly not under control.

And DVA is skiting that the time claims take from being received to being finalised has been reduced.

That sounds good, but that time is still a little either side of a year for most claims with some taking much longer.

This ridiculously long wait imposed on often desperate and suffering veterans can do harm to their health and, as the Royal Commission concluded, contribute to the risk of suicide.

We deserve better.

Ed





A MESSAGE FROM THE NSW BRANCH

Once again, we say **THANK YOU** to our many members who have made a financial donation to their State Branch. Without these donations we would find it much more difficult to cater to the needs of our war veterans, service and ex-service persons generally. Whilst all donations are gratefully received, and combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are too numerous to list. However, periodically, we will publish a list of individual NSW Branch members who have donated amounts of \$200 or more.

Generous supporters of the NSW Branch since the last Journal are:

\$1,000	Amelia Jenkins, Brian (Tab) Hunter Anonymous, Anonymous
\$500	Garry Smyth, Stephen Bunter Ian Taylor, Peter Unwin Christina Knight, Bryan McVinish John Stoker, Anonymous
\$460	Anonymous
\$400	John Harris
\$370	Geoffrey Peattie
\$300	Anonymous, Brian Wood William Smith, David Gibbs
\$250	Garry Chenhall, Tony Shephard Barry Radnidge
\$200	Ronald Giveen, Kerry Bee Maxwell Fitzgerald, Geoff Cole Ernest Lensing, Denis Nolan John Evans, Francis Scicluna Peter Miller, Geoffrey Lopez

Whilst the aforementioned refers to, mostly, individual donations only, we are also indebted to the many RSL sub-branches and other licensed clubs who generously contribute to our cause.

City of Bankstown RSL Sub-Branch

And,

\$5,000 Biopsychanalytics Pty Ltd

MEMBERSHIP PRIZE WINNERS

Michael Taylor, was randomly selected from all NSW Branch members who renewed their 2025 NSW Memberships by 31st December 2024 and, as such, was the lucky winner of our membership drawer, and as the lucky winner received a \$250.00 Gift Voucher

Warwick Atkinson, John Tillman and Tuan Phu

Were randomly selected from all NSW Branch members who renewed their 2025 NSW Memberships by 31st January 2025 and, as such, were the lucky winners of our membership drawer with each winning a \$100 Bunnings gift voucher.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR WINNERS.

Ron O'Connor JP
National Secretary
VVFA





OBITUARY NOTICE

**PRESIDENT - TAYLORS ARM SUB-BRANCH
VVPPAA NSW**

STUART JOHNSON RIP.

**LT-COLONEL GEORGE STUART GALBRAITH
JOHNSON RFD ED**

10/11/1939 - 14/12/2024

Taylor Arms is an out-of-the-way place located 500 kms from Sydney and some 27 kms from Macksville. Its importance is that it is the home of the Pub With No Beer.

Important to some of its inhabitants too was the local RSL sub branch.

Stuart was an active and dedicated member so when the news came from NSW RSL HQ that the sub branch was to virtually shut down, he was very unhappy.

But rather than submit, Stuart got in touch with us and changed the Taylor Arms RSL sub branch into the Taylor Arms sub branch the VVPPAA.

No doubt because of Stuart's enthusiasm and organizational ability the Taylor Arms VVPPAA sub branch has been attracting more members.

So who was George Stuart Galbraith Johnston

In short, Stuart was a stalwart of Australia's Reserve forces.

His first military experience was as a student at Scots College where he was very active in the school cadet corps

In 1958 he joined the CMF Macksville (NSW) Unit, for the beginning of a distinguished career.

There followed many years of postings to a variety of CMF units with Stuart's dedicated and valued service seeing him steadily rise through the ranks.

In 1980-81 Stuart completed the demanding TAC5 course at Land Warfare Centre at Canungra QLD for promotion to LTCOL.

In 1982 He was promoted to LT-Col and posted as the Battalion Commander of the 41st Battalion NSW, with HQ in Lismore.

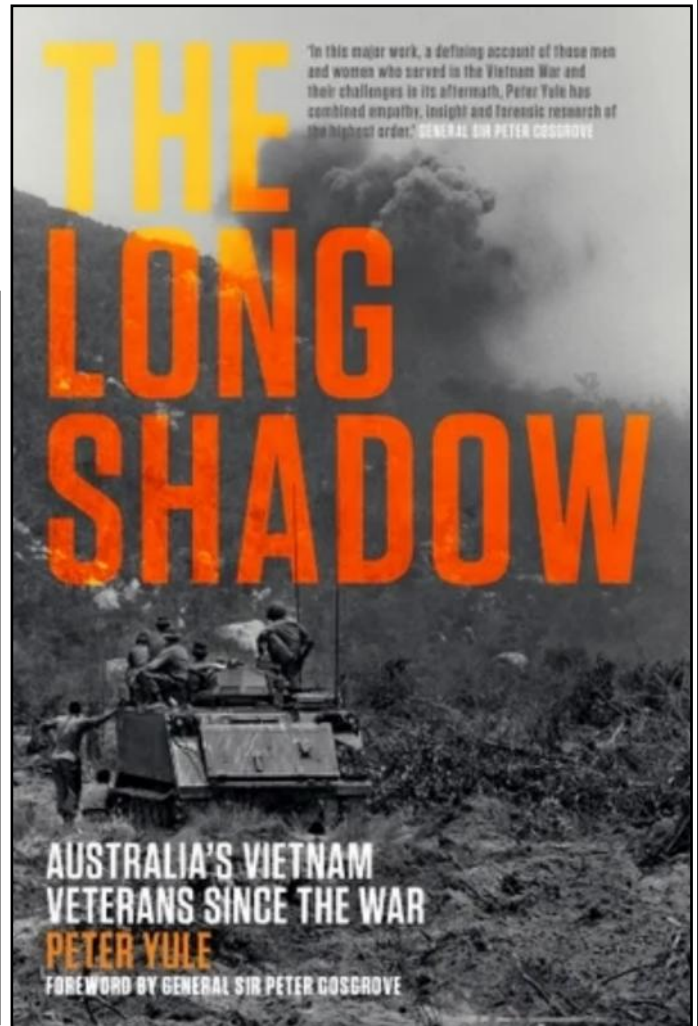
He retired from the active army reserve on completion of his Command at the end of 1985.

We will miss him.

What happened to us in Vietnam and what's happened to us since we returned home?

Extract

In Professor Smith's eyes the credibility of the *Evatt Report* was established by the glowing endorsement it received from Sir Richard Doll, regarded as the world's leading epidemiologist since his work in the 1950s linking smoking with lung cancer. Doll's praise for Evatt's work, however, was given in 1985, and took no account of the later studies that increased the level of uncertainty surrounding possible links between herbicides and cancer. Further, Smith either did not know, or chose not to state, that Doll was being paid a retainer by Monsanto at the time he endorsed the *Evatt Report*.



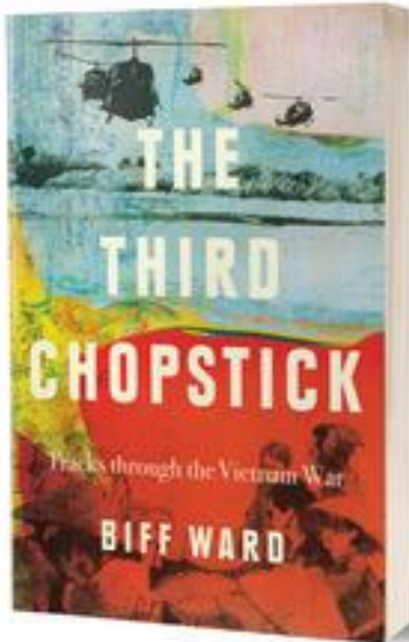
To get your copy simply ring the NSW
Branch Granville Office on

02 9682 1788 or contact on-line at
www.vvfaгранville.org

Price \$60

Plus postage

Excerpt from:



Do you remember Ray Fulton?

He contributed so much to our Federation and to veterans' welfare in general.

This book, amongst other things, is about him.

If you remember Ray, we invite you to write a letter-to-the-editor with your memories.

As I drifted about [at the Granville office], I saw that the volunteer advisors each had their own style, just as Ray had told me in Darling Harbour. One was quiet, focused on pen to paper, another joked and spread his hands. It was triage work. They listened and decided what was needed: accommodation, money, food, medical help. Nearly always, they set the guy on the path to repatriation benefits, which meant supplying contacts for psychiatrists. As volunteers, they worked as much as they wished, every day or once a month.

It's part of our own therapy, they all told me. We've been there.

As they helped each other wind down a little, it granted them enough slack to be able to help the next guy wind down too.

One guy said to me, they wound us up with all that training, but they didn't wind us down. They were working out how to do that themselves. ■

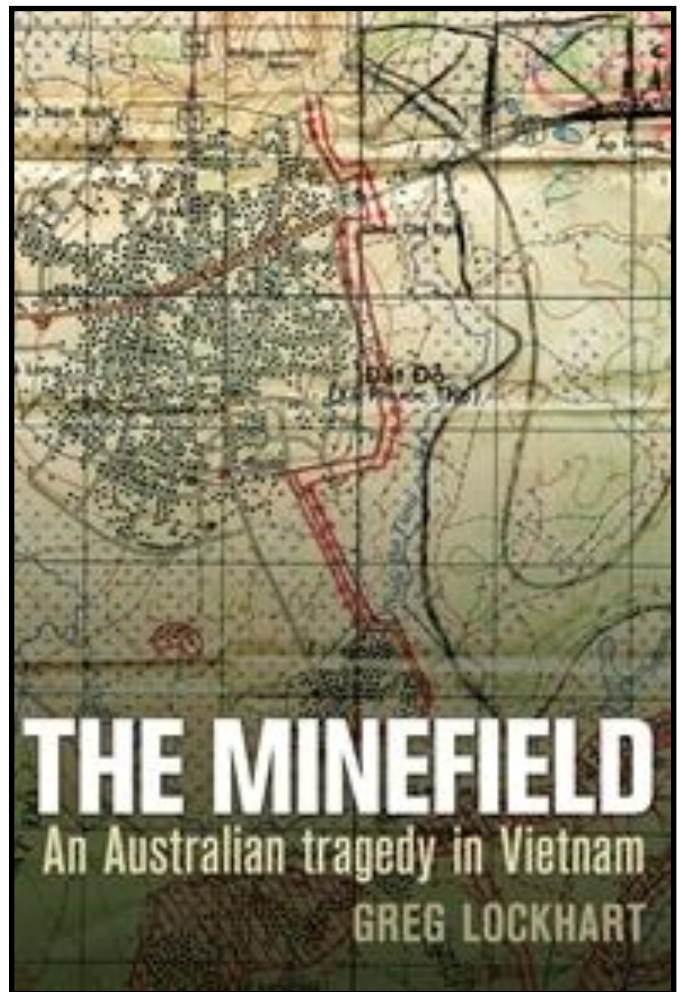
To get your copy simply ring the NSW Branch Granville Office on 02 9682 1788 or order on-line at www.vvfagranville.org

The Minefield

An Australian tragedy in Vietnam

Another extract from the book

Officers and senior NCOs in 1 Field Squadron met to 'brainstorm' the problem [of clearing the minefield] before a second attempt was made in May. Various roller solutions were considered; however, heavy rollers fabricated from concrete-filled 44-gallon drums were unable to detonate mines in depressions in the ground. Lighter, more flexible rollers made of tyres or bladders filled with mastic, dirt or lead dust and pushed in front of a tank would very likely be ripped to shreds by the shrapnel from the exploding mines. Other methods were mooted. These included: burning the areas with napalm; bombarding the mines with mortars and artillery; burying the entire field; flooding the field with corrosive fluid; and using land clearing chain from one side of the field to the other pulled by bulldozers. But the massive cost and effort, plus the unlikely success or proven failure, eliminated all these proposals.■



Dr Greg Lockhart is a Vietnam veteran, having served with AATTV.

He is an eminent historian whose work has been widely acknowledged.

His writing of this excellent book came from the VVFA's concern that it knew very little about the Minefield when dealing with veterans damaged by their contact with it.

He is the VVFA's honorary historian.■

It is the best book so far written about Australia's participation in the Vietnam war.

Written ten years ago and still selling well.

To get your copy simply ring the NSW Branch Granville Office on 02 9682 1788.

Or order online at: www.vvfagranville.org

**VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC.
2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - AGENDA**

The 2025 Annual General Meeting of the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc., will be held at the **Veterans Support Centre, 8 Mary Street Granville 10.30am, Wednesday, 14th May 2025.**

AGENDA

Opening of Meeting by the Chairman

Apologies

Confirm the Minutes of the AGM 2024

Business Arising from the Minutes of the AGM 2024

President's Report

Treasurer's Report

Secretary's Report

Membership Report

Election results (for Office Bearers) *[Nomination form is printed opposite for convenience]*

President

Senior Vice President (1)

Vice Presidents (2)

Secretary

Treasurer

Committee Members (10)

Changes to the Constitution

Appointment of Association Auditors

Appointment of Association Legal Representatives

Appointment of Insurer

Appointment of Life Members

Other Business by leave of the Chairman

Close of Meeting.

Any items for General Business **must** be in the hands of the Secretary by close of business on **Thursday, 24th April 2025.**

Next AGM to be held on a date to be confirmed during May 2025.

Ron O'Connor JP
Hon. Secretary
NSW Branch

**VIETNAM VETERANS', PEACEKEEPERS' & PEACEMAKERS
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC.
2025 ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS**

Members wishing to nominate for one or more of the following positions on the NSW Committee are asked to indicate with an (X) alongside those positions, and remember appointment on the Committee is for a 2 year term.

President (1)

Senior-Vice President (1)

Vice Presidents (2)

Secretary (1)

Treasurer (1)

Committee Members (10)

***Members nominating for a position(s) must be financial for the year 2025.**

Details of Nominee:

.....		
Print Name	Signature	Membership No

Details of Seconders (2)

.....		
Print Name	Signature	Membership No.

.....		
Print Name	Signature	Membership No.

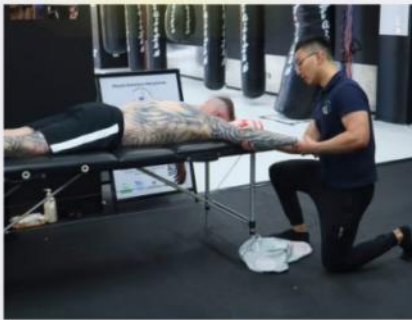
NOTE:

All nomination forms must be in the Secretary's hands by COB 24th April 2025.

Should an election be required personal profiles will be requested and ballot papers will be posted. The election results will be declared at the AGM on 14th May 2025.



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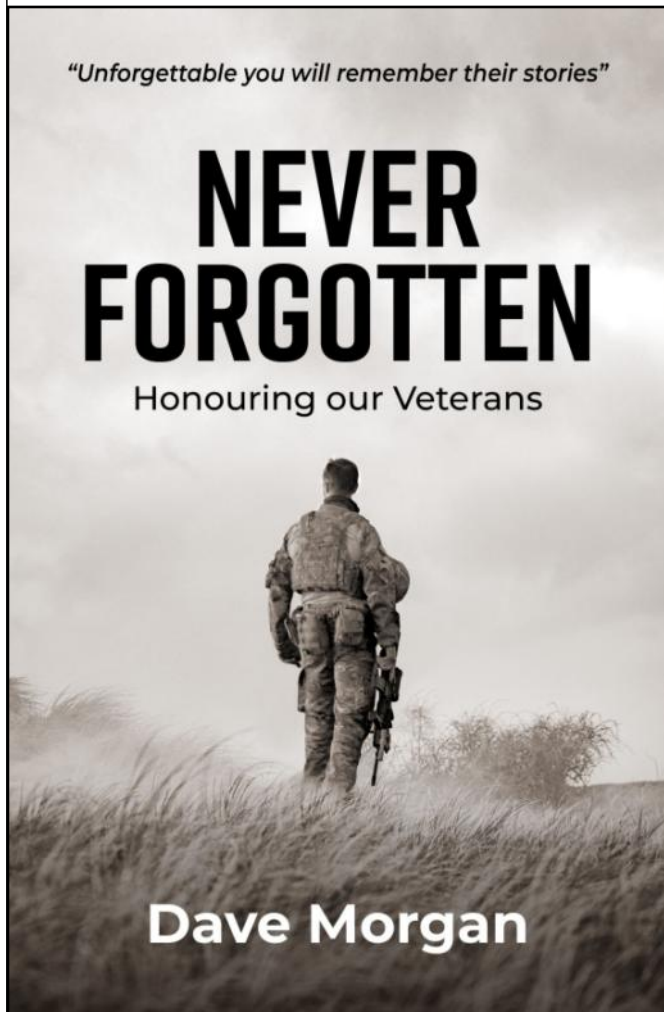


Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs



HICAPS

Fast claims... on the spot



Never Forgotten Honouring Our Veterans

Author: Dave Morgan

Pages: 388

Book Type: Paperback

ISBN: 9781923144613

\$32.99

from Big Sky Publishing

*See other pricing at end of review, however,
note that all proceeds from Big Sky Publishing
will go to Legacy Australia*

Review:

In the shadows of war, their voices resonate: Australian veterans' tales: Untold stories of Australia's forgotten soldiers.

Vietnam Veteran Dave Morgan explores the often-overlooked sacrifices of Australian military personnel. Inspired by his own experiences, Dave embarks on a journey to capture the diverse narrative spanning generations and conflicts, from Vietnam to Somalia and Afghanistan.

Through meticulous research and armchair conversations, he uncovers untold stories, from talented athletes like Ian Anderson to pioneering female veterans like Stephanie Shipman. The book weaves together tales of camaraderie and resilience, from heartwarming reunions to the loss of friends like Robert Wilson.

These accounts offer a mosaic of bravery and resilience and through these stories, readers gain a deeper understanding of the profound impact of military service on individuals and communities, highlighting the importance of preserving these invaluable narratives.

Never Forgotten serves as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by those who serve, ensuring their voices resonate for future generations.

Available on-line through Big Sky Publishing

<https://www.bigskypublishing.com.au>

All proceeds from this book will be donated to Legacy Australia.

Also available at:

Amazon.com.au \$22.00 (23 Feb 2025)

Booktopia.com.au \$30.25 (23 Feb 2025)

Limited Big W stores \$22.00 (23 Feb 2025)

Dave Morgan.



VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDAL CONTROVERSY-PART 3

RICHARD BARRY OAM RESPONDS TO MALCOLM WHITNEY'S COMMENTS IN OUR DECEMBER 2024 ISSUE

Letter to the Editor

Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia.

I have read Mr. Whitney's letter to the editor which was published in the December 2024 edition of the Vietnam Veterans' Newsletter wherein my name is mentioned several times regarding the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. Thank you for allowing me to set the record straight. Luckily, I've only had to deal with a few naysayers since commencing the campaign in 1996 to have many Vietnam veterans to be fully recognised for their lawful and valiant service. Best I respond in point form to make it easier for readers.

- If Mr. Whitney had the courtesy to contact me in the first instance I might have saved him a letter. However, I think its beneficial that others now have the opportunity to read the truth. I might add Mr. Whitney does not have access to the submission before the decision makers so how could he know the content of our argument regarding another very important aspect not widely canvassed about the RVCMB? I hope he has read my letter to editor as well as the excellent letter from LTCOL Bert Hoebee (Retd) – a platoon commander with an infantry battalion in Vietnam. Both letters appear on the pages before Mr. Whitney's letter. They are well worth the read.
- I acknowledge and respect Mr. Whitney's service with 503 Signal Troop and 110 Signal Squadron. I was a Forward Scout in Tracker Platoon with 6RAR in South Vietnam in 1969
- and I wear my RVCMB with pride and in honour of the mates who never made it back home. In essence I have been 'thanked' for my service.
- I am a little concerned about the inaccuracies contained in Mr. Whitney's letter. I feel it is absolutely necessary to address these inaccuracies so they don't cause anymore undue stress to surviving Vietnam veterans and the families of those since passed.
- The "small group" Mr. Whitney refers to is actually around 6,000 Vietnam veterans (Nashos & Regs) who served less than 181 days overseas according to recent confirmation from Defence Honours & Awards. I regard that number as fairly significant.
- There have been two separate inquiries held by Defence Honours Awards Appeals Tribunal in 2014 and 2015. Both determined that the eligibility criteria for the RVCMB cannot be changed. So yes, we have accepted the umpire's decision repeatedly over the past ten years. Our case has been made on an entirely different aspect.
- I have come across the occasional naysayer, who have the RVCMB, and who like to call their comrades with less than 181-days overseas service names like "short-timers"



and “second-class veterans”. I have been sent several testimonials from these men who now refuse to march on Anzac Day. In fact, Senator Richard Colbeck encouraged me to refer several of these men to the recent Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. This is disgraceful to say the least.

- Senator Paul Scarr has never advocated for any change or amendment to the Vietnam Directives of 1965/66 when the RVCN was originally approved. I suspect you won't receive a response from the Hon Barnaby Joyce MP because he has been a great supporter for the campaign over many years writing letters to the various Ministers for Veterans' Affairs.

- The then-Minister for Veterans' Affairs & Defence Personnel the Hon Andrew Gee MP is correct. Like Senator Scarr he has never advocated a change in the criterion for the RVCN. In fact, Minister Gee supported my campaign as presented, and it was about to be dealt with by whole-of-government (Cabinet) when the May 2022 federal election intervened. We then commenced lobbying the new government.

- Mr. Whitney mentioned the Australian “Vietnam Medal.” This medal is an imperial award not a foreign campaign medal and is issued for those who served one or more days on the posted strength of a unit or formation on land. To date 18,740 of these have been issued to Australians. As some 60,000 Australians served in Vietnam it seems many don't place too much emphasis on this medal for being in Vietnam for a minimum of 24 hours. The affected men are simply asking for a ‘thank you’ via the RVCN for their honourable and lawful service in a controversial war fighting alongside a common enemy in the name of freedom and democracy. A war that divided the nation like no other. It's not their fault they don't have the medal. In fact, I have a list of Vietnam veterans who were killed within a few weeks of stepping ashore.

- If Mr. Whitney is a member of the RSL he should be aware that my motion asking for

support of my campaign was passed at the RSL NSW Newcastle Congress in October 2024. In addition can I suggest he might like to contact the National President of the Vietnam Veterans Federation, who has sent brilliant supporting letters over several years to various Ministers of Veterans' Affairs, respectfully asking that my proposal be given attention as a matter of priority. Does Mr. Whitney discount the pages and pages of support including those from former Prime Ministers, Deputy Prime Minister and a former Governor-General?

- Finally, it gives me great pleasure to confirm that I have assisted 39 Vietnam veterans to receive the RVCN in recent months in the absence of a formal Media Release from the Minister regarding a fresh interpretation to the eligibility criteria. Mr. Whitney should be pleased that 39 of his comrades now have the medal after waiting patiently for over 50 years and none of them served the 181 days! I have 50+ more pending approvals. This is occurring whilst the campaign for the others continues in earnest. The calls/emails/letters I am receiving makes it all worthwhile especially from the widows. They tell me their children/grandchildren will march proudly on Anzac Day wearing the full medal set in memory of their ‘hero’. I wish Mr. Whitney well in his endeavours.

Christmas and New Year will be behind us by the time my letter is published. I sincerely hope it was a peaceful occasion with family and friends.

Richard Barry OAM.

19 December 2024.

*And we received the following email, over the page, as well.
Republished here with the permission of the writer.*

(Continued on page 24)

(To) The Editor.

You have asked for comments on Malcolm Whitneys article in December 2024 issue of the VV newsletter.

First and more importantly before we get to Mr. Whitney I would like to comment on Richard Barry OAM who should be congratulated for what he is doing for the National Servicemen who did not receive the RVCN the countless hours he has devoted to this cause.

I am one of the 2500 National Servicemen who missed out on the RVCN. A forward scout-rifleman with 2RAR first tour 67-68

I was in Vietnam for 160 days most of those 160 days were spent outside of 1ATF Nui Dat. The Australian Government has repeatedly walked away from this issue ignored the men they sent to do their dirty work shame on them.

Name withheld.

HAVE YOUR SAY!

**WE INVITE COMMENT FROM
OUR READERS, WHICH WILL
BE PUBLISHED IN FUTURE
ISSUES OF THE VIETNAM
VETERANS' NEWSLETTER.**

**PREFERENCE IS FOR EMAILED
AND/OR ATTACHED WORD.
DOCUMENT BE SENT TO
bobf@vufagranville.org**

IT NEVER REALLY CHANGES

they're maturing now,
but their medical needs,
had grown exponentially,
clouding times,
when as recruits and conscripts,
they served as strong individuals,
as best they could,
in that once,
Vietnam War,
that scarred deeply,
the national psyche,
into seeing them as irreparable people,
unhinged and unworthy,
of that traditional soldier's repute,
that was seen,
to have defended,
within the rules of combat.
yet many,
(As was always the case),
still experience how combat,
leaves its mark,
its wounds,
often unseen,
but felt,
by the generations,
which their homecoming birthed
Indelibly!
deafening muteness;
about feelings,
Irritability about much;
Sleepless war tainted sweats;
and the love of routines,
couched in super alertness;
while around family tables,
empty chairs,
bring thoughts, and tears,
of why us!
as families view older photos on the mantle,
of their young,
who had so much,
for which to live.

Graeme Foley 3 RAR 1st Tour

The Vietnam veteran movement has achieved a great deal since its turbulent beginnings in the late 1970s.

Who was involved and what obstacles did they overcome?

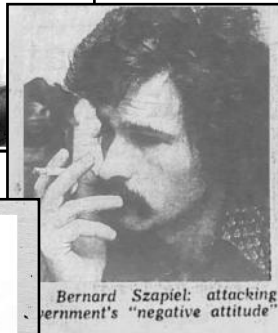
Kel Robertson, researcher and writer, pulls out the story of those stormy beginnings from the dusty archives.



Holt McMinn



Phil Thompson



Bernard Szapiel: attacking government's "negative attitude"



Bill McMillan



Clyde Holding



Jim Wares



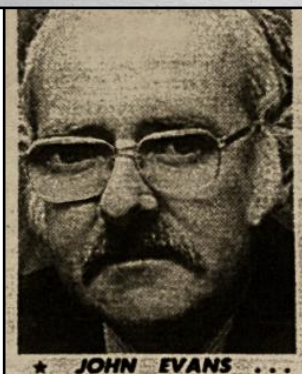
Mr Kerin



Mr Killen



MR. ADERMANN



★ JOHN EVANS ...



Sir Richard Kingsland



MR HARPER

Read on



VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS

Article 13

The First Half of the Association's Initial Year

Part A - Ministerial and Parliamentary Matters.

This article is the first of two outlining and commenting on events in the important first year of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association (afterwards to be the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia). It, in particular, looks at Ministerial and parliamentary happenings.

“One of the most important aspects of the study of history is to understand the context in which a given set of events occurred. – Jeffrey Grey, in *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*

For a range of reasons, articles on the early 1980s in this series are incomplete. There are few surviving records of Association national officers in 1980 and there may well have been few to start with. State Branch records for the same period are at best ‘thin on the ground’ and of little use in tracing developments. Important Association documents known to have existed do not appear in the extensive VVAA collection at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) or in known private collections. And the main participants in national events have passed away, been otherwise uncontactable or – understandably, after nearly half a century – been unable to recall events (and especially their timing) in sufficient detail to aid this narrative.

In addition, DVA has not made various files from the early 1980s – ones accessed in recent years by an official historian – available to other researchers and the public. Most of these records are more than 40 years old at the time of writing. Even if, as appears unlikely, they contain aged state secrets and personal information, they should be listed in the National Archives of Australia (NAA) database,

with access to be determined by NAA staff. A culture of bureaucratic secrecy is, once embedded, evidently hard to dislodge.

There was, further, no national VVAA magazine until the morphing of the VVAA NSW Branch magazine, “Debrief” – founded in August 1980 – into a national publication in July 1982. Further, the magazines of VVAA State Branches in 1980 were sporadically produced, seem not to have survived in their entirety and, where existent, mostly covered local matters.



Holt McMinn

series, but it seems likely that few of inaugural president Holt McMinn's records were handed over or sought following Phil Thompson's

Possible reasons for the scarcity of early national records in the Association's AWM collection are mentioned in article 3 in this



Phil Thompson

election as National President in May 1981... noting that, in any event, McMinn, like Thompson, was more inclined to use the phone than to put pen to paper.

Although the Association's NSW Branch kept useful records of its earliest fundraising and

educational activities, as well as some important legal reports (thanks to the efforts of Gary and Sandra Adams), copies of important national documents, like minutes of the 1980 and 1981 National Conferences, were not retained and shipped to the AWM in 1988 and

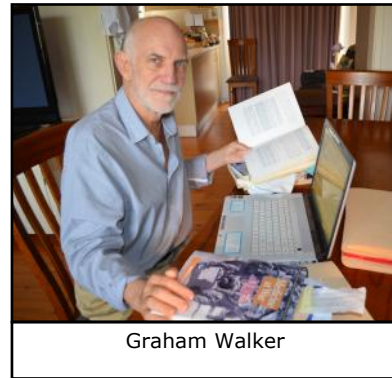


Gary and Sandra Adams (back then)

1994 when the VVAA's records were sent there. (One veteran who worked with Phil Thompson in the 1980s good-naturedly remarked to the author that Thompson's briefcase was the last known location of many a significant document in the early 1980s.)

Good record keeping was doubtless also hard to achieve whenever the National President and National Secretary lived in different cities (as was the case in periods prior to and following Thompson's May 1981 election), and when the two key officials weren't on friendly terms (as was the case when McMinn was National President and Gary Adams was both National Secretary and NSW Branch Secretary in the second half of 1980 and early 1981).

In fact, National VVAA record-keeping wasn't to improve significantly, despite the early 1981 efforts of Interim National Secretary Peter Sadler, until later that year when Graham Walker joined the



Graham Walker

Association. (Walker created a filing system and became Phil Thompson's ghost writer, with a style readily identifiable in a wide range and

number of later presidential and Association documents. By becoming Thompson's writing 'alter ego' Walker brought to the Association a greater tendency for the President (sic) to communicate in writing, while adding a new sophistication to presidential correspondence and speeches, and completing other work in his own name (and anonymously).

In drafting this multi-part account of 1980, the author has attempted to make up for the deficiencies in paper records and individuals' recollections by relying on newspaper reports, on articles in other publications, on those Government records able to be accessed, on RSL records able to be viewed and on other documents, as relevant. However, the extraordinary frequency of important events and developments in the first 6 months of the Association's life is such that there will inevitably be omissions which trouble some readers. The exercising of choice couldn't be avoided in the interest of concision.

Finally, the author is aware that State Branch officials in 1980 knew – in the absence of coordinated effort, of a national magazine and of teleconference technology – little about the activities of other Branches. In the major eastern States they consequently tended to see their own Branch as the most significant element of the organisation, even to the point where some doubted thereafter that other branches (and national office-holders) could have accomplished anything useful in early times. One ex-official

(Continued on page 28)

indicated to the author that he expected accounts of the Association's initial years to concentrate on the activities of the Branch in which he was active (to the exclusion of other branches). But even if records enabling such a single-component focus still existed – and they appear not to, for any 1980 State Branch – it would be inaccurate to focus this account on just one element of the new organisation. Instead, the multiple parts of this article will draw to the extent possible on events in which national officials and officials from Queensland, NSW, Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory (the branches existent in early 1980) played a part.

Beginnings Revisited

Early steps towards the establishment of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association (the predecessor of the VVAA) were outlined in earlier instalments in this series. Those accounts explained that there was no gradual emergence of groups (as claimed by other writers) prior to the widely publicised December 1979 announcement by two Victorians, Holt McMinn and Bernie Szapiel, of their intention to form a national organization: a body intended, they said, to press for an investigation of wartime chemical exposure and for

compensation of victims.

Vietnam veterans from at least Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia met at **Bernie and Senia Szapiel's**

Melbourne home on 2 January 1980 and it was at a subsequent

Melbourne meeting, a little over a week later, that a national organisation could properly be said to have been established. At this 10 January 1980 meeting most (but not all) of the key figures in earlier events



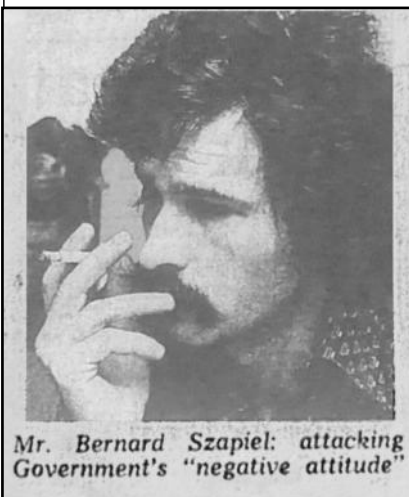
put the Association on a quasi-formal footing, probably at the urging of the Queensland solicitor **Bill McMillan**. They took this step by staking claims to national executive positions, with McMinn assuming the role of National President.

By early January 1980, after end-of-year publicity of the defoliant-related health concerns of key veterans, and after a particular media focus on veterans' children with birth defects (thereby making an emotive connection to the long-running domestic defoliant issue), few Vietnam veterans could have been oblivious to the possibility that defoliants were responsible for the health problems of some of their peers ... and responsible for problems waiting to emerge in the broader group.

The extent to which there was networking among the Action Association founders prior to the carving up of national positions on 10 January 1980 is unclear. It is unlikely, though, that the new officeholders agreed before or when they met on operating procedures or detailed divisions of responsibilities. This was so, even if the lawyer, McMillan, wanted the fledgeling organisation to be placed on an appropriate footing for a drawn-out struggle focussing on litigation and, to a lesser extent, lobbying of the Federal Government.

The 10 January veteran attendees had little if any experience of public organisations. McMillan excepted, those who met had little idea of what might be expected of them and of the likely duration of the campaign ahead. In any event, they didn't meet for long enough to attend to organisational detail and had already had a taste of independent action. Indeed, none of the key figures had been prevented by an earlier lack of official status from using the media to press for a Federal Government investigation of the impact of wartime chemical exposure.

(Continued on page 29)



Luck certainly played a part in publicising the initial moves of the Action Association founders. The Christmas/New Year period was traditionally one when the media were hard-pressed to find newsworthy material, and early stories about the calls for investigation of chemical harms (and about the Vietnam veterans and families who already seemed to have been affected by chemical exposure) made for undeniably good 'content'. Some of the fears behind the veterans' calls to investigate and compensate – fears of deformities, miscarriages and cancers – were ones tapping into the major social anxieties of the time, previously reflected in and exaggerated by the media. Indeed, it is arguable that without this connection to community anxieties (and a media focus on them), the wartime chemical issue would soon have petered out or become a matter of mere parliamentary sparring, notwithstanding the propitious timing of the McMinn and Szapiel media announcements, and regardless of increasing community feeling that Vietnam veterans had not been treated appropriately after the war.

Interactions with Government representatives (and especially the Minister for Veteran Affairs) were, unsurprisingly, an important part of the Association's early activities.

The ground for the Association's first (post-January 10) meeting with the (then) Minister had been set by the deformities, reproductive difficulties and cancers associated in the media with domestic defoliant exposure in the late 1970s. That ground was set in an even more particular way by news reports, late in 1979 and early 1980, about various matters specific to the Vietnam war; they included Australians' exposure to (and use of) defoliants in Vietnam, a careless recycling of grim "unofficial" US birth defect and illness statistics, and equally frightening predictions of the consequences of chemical exposure (especially when concentrations of Agent Orange in use in Vietnam were revealed to be much stronger than then domestic versions). Newspaper editorials had criticised the Government or urged more substantial action than that taken. There had also been news reports about Federal

Opposition backing of veterans' calls for an independent investigation of harms and for appropriate compensation: stories which pointed to a major political imbroglio in the making. Ex-service organisations had, further, expressed support for the Association/Vietnam men and some components of the RSL adopted a different position on the way ahead to the conditional one of the National body (determined out-of-session by the National President, William Keys). Intimations of possible legal proceedings, including involvement in the class action begun by American veterans and the instigation of local suits against the Australian Government, had also begun to appear in the newspapers.

It's likely that the delayed convening of the initial meeting of Association representatives with Veterans Affairs Minister **Evan Adermann** and the Secretary of his Department, **Sir Richard Kingsland**, was a result of the different locations of the key players over the Christmas/January holiday period and of an initial stand-off (until there were Association officials in place). Adermann had, in early January, with the Vietnam chemical story in full flight, expressed frustration at a lack of contact from representatives of aggrieved veterans but his officers didn't think to get in touch with any of the prominent individuals whose details appeared in news stories. (If the media could readily track these individuals down, why couldn't the Minister's staff?)

The initial meeting didn't take place until 22 January 1980 in Melbourne, by which time Adermann had moved from repeated, straightforward, RSL-supported endorsement of the repatriation system as the sole means of dealing with veterans' illnesses (without any special consideration of wives and children) to a hybrid response. That hybrid response to veterans' concerns (and the media attention they attracted) still included encouragement to lodge repatriation claims but also featured the establishment of a study of chemical effects by the School of Public

(Continued on page 30)

Govt asks Agent Orange victims to make claims

CANBERRA. — The Minister for Health, Mr Adermann, urges Agent Orange victims to make claims to the chemical defoliant Agent Orange to contact his department.

Agent Orange is a herbicide containing dioxin, one of the most powerful poisons known, in the carrier ingredients 2-4-D and 2-4-DE. Mr Adermann said he would like to see "less talk and more action by veterans in pursuing their well-known rights." There had been speculation about the long-

The informed their effect between orders. So far uncover orders. Orange skin con- The

AGENT-ORANGE INQUIRY

'Not serious attempt to find the truth'

MELBOURNE: The newly formed Vietnam Veterans Action Association stepped up yesterday its campaign to gain compensation for Australians affected by the defoliant Agent Orange.

The association, which has attained several hundred members since its formation a month ago, has placed advertisements in national newspapers asking ex-servicemen for details of any illnesses, deformities or deaths linked to the use of

chemicals in Vietnam had a damaging effect on some servicemen. During the past few weeks the association has called for an independent inquiry into the possible effects the use of chemicals in Vietnam has had on Australian servicemen and their children.

The association was formed after a number of ex-servicemen said they had suffered ill-health after contact with chemical sprays in Vietnam, and some of their children have been deformed.

On Monday last week the Federal Government announced plans to conduct an inquiry into the claims, but the veteran's association has been critical of this, saying it is not independent.

Mr McMinn said the decision to have the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine look into the claims was "not a serious attempt to find the truth".

"The school in Sydney is just another government institution. We will not be happy until an

Govt. sets up study on Viet. spray

CANBERRA — The possible effects of the defoliant Agent Orange on Vietnam veterans and their children are to be studied by the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Sydney University.

Minister for Veterans Affairs, Mr Adermann, said yesterday. He said the study would be conducted by Professor R. MacLennan, the associate professor of epidemiology in the school.

US war

Health and Tropical Medicine at Sydney University (a component of the Federal Health Department that was soon renamed the Commonwealth Institute of Health).

In the week before the meeting with the Minister, McMinn was quoted as stating that the School of Public Health study (hereafter referred to as "the Institute study") was "a farce". He was also reported as saying that it wasn't "a serious attempt to find the truth". He further criticised the lack of independence of those engaged in the work. These pronouncements, the Association's repeated requests for a judicial inquiry (instead of just an epidemiological study) and McMinn's record of feistiness in the media can only have caused the Minister to expect a difficult first interaction with Association representatives.

Our knowledge of what took place when they met is sketchy, as we have to rely on newspaper reports. It seems likely, though, that the Association representatives, McMinn and Victorian State President Szapiel — inclined to initial courtesy and unused to dealing with personages the like of a Federal Minister and his knighted chief bureaucrat — engaged in polite exchanges. This was, after all, a time when position

was more widely respected than now.

Adermann was soon after to say that the meeting was one reflecting "a good working relationship established in a friendly atmosphere". McMinn stated that "The Minister seemed very sympathetic to our cause and promised every assistance."



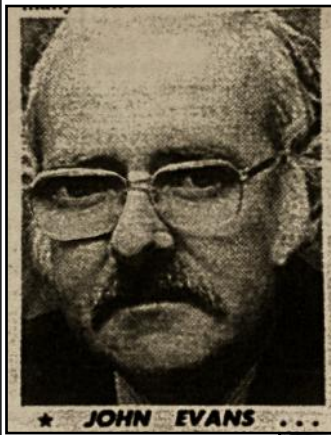
MR. ADERMANN

Perhaps McMinn and Szapiel would have been more assertive if they'd known the Government had been unnerved enough by veteran agitation to (a) consider the Vietnam chemical issue at the first Cabinet meeting of the year (on 15 January) and (b) establish a Committee of Ministers (supported by a group of senior officials) to "consider and report to Cabinet on matters relating to the study of possible effects on Australian and their children of use in Vietnam of the herbicide "Agent Orange".) These actions, though, weren't to be public knowledge until almost a month

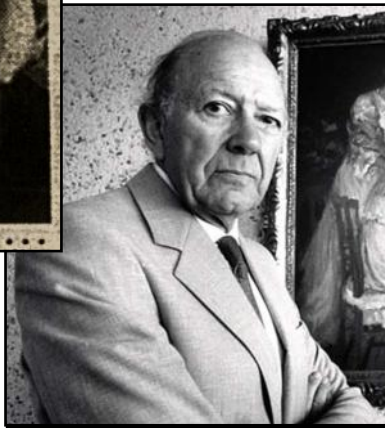
later.

It seems, nonetheless, that the Association representatives pressed the Minister to acknowledge a defoliant cause of illnesses and deformities, and suggested that changes be made to

repatriation legislation to cover “children of the victims of chemical warfare” – a proposal that had been foreshadowed in earlier newspaper articles, but that, when formally put, could only have alarmed Adermann and Kingsland. Any expectations the latter pair might nonetheless have had that their meeting had brought gentlemanly calm to the Vietnam chemical issue were dashed within days when the alleged taping of a telephone conversation between a Vietnam veteran and a DVA officer received media coverage. The alleged recording was compared by McMinn to “Soviet secret police behaviour” and was said by him to have “disturbed the rapport he felt had grown between his association and [the DVA head] Sir Richard.”



The most important outcome of the 22 January meeting was



Sir Richard Kingsland

arguably the Minister’s acceptance of an offer by McMinn to see the

Association’s evidence for war-time chemical harms – acceptance that amply demonstrated the power of obscure scientific knowledge. That offer resulted in a visit by Kingsland to the Melbourne home of **John Evans**, the Association’s scientific adviser, on the same day, to be followed by a meeting between (at least) Evans and Adermann on 11 Feb in Sydney and a series of meetings between Evans and the DVA’s Chief Director of Medical Services, **Dr Keith Fleming**, who’d been a surgical team leader in Vietnam. (Those Evans and Fleming meetings would result in a document later known as “The Fleming Report”, the subject of a major public spat

between the Association and the Government in the second half of the year.)

In the wake of the 22 January meeting, Adermann took the unusual step of writing to other parliamentarians to counter the suggestions that the Government had been tardy in dealing with the chemical issue, to point to the small number of chemical claims received and to spruik the merits of the repatriation system (including the retention of rejected chemical claims for later consideration in the event of proven links to disabilities). That Adermann felt the need to write to colleagues was testament to the effectiveness of the Association’s use of the media, as well as to pressure applied by veterans and their sympathisers in electorates. The letter was further evidence that Ministers were rattled; Adermann would not have put pen to paper if the Government had been winning the struggle.

Soon afterwards a large meeting of Vietnam veterans took place at RSL House in Melbourne at which Victorian RSL Branch President Bruce Ruxton criticised the Institute study for a lack of independence, echoing McMinn’s earlier criticism; DVA was reported to have received more than 500 enquiries from Vietnam veterans; and John Evans was (less

accurately) reported as having said that “Australia [had] used 19 million gallons of defoliants in Vietnam”. The participation of Australian Vietnam veterans in the US class action was reported to be imminent and The Australian Women’s Weekly had run a double-page story



Clyde Holding

(Continued on page 32)

sympathising with the veterans' families suffering from inexplicable disabilities. On top of these and other setbacks for the Government, Labor MP Clyde Holding, who'd previously displayed

parliamentary interest in other aspects of the chemical issue, was persuaded by a consideration of defoliant science to take up the Vietnam veteran aspect on 13 February. A slew of Questions on Notice followed on 19 February: a portent of the fierce Holding focus yet to come. Minister

Adernmann, doubtless feeling the heat (some of it, inevitably, from his own backbenchers) made a long statement to the House of Representatives on 21 February.

The Minister contended in his statement that, despite the lack of any conclusive evidence for defoliant harms, the Government had asked the Institute to determine whether a link between chemical exposure and claimed harms existed. He defended the proposed study, clarified that its work would be to gather statistics enabling linkages to be made, and outlined how this would be done, relying on three groups of veterans. He referred in very general terms to the difficulties in proceeding with the study and then detailed the preliminary work needed for the Government to approve it. Notwithstanding the fact that the study was still just a possibility, he concluded by claiming that the Government had "acted swiftly decisively and responsibly." Rather than calming matters in the Parliament, the statement predictably inflamed them, even though the timing of the statement worked against his critics.

The important things about debate on the 21 February statement (on the day of its delivery and in the week following) were, firstly, the gagging – procedural silencing – of Holding, and, secondly, his key criticisms of the speech (when permitted to briefly speak at the end of the sitting on the 21st). Silencing Holding doubtless increased his determination to attack the Minister and inevitably played a part in his later approaches to Opposition Leader Hayden to scale up attacks on the Government over the Vietnam chemical matter. His key criticisms were (a) that the Minister, having twice met with John Evans to review chemical science, had failed to acknowledge harms beyond the skin condition, chloracne; and (b) that the (the Minister) had underplayed criticism of the Institute study, ignoring veterans' desire for a judicial inquiry enabling the

Minister wants proof of sickness link

By PETER ROBERTS, our Science Reporter

The Federal Government will set up an independent study into claims that war veterans and their children are suffering from the effects of defoliating chemicals used widely in Vietnam.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Mr. Adernmann, announced the study into the herbicide Agent Orange last night.

Details will be announced within a week.

He said he had always been concerned to establish whether there was any link between Agent Orange and veterans' disabilities and deformities reported in their children.

Agent Orange, a 50-50 mixture of the herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, was one of four defoliants used in South Vietnam.

Mr. Adernmann repeated his call for veterans who felt their health had suffered because of contact with Agent Orange to come forward.

His move comes as the first fully documented case of the claimed after-effects of Agent Orange is nearing completion.

The case is the result of collaboration between the Vietnam Veterans' Action Association and a group of a dozen Melbourne doctors and scientists.

A scientist adviser to the association, who would not be named, said the study would work only if the Government was prepared to do it properly.

It is going to have to be one hell of a study, the adviser, an organic chemist, said.

"It is a matter of finding out how many people were in Vietnam, where they were, and how many have complaints consistent with exposure to Agent Orange."

"Then you have to examine their children."

Members of the association complain of constant nausea, dizziness, headaches, shortness of breath and fatigue which prevent them from working for long periods.

Veterans tell of illness and deformities

From BILL BIRNBAUER

SYDNEY. — After 12 months in Vietnam's Phuoc Tuy Province, Jim Wares did not think twice about the regular hum of American C123 aircraft spraying what appeared to be insecticide directly overhead.

He recalled yesterday: "When I first got there I said: 'Well what is that?' I was told they were spraying for the mosquitoes and after two or three weeks I didn't take any notice of it."

Today Mr. Wares, 32, believes that the spray may have been Agent Orange, a mixture of the herbicides 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D, which was used as a defoliant in Vietnam by the US.

He also believes it contributed to his son being born without fingers on his left hand.

Since Mr. Wares first mentioned the



Jim Wares

testing and adducing of evidence.

The Association quickly responded to Adernmann's statement with what was probably its first national press release, a punchy effort issued with the authority of McMinn and three State Presidents: **Jim Wares** (NSW) **John Harper** (QLD) and **Peter Keech** (SA). The release stated: "Nothing has changed since the end of last year despite the Minister's claim that the Government has acted swiftly and decisively." It then put a series of questions to the Minister, mostly designed

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MR HARPER

to demonstrate that he was not across relevant science. A briefing note, evidently prepared by the Association, followed a week later: the best summary to this point of the veterans' case.

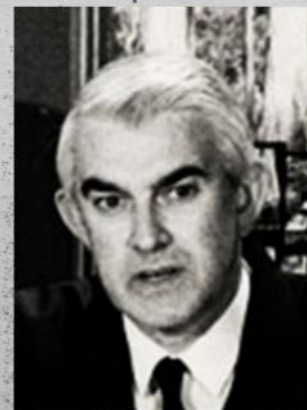
When the Minister met with Association again, on 3 March, both sides came in numbers. At the meeting Evans produced evidence of the dangers of chemical exposure, Professor Nash (a legal adviser) explained why the Commonwealth could be sued for negligence but for time limits on such action (the statute of limitations), and Evans proposed an alternative to the Institute study – all of this before Association representatives (including McMinn and McMillan) pointed out problems with that study, suggested different ways of proceeding, and criticised DVA's failure to correctly administer its legislation (principally in not giving claimants the benefit of doubt after consideration of the scientific evidence for chemical harms). According to the Minister, the Association could, in writing, apply for a waiver of the statute of limitations and could suggest improvements to the study. The Association had been roundly rebuffed.

A response from McMinn the next day – true authorship unclear – demonstrated a new legalistic steeliness. The Institute study was rejected for a range of reasons and a judicial inquiry was required. The terms of this inquiry, a little illogical, were principally that there was a “rebuttable presumption” that chemicals were responsible for a wide range of (listed) health conditions; that DVA would attempt to rebut this presumption; and that if failed to do this, veterans with the listed conditions would be automatically entitled to benefits. The inquiry would provide an opportunity for the Association “to make submissions, adduce evidence and cross-examine witnesses”. The Government's response was required by 18 March 1980. This, it appears, was the Association's formal request for a judicial inquiry and was treated as such by the Government.

The parliamentary highlight in the weeks following was Holdings questioning of Prime Minister Fraser on 5 March. Of the (at least) 5

questions put to Fraser in one go, there was one asking if the PM, in his capacity as Minister for Army and Defence in the war years, had known or asked about defoliant harms, and another enquiring if Fraser was concerned about/would properly investigate the Association's criticisms of the Institute study. In reply, Fraser said (summed up) that he couldn't recall any wartime information on defoliant dangers and that he and others would have been concerned if they'd been told of them; Adermann was consulting with the RSL and others concerned with welfare of veterans from past wars; matters would be treated in the customarily sensitive and just way. By not specifically mentioning Vietnam veterans, by not acknowledging the Association and by highlighting consultation with the RSL, Fraser's answer made more enemies than new friends.

At the end of March it was again a Minister's action – or conduct, to be more accurate – that most fuelled Opposition angst. In late March a persistent peripheral issue – whether or not Australians had used Agent Orange in Vietnam – came to the fore. An ex-RAAF helicopter pilot and



Mr Kerin



Mr Killen

then two ex-Army Officers, all Vietnam veterans, appeared in the media claiming Australian use of the defoliant. Their claims contradicted Defence Minister Killen's earlier (20 February) statement that Australians hadn't used Agent Orange.

Killen issued a press release on 26 March

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denying any misleading of the Parliament and was subject to questions by John Kerin and Holding in the House. The next day McMinn was in the news, saying that he, too, had evidence contradicting Killen. The Defence Minister was subject to further parliamentary questioning and, while delivering a response to a Holding question about the common use of the term “Agent Orange”, was flippant about his unfamiliarity with chemical names (and thus seemed to be flippant about the chemical issue). He remarked, in the finest *“I just say what others tell me to say”* fashion that, for all he knew, named chemicals “could be four horses running at Rose Hill on Saturday”. It was a remark that did little to assure veterans that the Government was taking chemical matters seriously and it did nothing to deflect suspicions (raised by servicemen’s evidence) that the Department was keeping information from the public. The Prime Minister’s swift fobbing-off of various questions on the same day once again did nothing to persuade critics that the Government was, in reality, much concerned about possible harms. Holding used both incidents to call for “new repatriation legislation which will allow Vietnam veterans’ wives and families to receive appropriate compensation.”

In the following week, on 31 March, Minister Adermann delivered another Ministerial Statement on mostly the Institute study. Earlier on the same day, Cabinet, rather than the Agent Orange Ministers’ Committee, approved the study. Among other things, Cabinet’s decision gave Ministers advice on commenting appropriately about Vietnam chemical matters, required a report for the Health Minister on “basic facts in relation to chemical use in Vietnam” and required Killen to consult with the PM before tabling any documents. Cabinet also agreed to reject both the Association’s proposal for a judicial enquiry and the RSL’s proposal for a survey of Vietnam veterans.

On the same day, before Adermann got to his feet, Holding attempted to ask PM Fraser whether he’d been briefed in his wartime Ministerial capacities on the US defoliant program, whether Australian forces were responsible for any aspects

of that program and whether Fraser had been informed by the Americans of the October 1969 cessation of defoliation operations. The Speaker diverted the question to the Minister for Defence. Holding raised a point of order, noting that only Fraser had the knowledge to answer the questions, and was reminded that the Standing Orders didn’t require questions to be answered by the Minister they were put to. Killen indicated that he’d see whether Army and Defence records would answer Holdings questions.

Adermann’s 31 March statement began with a not unexpected defence of the repatriation system, praising its generosity and observing that it didn’t require the cause of any disability to be identified: only a link between disability and service. (In the author’s view, he thereby ignored the fact that ‘cause’ can link a disability to service – especially a delayed disability or one which might not otherwise be linked to service). He announced that, subject to certain data becoming available, the Institute study was feasible, necessary and would proceed. He explained once again how the study would be undertaken, providing a little more detail than on his previous outing, and tried to head off the most likely criticisms of this way ahead. In attempting to discredit the idea of a judicial inquiry, he said that it wouldn’t assist in either assessing veterans/families medical conditions or establishing what treatments and payments were appropriate. (He ignored, it seems to the author, a possibility still to be negated by events viz., that an inquiry could reach conclusions about the validity of the science and could thereby identify conditions to be treated and compensated for. There would be no choosing for the Government, though, between the pursuit of knowledge through “cause” [an inquiry], and the same pursuit through “effect” [an epidemiological study]; the Minister’s early commitment in some manner to the latter couldn’t be reneged on without major political cost. Time would soon enough pass judgement on the practicality of this decision ... and, some readers may ruefully say, on the Association’s alternative

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way ahead, too.)

McMinn and Evans were at Parliament House the day after Adermann's statement to hold a press conference. Their advertised intention was to comment on the Institute study and reveal additional evidence on defoliants sprayed in Vietnam. No record of the Association press conference has so far been located. However, the pair could not have been cheerful, after learning of the Government's commitment to the Institute study and after having a scheduled meeting with Adermann and Killen cancelled (without refunding of airfares). They would also have deduced from Adermann's statement that a judicial inquiry wouldn't be proceeding under a Coalition Government, although the formal rejection was likely to have been mailed to Victoria.

McMinn issued a press release at this time requiring Minister Killen to table documents on Vietnam herbicides other than ones specified by him (Killen) – ones, embarrassingly for the Minister, mentioned in a report he'd tabled. Information was requested on the sources and distribution of all such herbicides. McMinn claimed, too, that the sending of an Australian report to the US chemical warfare HQ cast doubt on official claims that Australian use of herbicides was controlled by Australians. He then damned the Institute study on grounds of likely duration and cost, and for not taking submissions or being able to "locate the source of the problem" (whatever that may have meant). Finally, he pointed out that Adermann's request for veterans to lodge repatriation claims was "absurd, since he will not accept any such claims until the pseudo-scientific study is completed." "This" the release ended, "is in violation of the Repatriation Act".

In the parliamentary aftermath of the 31 March statement, the Government was evidently keen to hose down the notion of a judicial inquiry (see Adermann's more expansive condemnation of such an inquiry – "what would it achieve?" – and his 'talking up' of the Institute study in response to questions by two Coalition MPs).

On 2 April, Labor MP John Kerin delivered a substantial speech (albeit in a grievance debate) which began with a history of his involvement in the Vietnam chemical issue (through constituents), and continued with a fast review of wartime exposure and medical literature, making the point that the literature negated the need for any epidemiological study. He suggested that war-time Ministers in the Fraser Government weren't keen to acknowledge the science and thereby upset the US. He then did a fast, thorough job of pointing out the deficiencies in (and problems with) the Institute study before concluding with a judgement that the study would merely postpone resolution of the problems for the next two years.

Holding's long sought opportunity to speak on a Matter of Public Importance came on 2 April, as well, but he was again shut down before he could proceed with (what promised to be) a scorching condemnation of the Government. He did manage, though, to say that the study arrangements didn't satisfy the one group they needed to satisfy, and was able to quote McMinn's description of those arrangements as a "hoodwinking" of Vietnam veterans.

In the remaining 15 sitting days of the half year, issues of interest to the Association still came up (and are listed in an appendix available from the author) but there were few statements or exchanges of great moment except for a long speech by Holding on 15 May in which he yet again raised veterans' desire for a judicial inquiry, referred to the proposed Institute work as a "private inquiry" and criticised the lack of information on the study provided to the Association. He also tabled two authoritative documents detailing the extraordinary range of chemicals in use by Australians in Vietnam (see the appendix for further information). An additional tabled document proved that RSL National President William Keys had known about one set of chemical details in January (after a verbal briefing in December of the year before). Yet another tabled document – a Defence Medical

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Services Committee report, warning against the exposure of pregnant women and nursing mothers to organophosphorus insecticides – was said by Holding to discredit Minister Adermann’s earlier statement that chloracne was the only proven side effect of defoliant exposure. Holding then cited the recent repatriation tribunal experience of veteran **Bob Gibson** – the admitting of a claim before the scheduled hearing, so that the tribunal could avoid hearing and assessing scientific evidence – as an illustration of why veterans were disillusioned with the Government. He concluded with an impassioned plea for a judicial inquiry so that veterans’ evidence could be put, weighed and assessed, with (witnesses etc subject to) cross examination. This was a spirited and powerful conclusion to Holding’s campaign for the Association in the parliamentary half year.

Note: Comments on Association State Branch activities were originally to have been published in this edition of the magazine, along with summaries of early legal activities, of relations with the RSL, finances, coordination and Association strategy. These matters have been held over, pending the author’s examination of documents about to come into the possession of Gary Adams and Mick Scrase.

Kel Robertson is a Canberra writer. He is currently researching the history of the VVAA. The views expressed in this article are his and not those of the Federation.

The aim of "VVAA History Drafts" is to inform readers about progress made with the Association’s history and encourage people who have relevant additional information to assist in improving the text. Readers with extra information or who would like a copy of the article with sources cited, can contact Kel at vvhistory99@gmail.com. Readers who wish to take issue with the content of the article are encouraged to view the extra material and notes on sources in the version available from Kel.

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VIETNAM VETERANS STORIES

Memories of a Nasho - Part 3 **Posting to ARU Vietnam and 9 RAR** By Ted 'OKA' Davies OAM AFSM

When my transfer to 9 RAR eventually came through, I left 2RAR at Enoggera. I was taken to the Brisbane Central railway station where the movement officer based there issued me a rail ticket to Sydney on the overnight train. I arrived into Sydney Central station where I was picked up by army transport and taken out to the REO (Reinforcement) Wing based at the Ingleburn Infantry Centre. I arrived there in the early morning just in time to get on the Army bus transporting us back to the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra. I had gone almost full circle from Brisbane to Sydney and back again to QLD. The Army moves in strange ways ???

The Jungle Training Centre at Canungra is recognised internationally as one of the toughest courses in the world. It certainly lived up to its name with intensive training sessions in jungle warfare. From moving silently through thick jungle to lessons on fixed and improvised booby traps, from water crossings to movement under live firing conditions with actual live rounds cracking very closely overhead, from setting up ambush positions to the ever practiced "fire and movement". All day every day and most nights too the training went on with instructors who were very tough with no room for error. Good enough was not acceptable. They pushed us to our very limit. The course culminated in an exercise up in the high McPherson Ranges along the border with NSW. The slopes were almost vertical with monsoonal rains and booby traps everywhere. It was the extreme test for us and took us to the edge of our endurance. Some of the men unfortunately fell by the way and had to stay back and join the following course. The Course lasted for three weeks and it was a great feeling to have qualified.

We were transported back to the REO Wing at Ingleburn where we were given 10 days pre-embarkation leave. My Mum and Dad put on a 21st birthday for me at home on our property at Menindee in outback NSW at which relatives and some friends attended. It was a fairly quiet affair as the realisation of my going to war as an infantry soldier was in most people's minds. I reported back to the REO wing and received my orders posting me to the Australia Reinforcement Unit at Nui Dat in South Vietnam. The day arrived to fly out of Sydney and the timing of the flight was very late at night to supposedly avoid the crowds of people. My family organised a dinner for me in the early evening and we travelled out to the airport for me to join the flight. There were a good number of family there to send us off. However, when my flight was called my mother broke down and was quite hysterical, clinging on to me. I was quite amazed at my mother's actions because she is the strongest woman I have ever known. We had lived a lonely life on a small outback sheep property with my dad away for extended periods. She had managed the property and besides her own children, she adopted two of her older brother's children and was also home schooling us. It was many years later when I found out the reason for her actions. It was the fact that during WW2, the army recruiting team would roll into country towns. They would blow the bugle and march up and down the main street and then invite any young men to hop in the truck and join the military. Many country boys were recruited in this way and were never seen again. Mum has strong memories of mothers running behind the trucks screaming out for their boys not to be taken away. She told me that this memory overwhelmed her as I was called to board my flight.

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Most of us had never flown in such a big aircraft as the Qantas Boeing 707 and here we were, a whole plane load of us. Unfortunately, we did not have any pretty hostesses on the flight, only male stewards. On the plus, we had free beer for the flight to Darwin where we landed for some reason and then on to Singapore. We had to don Civvie shirts and pretend that we were not military. There were Singaporean soldiers in the terminal armed with sub-machine guns. Back on board our flight and we flew on into Tan San Nuit airport in Saigon.



Tan Son Nhut circa 1968-69

What an experience for us novice soldiers. It was a cacophony of sounds and movement. There were massive B52 bombers parked in huge revetments. There were a large number of helicopters of all types from Hueys to the double rotor Chinooks and preying-mantis Sky Cranes. There were Phantom jets taking off and vehicles of every type buzzing around the airfield. I am sure that we must have looked like goggle-eyed tourists. Anyway, we walked across the airfield to a baby Herc (a 2 engined Hercules aircraft). Those of us bound for Nui Dat walked up the rear ramp and as there no seats, sat on the floor with a rope across our thighs as a safety belt. The American pilot and co-pilot sat on a higher deck than the floor but in full view. The pilot had trouble with one engine that would not start. Now, one hears of the swearing ability of our old-time bullock drivers. I can tell you that this pilot could give those old bullockies a run for their money. Eventually he got the engines started and away we went to the Dat. Arriving there, we were trucked to our new home at the ARU located on a

corner section of the perimeter wire between two Companies of our eventual unit 9RAR.

Expecting an enemy soldier or black pyjama-clad Viet Cong to appear at any moment, we moved into our temporary new barracks, a classy upmarket sandbagged army tent without a view. Fortunately, it was the dry season and the weather was warm and reasonably pleasant. We were introduced to some of the newer weapons such as the M79 grenade thrower – a short stubby shotgun that throws a 40mm grenade out to a couple of hundred metres and the M72 anti-tank rocket that is housed in an extendable tube with pop-up sights. We were given the modern M26 hand grenade with smooth sides and we were shown the M16 Armalite semi and fully automatic rifle. Everything was so new and so different. In Australia, weapons and ammunition were carefully guarded and accounted for. Suddenly, there were weapons of all sorts and ammunition in belts and in steel boxes in almost every tent.

My first night on piquet duty on the wire was also very memorable. Expecting hordes of enemy soldiers to come storming towards my position, I took my first ever look through a starlight scope. This remarkable night scope uses and enhances the available night light. I was positive that I could see movement out there at the edge of the scope's vision. Of course it was really only in my nervous imagination. We were taken outside the wire on both day and night patrols by experienced NCO's and even setup and manned a night ambush.



Christmas at 1 ARU Nui Dat 1968

Christmas Day 1968 came and as per tradition, were served Christmas lunch by our officers.

There were plenty of pranks played on us whilst we were the “Newbie” soldiers just arrived into Vietnam. The Hoa Long dance was possibly one of the best with a large sign advertising the dance every Saturday night. Hoa Long was a small village just outside the perimeter fence or the “Wire” as it was called. We were told that the village had a washing contract for the army. Keen to meet some of the local “exotic” girls, quite a few of our boys were fooled into waiting at the pickup point for an event that was never going to happen.

We were shown and actually handled captured enemy weapons including the infamous AK47 and RPG 7 rocket launchers and rockets. We visited the base museum and saw some small wheeled heavy calibre machine guns and light artillery guns.

We discovered powdered eggs that smelled of ether and powdered flaked potatoes. One pleasant bonus was the price of a can of beer at only 10c

We were introduced to MPC or Military Payments Currency. This is monopoly sized paper money of various amounts with the notes featuring a military theme. MPC was the only currency that was used on foreign military bases in attempt to stop the black market in US Dollars. Conventional US or Australian dollars can be converted to MPC or vice versa when arriving at or leaving US military bases. Because we were operating as part of the US Allied force in Vietnam, we had adopted the MPC system.

The US military had their own radio station, AFVN (American Forces Vietnam). We all listened to and enjoyed this station which not only played the latest music but also featured short ads reminding us of various safety features. Have you cleaned your weapon today? Check the safety pins on your grenades! Remember to check that your safety catch is on! Have you rested the springs in your rifle magazines? They had lots of different music from country and pop to rhythm and blues, from surfie music to blues and jazz and more. They even had messages from home which mainly featured American families but on occasions there were messages from Australia.

Sometime between Christmas Day and New Year’s Day, I was posted out to my final unit in the Army, Charlie Company 9RAR.



Captured AK47

Posting to C Company 9RAR - Vietnam

Finally, I was posted to my unit, Charlie Company 9RAR which really only involved moving next door from ARU. When I arrived into the unit, they were out on operations and there were only a few fellows back in camp. I was initially placed into a 7 Platoon tent along with Ray Kermode who was back in camp with some sort of infection.

Whilst in camp waiting for transfer out into the field, we helped the Q Store Staff Sergeant Tim Daly load up the ration resupply sandbags. Ration resupply was usually every three days. At that time, we were using the old-style Australian 24 hour ration packs with varieties of A, B, C, D and E. Each variety had slightly different main and secondary meals and the rest of the contents were standard. Fortunately, we had access to a limited supply of the American “C” ration packs. Unlike our Aussie packs, the C rations are in one meal boxes and they feature not just the main meal but also a small tin of fruit and other small tins of biscuits or cake. The fruit was very highly prized. Also included with each US meal was a very small pack of 4 cigarettes. Additionally, every so many US meals, a very large box of cartons of various brands of American cigarettes was included. We broke up these cartons and added a packet of cigarettes into the ration resupply sandbag along with one of the C rations when they were available.

The mess was run by Sgt Bob Davis with his offsider Pte Peter Cave. One of the delicacies when we were back in camp was a BBQ with Peter Cave’s famous “Cave Burgers”. Hot water for the mess was created by a special tubed device which was

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Charlie Coy, 9 RAR Boozers

lowered into a large drum of water. A burning piece of paper was dropped into the tube and petrol was dripped onto the burning paper in an almost continuous stream. It was very effective but how we did not blow ourselves up is quite remarkable.

Then, the day arrived for me to fly out and join my comrades on a ration resupply chopper. I can very clearly recall flying in over the top of the Company as we came into land. After getting off the helicopter, I walked up to an older man and said to him "Who's the monkey in charge of this lot?" He replied "that would be me". That is how I first met our Company Commander, Major Laurie Lewis. He went on to tell me that he had been informed that I had completed a radio operator's course and that he needed a radio operator. He then told me to pick up the radio that had been left by my predecessor and from that time on, I carried a radio for the next 11 months.

I then met up with the other two radio operators in the Company Headquarters section, Cpl David Brennan and Pte Ron Bruce. The Company medic was Cpl Peter Bunn who was a very competent medic and knew every man in the Company and any medical issues they had. I was pretty skinny and over time developed rub sores on my hips from the heavy webbing belt that I wore. Peter was always checking and treating those sores for me.

There was an aboriginal man in the section, Pte Mick Markham. When we first met and he found out that I was from outback Australia, he said, "because you are a country boy, you must be an

OKA" and the nickname stuck. For the rest of my time in the army, I was known as OKA. (Pronounced Ocka)

We were a close-knit group in Company HQ section. Our CO, Major Laurie Lewis was a very decent, honourable and caring man. He was only 32 years old which to us young diggers was quite old. He cared about each and every one of his soldiers like a father. He knew if any one of us had any problems at home or other thing worrying us. Being one of his personal radio operators, we were privy to matters that the rest of the Company were not aware of.

During the training work-up for Vietnam, apparently one of the Charlie Company platoon commanders had a habit of saying to his Sgt when they arrived out in the field – "Where the F--- are we"? Charlie Company became known as the



Zippo Lighters, front & reverse

Fuckawi Company which eventually morphed into the Fuckawi tribe. One of our boys drew up a logo of an Indian with a bent feather. During our time in Vietnam, Zippo lighters were ordered with the words – WTFRW C COY 9RAR Vietnam 1968-69. Back in Australia we even had ties and women's scarves made with the logo of an Indian with the bent feather and the letters WTFRW – C COY – 9 RAR

Our operations were long and sometimes one operation merged into another operation. We operated mainly in Phuc Tuoy Province. However, during Tet 1969, we were tasked with protecting the large Bien Hoa American airbase. We set up a number of ambush positions and patrolled the outer perimeter. On another occasion we were sent in APC's to an area near the coast and one of the



Training ARVN Troops

APC's hit a mine which blew a track off. On yet another, occasion we operated with some APC's in which Normie Rowe the singer was a driver.

We were choppered into known enemy territory to blow up a downed helicopter and we were involved in the search for a missing SAS soldier who had fallen during a hot extraction. We also operated to protect a team of D8 bulldozers clearing a lane through the jungle.

Our Company was very fortunate to be given the



Front gates at 'The Horseshoe'



Outside my bunker at 'Horseshoe'

job of training some ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) troops and we were based at the

Horseshoe for a number of weeks. The Horseshoe was a hill shaped like a horseshoe and was located some distance from Nui Dat. It was quite heavily fortified with bunkers dug right into the ground and trenches leading between defensive positions. We had 105mm artillery and 81mm mortars to protect the base and there were 50 calibre heavy machine guns located at intervals along the hill.

Every soldier was entitled to 7 days R&R during their tour of Vietnam. There were various choices of destination including, Manilla, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Hawaii and even Sydney for those married or engaged. I chose Hong Kong. The flight to HK was in a Pan Am 707 and they even had pretty hostesses. When we arrived there, an American Officer warned us about the dangers of pickpockets and to behave ourselves. We were then transported to our lodgings at the Park Hotel in Kowloon. The army paid for our accommodation at the hotel and we had a meal allowance as well. After checking into the hotel, we visited a number of seemingly more reputable looking bars and found suitable female companions for our five days in HK.

We had to negotiate a price with the Mama San in charge of the ladies. Once the deal was done, the girls stayed with us for our entire time in the city. They were really wonderful companions and I can truly say that I found "heaven on earth". It has to be borne in mind that we had just come from a war zone where every step could be our last with the "Angel of Death" always hovering nearby. At the end of our time in Hong Kong, we would be returning to the horror of that war with, in my case, still 6 months to go.

The girls were really wonderful – part tourist guide, part girlfriend, part lover and even in some ways part mother. We visited Tiger Balm gardens and went on a junk ride around to some fishing villages. We went up the vertical railway to Victoria Peak and we dined in a floating restaurant. We took a train ride out to the border with Communist China and visited the beach where the Japanese stormed ashore in WW2. Our ladies took us to all these places and more and bargained for us when we wanted to buy articles from local traders.

All too soon, "heaven" was over and it was back to

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operations in Vietnam. When I arrived back to Nui Dat, I was sent out to 9 Platoon, one of the 3 platoons that made up Charlie Company and my callsign became "Three Three". Lt Mick Mummery was the Platoon Commander. I spent half my year in Company HQ and the other half in 9 Platoon.

Mail from home was one of the most important highlights of our time in Vietnam. It was the link back to normalcy from the terror and horror of war. When a letter arrived from home, all of us in our section (10 men) would have to do the sniff test. Girls from home would spray some perfume on their letter and following the sniff test, there could be some quite bawdy comments. Various parts of the letters might also be shared.

Sadly, we lost a number of our tribe KIA (Killed in Action) whilst in Vietnam. Pte Ron Gafney * and Cpl Peter Chant was killed early in our tour. Pte Ray Kermode was killed during a bunker assault and my friend, Cpl David Brennan was killed whilst posted out to a Fire Support base with another unit. We also had a number of WIA (Wounded in Action), some were flown home with their wounds and others returned.



My platoon loading into US Army Chinook

also received a bravery medal because on at least two occasions, he treated wounded diggers whilst under fire.

We carried very heavy loads on operations. Not only did each man have to carry his own rations, water, personal gear, weapon, ammunition and M26 grenades, but each section had to carry extra 100 round bandoliers for the M60 machine gun, smoke grenades, an M72 anti-tank rocket, an M79 40mm grenade launcher and grenades and on occasions even a claymore mine. The ordinary infantry soldier carried around 45kg with a machine gunner and signaller carrying extra weight.

There were three seasons in Vietnam. The dry season was followed by the buildup season and finally the wet season. The dry season was very dry with no rain at all. Water was very scarce and we usually carried 6 water bottles which had to last three days. It was very carefully rationed and even so, we were always thirsty. The extra weight added to our already heavy burden. The buildup season was very difficult, causing extreme sweating that soaked a shirt in around 2 minutes with prickly heat rash a major problem for some soldiers. This season seemed to drag on and on until finally the wet season arrived. In the wet season, we usually had two monsoonal rains each day. Late each morning, the clouds would build up and around 1.00pm it would team with rain and again in the early evening, it would pour down. Fortunately, the rain was warm and even though it teemed, it was not unpleasant.

During our year in Vietnam, we were able to attend a concert by visiting Australian entertainers. These concerts were very greatly appreciated by the diggers. They were held on the Australian Task



On patrol again, into the jungle

During the operation when Ray Kermode was killed, one of our machine gunners, Pte Greg Salmon was awarded a Military Medal for bravery. Cpl Peter Bunn, our Company medic, should have

Force base at Nui Dat in a place that was called the "Music Bowl" with troops sitting up around the sides. Naturally, the Aussie girls were a great hit with the boys. On behalf of all those stationed in Vietnam, I would like to personally thank each and every entertainer that came to perform to the troops. You will never really know how much you meant in bringing a little bit of home to our warzone. And, we all loved our round-eyed girls.

My Company, Charlie Company had their own canteen bar called the "Toucan Bar" because supposedly, we were only supposed to have two cans of beer. There were captured enemy weapons on the wall above the bar. Beer was only 10 cents per can. A couple of our boys had a Crown and



Vung Tau R & C Facility

fellows passed large bottles of Swan Lager over the fence. We journeyed further on to Adelaide where we marched through the city. Those of us from NSW once again boarded the ship which cruised on around to Sydney which was our final destination. I was given leave and a few weeks later, had to report back for discharge and my National Service time was over.

To be continued next issue.



A Concert at the 'Music Bowl' Nui Dat

Anchor board which was popular with some.

One starts their year in Vietnam with 364 and a wakey That is 364 days and one wakeup. As the time passes, the days get less until finally, it is only a few days and a wakey. We packed our trunks and bags and, on the final day were trucked down to Vung Tau to board the HMAS Sydney for our voyage home. We were transported out to the ship in a landing barge and we waved goodbye to Vietnam. We were issued hammocks for our beds and ran into a typhoon on the trip home. We arrived into Fremantle and some patriotic



Truly home at last, with Sydney Harbour Bridge in the distance



2025 Economic Outlook

Economic indicators and data were mixed throughout most of 2024, with periods of strong data leading to optimistic markets quickly followed by weaker data points leading to pessimistic markets. Market expectations for economies around the world continue to change quickly, including in Australia.

2025 Australian Economic Outlook

- Inflation will continue to fall gradually in 2025, with risks tilted towards inflation reaccelerating or falling more slowly than expected.
- GDP (economic) growth will remain low but positive, avoiding recession territory (two consecutive negative quarters).
- Consumer confidence will start to lift, assisted by a few rate cuts through the year and higher real (after inflation) household income.

Growth in 2024 was much slower than the years prior. While Australia avoided recession, the economy looks likely to have experienced its slowest GDP growth in 32 years (excluding the pandemic) despite higher-than-normal population growth.

This slowdown in growth has been driven by three key factors:

- High inflation
- Low household consumption
- Low consumer sentiment

For GDP growth to improve from here, these three key issues need to reverse. Market and economic consensus are currently forecasting a

modest recovery in growth in 2025, largely citing an improvement in inflation and real household incomes, leading to a recovery in demand. While we agree that this scenario is likely, we feel that risks are tilted to the downside, meaning we may see another year of very slow growth.

There are two primary measures of inflation; headline inflation (the measure targeted by the RBA) and underlying inflation, which excludes volatile items such as food and energy prices. Headline Inflation has fallen a long way from its peak of 7.9% in December 2022 to 2.9% in the September quarter, primarily driven by disinflation in goods and a moderation in services inflation. Headline inflation also includes the impact of government cost of living support to households, the largest being the energy rebates. Lower demand has also helped reduce inflation, which is likely to continue into 2025.

Underlying inflation remains elevated at 3.5%. Food and commodity inflation has started to pick up which will eventually feed into goods inflation. For underlying inflation to slow further, services inflation will need to ease. Subdued economic growth is likely to increase the unemployment rate. This will place downward pressure on wages growth, and therefore services inflation.

While the inflation falls are positive, there remains a risk that inflation reaccelerates from here. Energy rebates are scheduled to end later this year, which will temporarily increase the headline inflation number. President Trump's plan for increasing tariffs could increase prices globally, while also increasing uncertainty and disruption. The low Australian dollar (AUD) relative to the US dollar (USD) also presents upside risks to inflation, as imported goods will cost more in AUD terms.

(Continued on page 45)

Australia's historically low productivity levels may also keep labour costs high, which places upward pressure on inflation. Any acceleration will reduce consumer confidence and real household incomes, likely reducing consumption and therefore GDP growth. A good outcome in 2025 would be for inflation to remain at current levels.

2025 will also see an Australian Federal Election, likely to be held in May. The lead-up to this election is likely to see policy announcements aimed at supporting growth. Larger government spending is positive for GDP in the short term, however over the long term this is often associated with higher inflation, potentially higher interest rates, and weak productivity (especially if the public sector crowds out the private sector).

Any increase to inflation could also be exacerbated if the RBA cuts rates too soon or too fast, presenting a headwind for rate cuts in 2025. At the same time, growth has slowed materially and may continue to slow into recession territory if rates are kept high for too long. Headline inflation is within the RBA's 2-3% target range for inflation, which provides scope for the RBA to begin cutting interest rates. The path for rate cuts is highly uncertain. The February RBA meeting decision will likely rest on the outcome of the December CPI report, due late January.

Real household consumption is growing at a low 2.4% (annualised) as of November 2024, which against strong population growth means there has been a contraction in the volume of spend per person. This change in individual consumption is what a household feels, rather than the growing headline number.

We expect that this will slowly pick up in 2025. Stage 3 tax cuts implemented in the second half of 2024 boosted household disposable income, however very little of this was spent by consumers, largely due to low consumer sentiment levels. Lower inflation levels also improve real household incomes and purchasing power.

Rate cuts often boost consumer sentiment, and given inflation is likely to fall in 2025 and the RBA is likely to cut, we expect sentiment to improve slowly throughout the year. While consumers are likely to remain more cautious than confident, we

expect the late 2024 pick-up in consumer sentiment to continue, which is positive for consumption and will support growth.

What does this mean for portfolios?

While our economic outlook is cautious, as we have noted previously, trying to time a correction is fraught with danger. It is important to position portfolios for a range of scenarios, with a long-term focus in mind.

To discuss further or to arrange a time **to review your current financial position please contact:**

**Paul Messerschmidt (Partner) MFinPlan
PSK Private Wealth**

0414 811 777

(02) 8365 8333

paulm@psk.com.au

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Advice that puts you first!

We offer a complimentary meeting on presentation of your VVPPAA NSW or VVFA Branch Membership Card.

Call PSK Parramatta today!

PAUL MESSERSCHMIDT,

Partner & Financial Advisor M 0414 811 777

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**Australian Veterans'
Children Assistance Trust**

VVPPAA NSW SCHOLARSHIP REPORT Annual Review 2024

**This report has been reviewed and is
available for VVPPAA to publish within their
Newsletter (AVCAT)**



2022 Cohort

Scholar Updates and Thank You Notes

Nathan Miller — Bachelor of Social Work

Course Completion: December 2025

Nathan achieved his first distinction this last semester and has made significant progress having completed a placement as a Family Advisor. His scholarship has been instrumental in his pathway to becoming a social worker and sends his thanks to (the) VVPPAA BSW.

Thank You Note:

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the generous scholarship you have provided. Your support has made a significant difference in my academic journey, and I am incredibly thankful for the opportunities it has given me. Despite facing some setbacks this past year, I have continued to grow both academically and personally. I have made tremendous progress in my placement as a Family Advisor, where I have had the privilege of working closely with clients experiencing domestic violence. I received high praise from my supervisor, for my role in helping clients flee dangerous situations and reunite with their children through mediation. This work has been incredibly rewarding and fulfilling, and I know I could not have achieved this without the support from the scholarship. My family is incredibly proud of me, and I recently had a discussion with my pop about the positive impact of the scholarship. Despite my previous academic struggles, it has allowed me to continue my studies and pursue my dream of helping others in meaningful ways. I am now nearly finished with university and remain determined to make the most of the opportunities ahead. I hope to give back by mentoring students in the future under this

scholarship particularly those who, like me, may have faced challenges in school but still intend to make a difference. Having received a very low ATAR, I have proven that with determination and the right support, anything is possible. Once again, thank you for your support. It has not only helped me pursue my education but has also allowed me to have a real impact in the community. I look forward to continuing to grow and, give back to you one day.

Warmest regards

Nathan.

2024 Cohort

Scholar Updates and Thank You Notes

Erin Eagles — Bachelor of Arts

Course Completion: June 2025

Erin has achieved excellent results this last semester with the support of VVPPAA. She is on track to graduate in June 2025 and has secured a role as a Client Support Officer with Compass Education.

Thank You Note:

Dear VVPPAA NSW Committee, I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for the financial aid I have received from your organisation. Your generous support has been instrumental in helping me navigate a challenging period and move closer to achieving my educational and career goals. I am pleased to share that I am currently completing my final unit of study and, if all goes as planned, I will graduate in June 2025. This milestone would not have been possible without your assistance, which provided a crucial lifeline after an injury. While I am still recovering, your financial aid helped me cover lost wages and essential bills during a period of

uncertainty, allowing me to focus on my studies and future. I am also excited to inform you that I have secured a role as a Client Support Officer with Compass Education. This opportunity is a significant step forward in my career, and I am eager to apply the skills and resilience I have developed throughout my journey.

The impact of your generosity cannot be overstated. Your support has enabled me to remain on track despite setbacks and has been a reminder of the kindness and care within our community. Thank you once again for believing in me and for providing the means to continue pursuing my goals. I hope to one day pay forward the assistance I have received and make a meaningful contribution to others in need.

Kind regards

Erin Eagles



2024 Cohort

Scholar Updates and Thank You Notes

Amara May Wright — Bachelor of Criminal Justice

Course Completion: December 2026

Amara has adjusted to university and is going from strength to strength, achieving excellent results this last semester. She has set some clear goals to ensure a balanced lifestyle and continued success in her studies. Amara is grateful for the support of her scholarship.

Thank You Note:

Dear VVPPAA NSW, I am writing to thank you for choosing me to be the recipient of the Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Scholarship. The scholarship has assisted me immensely throughout my first year of university and has helped me focus on my education, as shown in my results.

My results this semester were fantastic. I received two high distinctions, a distinction and a satisfactory. The subject I received the satisfactory for was not graded like my other subjects and was graded only as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Next semester, I plan to focus on improving my time management even further.

I've already learned a lot about balancing coursework and personal life this semester, but I'm determined to do even better. My goal is to achieve results that surpass what I've accomplished so far, and I'm confident that with better time management and continued hard work, I'll be able to meet and exceed those expectations. Your support is truly inspiring. It pushes me to do my absolute best so I can succeed and make the most of this opportunity. I'm committed to giving it my all and making sure your investment in me pays off, both academically and personally.

Once again, thank you so much for your support. I'm incredibly honored to have been chosen, and I can't wait to keep moving forward in my education with your help.

Best regards,

Amara May Wright

Invitation to TPIs



If you are a TPI, you are invited to join the TPI Veterans' Association of NSW. You will then ***be eligible to enjoy the following benefits:***

Access to our well-being officer who can provide general information on personal and pension issues

Receive copies of our quarterly magazine, 'Salute' by post or email and an annual booklet on concessions available to TPIs and families.

Receive a regular electronic e-newsletter as well as other TPI news updates.

Be eligible to attend monthly meetings in Sydney and enjoy camaraderie with fellow TPIs afterwards.

Be able to attend scheduled regional meetings and enjoy camaraderie with fellow TPIs afterwards.

Be part of a dynamic organisation that has an up-to-date business plan.

Have your interests and welfare represented in Canberra.

Have the TPI Veterans' Association representing you at major ceremonial events.

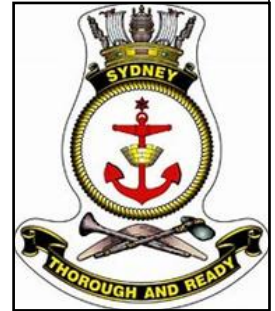
.....
To join, please call the office on (02) 9235-1466; or email our membership officer, Sara to request an application form (email office@tpinsw.org.au).

Or call into the office on Mondays to Thursdays between 9am and 4pm. (Level 4, 55 York Street, Sydney).
.....

Vietnam Veterans' Stories

From letters diaries and memories

HMAS SYDNEY:



The bloody “American War” 1966-67

Part 11 of the story of HMAS Sydney, told by one of the crew, John Ingram., beginning with those embarking from South Vietnam, being unaware of contamination in the potable drinking water aboard.



Soldiers embarking in South Vietnam, whether from lighter or “chopper”, would stomp heavily on the deck with their boots as if to say “no land mines here; this is safe to walk on without being blown up!” Then would follow long, hot showers to wash off the notorious Nui Dat red dust or mud of Bien Hoa Province. Our Engineering personnel would be dismayed at the ensuing consumption of fresh water as the levels in the potable water tanks fell while the evaporators worked overtime replenishing storage tanks from the heavily polluted waters of the Saigon River basin.



We didn't know it at the time but that distilled water contained extremely dangerous toxins, mainly dieldrin in a man-made product commonly known as “Agent Orange”. We mistakenly believed it was being sprayed by low flying US military aircraft (fixed and rotary wing) to kill mosquitos in the vast swampy, delta area

(Continued on page 50)

forming the Saigon River basin. These aircraft could be seen usually late in the afternoon dispersing their vapour trail. The toxic “cocktail” was actually a defoliant designed to kill vegetation and thereby expose the enemy, his supply trails and hide-outs. The toxins quickly dispersed into waterways and river basin and entered the human food chain via crops, marine life etc. Now 50 years later “Agent Orange” is still causing genetic deformities in the animal kingdom including humans.

In the SYDNEY and her escorts, we were affected by the water we showered in, drank, prepared and cooked our meals and in which our clothes were washed. I first became aware of a contaminant in the water when some of the Cooks complained about the smell. I discussed with our Senior Engineer, whom I jokingly accused of adding kerosene to the water to reduce consumption. He promised to investigate and later reported it may have been traces of a boiler cleaning compound (Gamlen D) then in common use to de-scale the boiler tubes (ironically since banned from use in the RAN as a known toxin).

History records “Agent Orange” did affect the health of those exposed. Unlike US ships which were replenished with potable water sourced in Guam, RAN ships manufactured distilled water from the polluted coastal waters of South Vietnam. While it was “distilled” it was not “demineralised” per se and the “Agent Orange” cocktail entered the ships’ potable water tanks and hence our food chain and bodies. Australian military personnel, especially those who served years in the SYDNEY (including me) recorded some of the highest personal levels ever documented of this extremely dangerous cocktail.



Target practise:
drone recovery



Towed target
for a surface
shoot



Pre-fighting
drone on
launch dolly

Above photos
are of different

types of targets deployed in the SYDNEY to keep the Gunnery department on their toes while providing entertainment for the troops. The orange drone was remotely controlled and assisted the 40 mm Bofors crews hone their skills. Occasionally, a direct hit “inadvertently” occurred causing much shouting and cheering by onlookers, but later incurring the wrath of the “bean counters” back at the Ordnance Depot. The yellow Battle Practice Target was towed astern on a very long wire and the escorts would engage with their main armament mostly, the 4.5” guns in “throw off” shoots.

Soldiers liked souvenirs with a particular propensity for SYDNEY’s cutlery and crockery embellished with the RAN crest and superior in quality to that issued to soldiers. Naval officer’s cutlery was silver plated and of special appeal. Significant quantities of our cutlery, bone china coffee cups and saucers would “walk ashore” both

(Continued on page 51)

in Australian ports and South Vietnam. Checking soldiers' baggage before disembarkation would've been both unwise and impossible. We kept records of the "losses" and were eventually able to convince Army Office to reimburse Navy the costs of replacements.

Portable "transistor" radios became a "must have" by the mid-1960s but would not function inside the ship's hull. At night men would huddle in dark gun sponsons and suchlike listening to the crackle of **Radio Australia** for news of home. Or in Asian waters any station which could be detected including the **Voice of America**, to be later immortalised by Robin Williams in the film "**Good Morning, Vietnam**".

Of note to us in the SYDNEY was another English-speaking radio station which beamed its propaganda from the North (Vietnam) courtesy of "Hanoi Hannah". Hannah would know whenever we were within range, describing us in hysterical terms "as lackeys of US imperialism, that we'd be destroyed by those we wished to harm" and suchlike threats. Of course, it was easy to dismiss her intimidating messages but disconcerting to know Hanoi knew of our presence. There were instances where irresponsible US forces exposed us to attack by breaking radio silence, or in one instance, illuminating us from a searchlight in a maritime surveillance aircraft as we proceeded at speed towards Vung Tau harbour. When the captain threatened the offending aircraft with gunfire, the light was extinguished.

The Saigon River delta is a vast expanse of water in which lies a myriad of low-level mud islands, mostly vegetated. To the north are treed hills interspersed with houses visible from the designated anchorages exposed to the elements and enemy forces. Tidal action is very visible while the water a debris littered murky brown. Safe diving activity is only possible at slack water and then very limited in duration. In 1966 there were as many as

50-60 merchant ships at anchor or secured to buoys in neat rows waiting to make the hazardous passage up the long channel to the Saigon wharves. Most of these are old, some former "Liberty" ships. Their owners are well aware of the dangers: on the one hand trying to profit from the war while on the other tasking second-rate ships in America's "Big Push" to rapidly escalate their military presence in South Vietnam. But the "logistics train" had become constipated short of the destination.

To serve as a visible warning of their presence the VC (Viet Cong) had left evidence of their recent activity in the form of masts and superstructure of two merchantmen sunk by explosives at nearby anchorages. Their technique was simple and deadly: a very simple device comprising two captured US 225 kg iron bombs each secured inside a 44-gallon drum with a detonator attached. The two drums connected by a length of rope were then released to drift with the tide. On fouling an anchor cable, the drums would hit a ship's side with massive, destructive force.

We were also very conscious VC "swimmers" using basic snorkelling equipment and working as fishermen by day and saboteurs by night were operating in waters between Vung Tau and Saigon. To counter this activity an RAN Clearance Diving Team was assigned to the area to back up US Navy SEAL teams.



SYDNEY's
signalmen closed up
24/7

(Continued on page 52)



USMC

hovercraft on patrol while an RAN destroyer stands by



SYDNEY, whenever at a designated anchorage, was a prized target and our escort/s, supplemented by RAN divers, would “sweep” the immediate area of the intended berth prior to check for explosive devices positioned either on the harbour bed or, limpet-like, to our hull. At slack water ships’ diving personnel would undertake a complete survey of hulls below the waterline. At all other times the propellers would be turned at irregular intervals to ward off potential saboteurs and scare charges dropped over the side of ships as a deterrent.

The 2 hangar lift wells were open when at anchor to provide essential ventilation. This posed a “calculated risk to ship safety” as a well lobbed mortar by the enemy in the nearby hills would have major consequences.

This must have been an awful task for many reasons including the fact by 1967 SYDNEY was way overdue for refit and the hull, shafts, propellers etc were heavily coated in a swathe of marine growth 50-100 mm in depth. This was having a significant impact on the ship’s performance, including fuel consumption. The Naval Board was being held to ransom by certain militant unions, in particular the Painters and Dockers, opposed to Australia’s involvement in the war. Their mission was simple: to stop SYDNEY and her escorts from participation in the conflict. Projected as an act of altruism it was a convenient lie. This union and its anarchist, communist sympathising leaders effectively seized the opportunity to create ongoing industrial strike activity to force the weak federal coalition governments of the day into ever increasing concessions. While I had deep, personal issues with the war, its objectives and prosecution by the US government I had even less sympathy for the belligerent and bloody-minded attitudes of certain union leaders and their members who benefited from this sad situation at our expense.

The Navy was so short of escort ships as a result of dockyard industrial action the Fleet



Commander was forced to make unpalatable decisions to ensure some form of protection for the SYDNEY. In one deployment the Daring class destroyer DUCHESS (D154), then on loan from the RN as a replacement for the VOYAGER, had a defective seal on one of her two thrust blocks. To repair would necessitate

docking. Instead, she accompanied us to Vietnam and back functioning on one shaft only. The other shaft was in theory “available”, but only when manoeuvring or in an emergency situation, due to the loss of lubricating oil and resulting overheating issues **HMAS DUCHESS made her debut round trip to Vung Tau essentially trailing one shaft.**



In

another instance the training destroyer ANZAC (D59) was deployed as SYDNEY's sole escort despite the fact her weapons' systems largely deactivated or of limited value. Her remaining (4.5" twin mount) "A" turret was operable, manually only, as the gun direction system was disabled. Ordering a veteran training ship to a war zone with scores of young men onboard, knowing of her inability to fight to protect herself and others, was to me inherently daft. The Argentine Navy did this in 1982 during the Falklands Conflict with their training ship, the General BELGRANO, incurring the most tragic consequences including the loss of several hundred young lives.

The former Battle class destroyer ANZAC, converted to a training ship, yet deployed as an escort for the SYDNEY



HMAS TORRENS on fast approach to refuel

By 1972 the situation had not improved. I was then serving in the newly commissioned destroyer escort HMAS TORRENS and we were committed as Australia's sole naval contribution to the 5-nation peace-keeping treaty known as ANZUK.

TORRENS was briefly removed from the ANZUK alliance obligation in February and March of that year and ordered to escort SYDNEY while in Vietnamese "operational" waters. On completion TORRENS resumed her ANZUK Treaty role.

**NEXT ISSUE JOHNS STORY WILL
CONTINUE WITH THE
CATCHCRY "ALL THE WAY WITH
LBJ" BEGINNING TO WANE AS
THE ANTI-NUCLEAR WAR
MOVEMENT GAINED STRENGTH.
AND, THE FUNNY SIDE OF BILLS
BEING PAID.**

VIETNAM VETERANS STORIES

Get Up, Get over, or Get Out! Boot Camp and Corps Training 60's Style

By Bob Cavill with kind permission from 5 RAR Association Website

1968

I had returned from the experience a 'flat liner' neither train crash, car accident, bushfire natural or man made event could change my heartbeat an iota, or indeed, elicit in my soul a sympathetic response. I wasn't completely switched off though, as an unexpected car backfire once put me flat to ground on a pedestrian crossing in Bankstown shopping centre, severely embarrassing myself, and my wife.

I felt strangely detached for a long time, small things would flash anger me, such as my wife asking me what coloured shoes she should wear, or our small daughter wanting me to kiss her ... it was all so irrelevant somehow. I would find my little daughter silently weeping over something I had said and I would feel the guilt; I seemed to be riding waves alternating in anger and remorse. I did not want to go back to 'that place', but I was desperately unhappy and could not fathom out why.

Sometime later a car accident happened in front of me opposite Liverpool Railway Station. A woman had turned right in front of a bus and the car had been catapulted down the road and come to rest upside down. I walked calmly to the overturned car, petrol was pouring out of the tank onto the road. I tried to pull the driver out but unusually for the time the car was fitted with seat belts and I was not familiar with them. After a time, I realised the weight of the now unconscious elderly woman driver prevented the release of the seat belt lock. I called out to some onlookers at the taxi stand in front of the station to help me undo the seatbelt! They yelled back "get out of there it will blow up!" and refused to approach. I got angry; called them all a bunch of f***ing cowards. I eventually got the seatbelt undone, placed the woman on the road

nearby and walked back to my own car, and left. The whole incident reinforced the contempt I already felt for these 'others'. I had felt no fear only anger, it was anger so intense on the way home I could hardly speak ... my wife said nothing.

I was suffering from separation anxiety. I didn't know it at the time, and I just didn't care, nothing else mattered. I feared the War but I wanted desperately to be back with them — 'The Brothers', the men of 'The Regiment', the only people in the world who meant anything to me — the ones who 'would have been there' beside me — at that car.

I got drunk often. I woke one night yelling that I couldn't see! ... My wife put the light on — and moved to another room.

I talked about returning to the Army, perhaps I could corps enlist, and be back with them in a fortnight.

My wife told me she was 'sick of it!' ... It was going to have to be her or the Army. I swallowed my tears, it had been hard to march in ... but was harder to march away.

It had all started in 1964.

It was around twelve months before the introduction of national service by lottery in 1964-5. After voluntary enlistment for 3 years near my 18th birthday, I reported to Eastern Command. An Australian Army Depot at that time beautifully situated on the south head of Sydney Harbour near Watson's Bay. Having very long hair at the age of 18, on arrival I was subjected to the usual standard Army joke of being asked in a serious manner 'how would I like it!?' only to have my hair immediately removed completely. Observing I was completely bald in a mirror and having at this time in my life

developed many inhibitions, one of them being my appearance, this close cropping of my hair had a depressing effect. It must be remembered that this was the 'sixties' and long hair to both sexes at this time was a defining characteristic of the teenage scene. My fellow recruits and I had been lined up and shorn like sheep; being thus crushed by my appearance I headed for a small beach below the base on the shores of Sydney Harbour — Lady Bay Beach.

Looking westwards, up the harbour, one could see the bridge silhouetted by the setting sun, the light defining the bridge's steel frame, and reflecting off the sides of the tall buildings. It was one of those turning points in your life when you sense that something is about to change and nothing will be the same again. I was somewhat worried, and a little unhappy. I knew that, what I was about to do was not going to be easy, my father had said as much to me on signing the enlistment documents — his signature was necessary due to my age of 18.

In the gloomy orange light of late afternoon I could see there was another figure standing on the beach. After a time he approached me and I noticed he was in uniform. He asked me for a smoke and I gave him one. We stood in silence facing each other smoking. After a while I enquired of him his reason for being there, he explained he was being discharged after completing six years of service. I asked him of course "What was it like in the Army?" He looked at me, probably realising for the first time that I was a recruit, something he had perhaps only suspected up to that point, I being in civilian clothes. He looked at me in silence, then after a long pause said "just coming in are you?" I said "yes," he shook his head.

I now know there was no answer to the question, one that could be delivered in less than three hours at any rate. He said, "Have you been given a number yet?" Looking down, I said "I think it's on a bit of paper that's been given to me." He said make sure you learn it, "know it mate before you get to Kapooka, know it when you get there." He turned away and walked back up the hill toward the barracks. I looked down in the fading light at the paper, service number 2 4 1, double 2, double 3 - 2412233. This was to be the very first tiny piece of

a mega download of information, that was about to be driven into my brain over the next three years by the Army.

Within a day or two we were warned to prepare for transfer by train to the Army's training centre at Kapooka near Wagga Wagga in central New South Wales. I was still very self-conscious regarding my appearance, in particular the loss of my hair, so I asked my girlfriend Christine Long - later to become my wife, not to come and see me off at Central station. This request made by phone she promptly ignored!

It was a worrying and an emotional parting for her, given she was pregnant at this time, as well as an intensely embarrassing one for myself due to my appearance. This — my self-image, along with my somewhat fragile ego was about to be given an incredible work over.

On arrival at Wagga Wagga railway station we were ordered on to buses where I was to have my first experience of an Army Regimental Drill Instructor, an R D I. Over six feet tall he was built like a pit-bull terrier, but we nicknamed him 'The Cattle dog' on account of his friendliness. His uniform starched as hard as cardboard, he looked every bit the professional soldier and the Korean War Veteran he was. His boots and belt shone like black lacquer.

Placing himself at the front of the bus he stood at what I would soon learn was the "at ease" position with a clip board in his right hand. There was a decidedly menacing volume about him we would come to recognise as being the parade ground professional soldier. "Quiet! Now answer your numbers when I call them; answer your number with your name and end with Corporal." This went along with some confusion for some time as many had not been given the good advice I had received back at Eastern Command re: learning your regimental number. Eventually one of my fellow recruits decided to inject a little levity into the proceedings by answering his name, but ending with 'Mate'.

The RDI launched himself at the offender, he hurtled down the aisle of the bus to where the miscreant was seated and leaning over him yelled in

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an incredible volume "Corporal!... I'm no f*****g mate of yours"! All in the bus went silent, the bloke next to me whispered, "This is like the 'Boob'", (Jail). The same bloke went over the hill a few days later - never to be seen again.

In the mid AM, the bus proceeded on to the camp. As it passed through the Wagga City streets, I remember the RDI in that incredibly loud voice saying the town area would be 'out of bounds'. As we proceeded up through the Kapooka base camp gates he nominated the different buildings mess sites, stores, sgt's mess etc with an immediate and very loud... 'out of bounds!' It would seem that I was now to be confined to a very small place for the next three months. On debussing at our nominated accommodation site, those long round silver tunnel shaped Army buildings soon to be known as 'Silver City', we were told to get into some semblance of three ranks. Being of course unable to achieve this quick enough for the RDIs' we were promptly told we looked like a pack of f*****g yank wankers suffering with crud. Crud, we later found out, was a particular condition common in the Army among recruits and other low types, caused by a slow seepage of shit to the brain.

The next day we were walked, because we could not march, like the shower of shits we were, to the Q Store. Here we were issued some kit; very basic and disgustingly non-descript pale washed out khaki clothing; a hat that looked like a cloth rag, this was nothing like the slouch hat I had expected? along with some err 'under-things'. These looked on brief perusal, rather like something my grandfather would have warn 'decidedly' un-cool, and a pair of boots AB with odd looking things called 'gaiters'.

Replete with all sorts of strange toiletries and objects 'For the Use Of', we twitted nervously along to what we would later recognise as a parade ground where we were lined up. This time to find a sergeant with a distinctly unfriendly look about him waiting for us. Standing at attention his swagger stick held perfectly level under his arm, he addressed us in this vane. He told us that his name was Sergeant Clark (I Think?) that 'we' in future could call him 'Sargeant or God' he would answer to either but nothing else. We, at this point thinking this must be some kind of joke, began to laugh in order to join in what we perceived as a sudden and

generally more relaxed atmosphere ...but this was a mistake, it solicited an immediate reaction in him, he moved rapidly towards us and screamed out 'Silence!'.

Having immediately achieved the desired effect, he stepped back and came again to attention. Starting low and slow, he built to a crescendo eventually, spitting out "you may think you have known some bastards in your life - and you may have, but you see I'm not a bastard. I am an absolute *****!"

"And I guarantee in a very short time you will think so!" Getting into his stride proper now he continued, "So You f**kers want to be soldiers aye?problem is, you pack of civilian f**kwits all suffer from crud!" "Do you know what crud is? It's a slow seepage of shit to the brain!" "Soldiers aye?" "Well... we will make soldiers of some of you, but it's going to f*****g near kill you'; I will see to that! It's my job." "You are the lowest form of life in the Army - 'f*****g recruits that doesn't mean soldier... you lot will be soldiers when people like me call you soldiers and not before!" ... "And believe me you have a very long way to go!!"

We stood in silence; it would seem this was going to be a very unfriendly place indeed! And as it turned out, he was not exaggerating, because mentally and physically this was the beginning of probably the hardest time of my entire life. A second three months of 'Infantry Corps Training', followed by a further three months of jungle training near 10 months of intensive training in all, was and still is, with one exception - the hardest physical and mental challenge I have ever been subjected to in my entire life. However, I was to learn that without this mental and physical torture, to survive in Vietnam and remain psychologically intact would probably have been impossible.

And so it began, a Corporal called out Quite...Stand still! You will remove that crap you have on and change into the clobber you have been issued!" One fellow recruit was wearing a black leather jacket, there was something about his attire that induced what I felt was a particularly sinister sort of leering grin from 'The Cattle Dog' perhaps a sign of things to come. Staring intently, his eyes locked onto this offender he said 'Place that shit

into what ever baggage you have'. I personally, had an airline bag. He went on 'You have been issued a tag, put your name and number on it and tie it to the bag, this will then be collected and returned to you on completion of your first three months training ... You have five minutes'.

We all stared at each other. 'Christ! is this bloke for real? it's more than five minutes back to the huts ...does he expect us to get undressed on the parade ground?' Two seconds passed - behind me some croweater in a low voice said "Ya can't piss-off without ya civvies aye!" There was some discussion among the members; I distinctly remember someone saying "Go on ... ask him Bob"

I decided to speak up; there must be some misunderstanding! Things could no doubt be clarified with further communication. 'THIS' was a mistake. "Ah sir, do you mean our shoes and underclothes too ... it's just that..." He came so close to my face I'm sure he smoked Rothmans! He spat out ..."Everything!" "You now have four minutes and 50 seconds!Well?" "What the hell are you waiting for, your mummies!?" "Get the f**k on with it!"

We took off! Some ran in the complete wrong direction dropping 'utilities various for the use of' all over the parade ground. It looked like someone had thrown a kero tin in a chook yard. We had been given our first lesson and one of the most important things learned in the Army, when you are told to do it in the Army, Don't ask - DO IT NOW!

Pushed to the limit, my memory of the three months is a blur of physical hardship interspaced with moments of great exhilaration. We had to master the basics of soldiering and be fit enough after three months to run a mile in under six minutes. This was required in order to get out of Kapooka; there were no exceptions, fail this! and you stayed. There was a great deal of harassment; periods of rapid kit changes where one was required to go from full battle order to sandshoes and running shorts in something like two minutes, and the physical exhausting of a 20 mile march in battle order within a limited time, along with basic weapons training. But this was all just simple stuff, how i.e. to do up your boots, put a 'bash' into your slouch hat, learn to drill, it was about changing

perception's; how you should move and behave, as a small part of this bigger machine - The Army.

There were some positives, this period at Kapooka was the first time in my life I had ever been allowed to eat as much as I wished. Having been the eldest of six children born to a lower working class family of eight, with a gambling alcoholic father, food was always rationed and often in short supply. Once a teenager I was scolded for stealing my infant brother's 'farex' baby food, the only thing in the house at the time I could find to eat! I can remember enjoying immensely this particular aspect of my new army life. As mentioned previously, I was somewhat oversensitive at this time in my life and after a couple of 'physical altercations' with my fellow recruits I was sent to what I can only assume was an army doctor/psychiatrist.

I can remember him telling me that 'I appeared to have a chip on my shoulder' that 'I was too quick to get up!' the world didn't owe me a living' and 'if I wanted to get anywhere in the army, I would have to learn to be a 'team man'" etc, etc. This must have had the desired effect for on completing the three months training at Kapooka the army reported me as being 'a good team man'. This comment later led directly to a further six or eight weeks of specialist Infantry training via an Assault Pioneer Course and later in Vietnam, a transfer to the 5th Battalion Assault Pioneer Platoon.

After marching out of Kapooka, my family being absent as was normal from this the greatest up to time, achievement in my life, I was given one weeks leave where after I was to report for infantry training at Bardia Barracks in Western Sydney. Being very 'chuffed' with myself, and thinking my father (a WW2 Armoured Corps) might have exaggerated the difficulties I would face in Army training. I was completely ignorant of the absolute torture at Bardia Barracks that was about to befall me compared to Kapooka,

Heading for my parents home in Sydney I packed very carefully a set of freshly starched greens in my big maroon kit bag along with all my kit, boots etc, and organised a lift from Wagga to

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Sydney with one of my fellow lowly recruits. I was determined to surprise my parents by appearing next morning turned out in full uniform. This I did, my father of course, true to his nature embarrassed me by telling me I did not have to wear my uniform on leave. I remember my mother however, positively beaming with satisfaction. Understandable, given many of her Public Housing neighbours' sons, were already working for her Majesty in much more confined spaces.

Infantry Centre, a willful place

Around a week later mid January 1965, I reported to the Infantry Centre Bardia Barracks in western Sydney to begin three months infantry corps training. After the first muster parade it was immediately obvious that any expectations of things becoming easier were premature, and in fact we were rapidly left in no doubt that the opposite would be the case.

There were to be no exceptions to the word 'will'. Every move either to 'shit or shower' will be at the double and all movement of two or more 'will' be in step. Ranks will be strictly nominated, any mistakes such as answering with 'sir' when sergeant applied, or visa-versa, will be punished with loss of leave entitlement. There will be a 'stand by your bed' kit inspection promptly at 0730 hours every morning. Any misdemeanor during kit inspection and/or against Army RO's (Routine Orders) will be punished with loss of pay or work duty (lesser offence) any loss of, or damage to equipment will be charged against your pay book.

Bed checks will be at 1159 hours promptly every night; any recruit missing will be considered AWOL (absent without leave) and punished accordingly. Insubordination in any form will not be tolerated and no refusal tolerated. In fact, refusing to answer would be punished under Army Routine Orders as 'Conduct Unbecoming', i.e. Dumb Insolence. One particularly hard bastard told us 'if you shake a shit-tin the turds will come to the top, they will be removed!'... and what we have left at the end will become 'the Infantry', the soldiers, that all other soldiers follow, the motto was... 'I am the Infantry follow me'.

A severe training regimen now followed. Starting with a five mile run every morning at 0600 hours in sandshoes 'n' shorts, followed by a shower then mess. Then barracks 'stand by your bed' Kit inspection 0730 hours then 0800 turnout uniform/rifle inspection then parade. This would be followed by the days activities, i.e. weapons training, various tortures, via a 'battle course'. This came complete with mud, monkey ropes, high timber wall and a particularly difficult, as in crawling beneath a barbed wire section. The battle course to be completed, 3-4 times a week sometimes more, depending on the mood of the RDIs' on the day - slackers would be punished.

MT (Motor Transport) training that included MT dismount drill. This involved going backwards out of a moving truck via a somersault forward roll complete with rifle and webbing, less 37 pack, from the back of a moving truck on dirt roads or tracks. And MT Ambush Drills in full battle order i.e. leaping over the sides of trucks while yelling 'ambush left or right' and crashing to the ground, hoping like hell the soldier following, did not hit you in the back of the head with his rifle barrel, or that you might hit someone else's.

Helicopter training - this involved running hard, bent over in full battle order (about 35kgs), and scrambling onto a chopper while looking wild eyed at those already on board pulling you in. As the chopper lifts off the ground, you struggle to get into your seat against the G forces as it does a short circuit go-around, and then back down, where you would be ordered to 'get out' trying not to break your neck as you jumped out and doubled away to arrive precisely where you had started, completely winded.

We were put into a closed room and made to jog round a central table with a gas mask on. Tear gas would then be released and of course the gas mask leaked. As the sensation of asphyxiation reached a point where you were clawing at the locked door, it was opened, and out you went, coughing and gagging; tears pouring out of your eyes from the effects of the tear gas. We were put into a bunker and shelled by the 'Nine Mile Snipers' with 105 howitzer shells. This was a singular experience, but nothing compared to a drop-short later in Vietnam! You had to 'stand

upright' after pulling the pin and throwing a hand grenade (M26) then wait to a count of 4 with a 6 second fuse, 'no flinching allowed' while you waited for the word 'down' from the RDI. We were placed in a trench at the MTR (Mechanical Target Range at Holsworthy) while a Platoon fired machine guns (M60) into the targets above us, I was somewhat unnerved when hit by a spent rebounding round!

Do it Again! and Again!

Young fit men were driven to the point of exhaustion on the 'Battle Course' and once we were driven beyond that point. On a hot day, the discomfort of one or two rounds on this course can hardly be imagined by people of today. A combination of mud, dust and heat overlain by exhaustion, along with the knowledge of any damage to clothing or loss of equipment was to be made good by the recruit, was an intense trial of endurance and self control! One recruit, a 'chubby bloke', was driven nearly insane, as all the platoon were driven round and round, again and again though the course because he could not complete the course in time.

They had found a 'weak link.' He eventually collapsed while climbing the high monkey ropes, he broke down, throwing his rifle into the dust, a serious offence! He was then 'hazed' by the RDI's, and told to get up! Get over! or get the f**k out! He wept while repeating, "I can't, I can't do it!" He was arrested on the spot and taken away by the duty officer under guard.... Never to be seen again!

Two hours later, it was as though he had never existed so completely focused were we, as individuals, in just surviving this cauldron of physical and mental torture.

It went on, day after day relentless, staggering under 60-70 lbs (35kgs) of weight we were required to do a nine mile march in a time that required at least half that distance would be at the double, spoken of with dread, it was known as the 'Nine Miler'. The big hill near the end of the course going west from Ingleburn Railway Station was a killer. Another recruit having failed this twice was later transferred out, and became a cook in the Service Corps.

One morning during barracks inspection a cream coloured glove was produced and run over the top of the steel lockers, it was then closely inspected for dust, probably short of slaves for the weekend roster aye.

'Cavill what's the civvies for?' Your name's on the duty board - Officers Mess.... 'Aye? *%#*\$ me!'

Once a matchstick was found in the grooves between the floor boards nearest my bed area, without comment or opportunity for redress I was placed on report, thence given mess duty, I bashed (cleaned) large Dixies (cooking trays) over hot water surrounded in a cloud of steam in the cookhouse, every night for a week, learning on that day, it did not matter to the army, how the matchstick happened to be there, 'only the fact of its existence was relevant!' Never had I felt so much at the mercy of chance, the ink was dry, the contract filed... and the army owned my arse.

Night navigation exercises were carried out in the O'Hare's Creek area South-West of Sydney. Topographically this was a wilderness tableland cut by deep sandstone gorges. I can remember staggering around in pouring rain in the pitch dark any exposed skin being affected by the native prickly clawing vegetation. Moving though the darkness via the dim green incandescent face of a compass, we would discover numerous edges and cliffs where one could literally fall to one's death. During these exercises we would often get into blind gorges and have to retrace back, or use toggle ropes to get out, a particularly unnerving experience even in moonlight and no place for sufferers of vertigo.

All the while knowing if we did not get to the nominated grid reference (location of trucks) in time, we would be 'force-marched' all the way back to the Ingleburn Barracks, some 15 miles away. This last was typical of the army's methods at the time, and a seriously effective motivation for success in refining one's navigation/map reading skills.

Another man collapsed completely exhausted after the rain-event navigation night exercise. Short of the designated grid reference pick-up point; he collapsed and refused to get up, then refused to

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answer or speak at all to the RDI's. Arrested, he was taken back by vehicle, charged with 'Dumb Insolence' placed in a cell in the guardroom near the gates at Bardia Barracks. I saw him there myself while on guard duty the next day. He said they had tried to talk him out of it, but he just wanted out ... I never saw him again.

Guard duty was another test of endurance, your kit (clothes boots hat etc) had to be perfectly pressed, polished, positioned, hat, chinstrap buckle in line with the mouth, boots spit polished, the instep of the boot polished, or the back of the hat badge could be suddenly inspected, dirty fingernails were a no-no, clean, wash, press, polish, etc, etc. It could take up to six hours to achieve the necessary standard for one guard duty and sometimes 30-40 minutes just to get dressed for it. Still wearing boots AB, and gaiters' in those days you would lay down on your back to get the board-hard starched greens on, you would get your mates to put your gaiters on so as not to destroy those creases. Starched greens once on, you could not sit down until after the ceremonial mount/changing of the guard.

Drill movements and timing during Ceremonial Guard Mounts had to be perfect. Best dressed got to go!....straight to the pub. For the twelve left, hands had to strike the rifle stocks with a single smack on 'Present Arms' or it would have to be done again and again. Guard duty at the gate involved standing still in a guard box, rigidly 'at ease' for two hour periods at a time and in summer when air temperatures went up to 36 celsius, God forbid you swatted a fly! You were allowed to move a few paces forward and back to keep the blood going, but this could not be done without about seven drill movements.

These would have to be perfect, it was better not to try this too often, because the Infantry Centre RSM (Regimental Sergeant Major) could see the guard on duty at the gate from his office, and he took a great interest in proceedings. He would note for instance when any officer staff cars entered or left the duty guard came to attention and the 'Present Arms' or a 'Butt Salute' was correctly given.

Anything not to his liking would mean a loss of leave or roster duty for the miscreant...123-1 123 -1 you had better be counting because he was!

After about eight weeks into this relentless intensive training a change started to take place deep within the psyche of the survivors, we were actually starting to feel pretty bloody good about ourselves. We were actually starting to laugh a little, the whole thing did not feel to be as hard anymore and we almost knew what we were doing now. Also there was a subtle change taking place in the attitude of the RDI's they were starting to inject more positive re-enforcement into the mix and we were now given the occasional accolade or two.

This would do wonders for one's confidence and was the more valued for being only ever hard won and rarely given. I remember on one occasion, many of us having reached the level of Marksman on the rifle range, an RDI walking over saying 'well done Private Cavill'. I had never up to this point been addressed as anything but 'recruit' it was almost a four letter word I was so overcome, I almost burst into tears, the fact that I had actually pleased this bloke, seemed like a miracle.

My girlfriend Christine had produced a child, our daughter Robyn, born on the 5 march 65. Given the standards of the time it was prudent we married as soon as possible. I fronted the platoon Sergeant, told him I needed to get married. He was not convinced I being rostered on that weekend, he saw this as some dastardly snivelling recruit-ish scheme to avoid guard duty. I changed the wedding day to the Friday before and went back to camp soon after the ceremony to mount guard duty that afternoon.

Some days later after filling out the necessary paperwork to allow my wife to receive her allotment from my army pay, he apologised in front of the whole platoon - a rare honour indeed, and signed a leave chit giving me 3-4 days off. Though these were hard men, most of the RDI's had a sense of honour, something I have found to be extremely rare since leaving the Army.

On marching out of Bardia Barracks the 'survivors' had formed a bond the main adhesive being this singular life changing experience, a searing psychological and physical high-jump they called infantry training.

A short while after this training period at Ingleburn I was transferred to the newly forming 5th Battalion of The Royal Australian Regiment, based at the time at Gallipoli Barracks near Sydney. there we awaited our mates among the first intake of national servicemen. Further specialised Assault Pioneer and Jungle Training at Canungra and in New Guinea followed.

Soon 'Canungra' ... it was not over!

We had been 'metamorphosed,' gone from a tawdry bunch of pimply faced shallow youths who, when later flawlessly blended with the national servicemen to follow, would form what was arguably some of the best light Infantry soldiers this country had ever produced.

The men standing beside me who now received the shoulder badges of the RAR (Royal Australian Regiment) were survivors, they where the product of an intense physical and psychological catalytic process that allowed those that did not get over the line, not to have failed the army, but to have failed the Infantry. The products of this reduction process would prove in Vietnam to be among the best trained and best led Australian soldiers, ever to have left their country on active service. They proved to be, both in spirit and in fact, true grandsons of the Anzacs as they stood their ground against probably the most effective Jungle fighters in the world at the time, on their own terms, The NVA.

After the retreat from South Vietnam, some nine battalions of the most experienced and valuable combat troops ever to have been retained by any country had returned. what did our countries new leaders do with them?

In 1973 the dismantling of the National Service Program and the resultant dismissal of related personnel, within a matter of days crippled both the morale and the operating capacity of the Royal Australian Regiment.

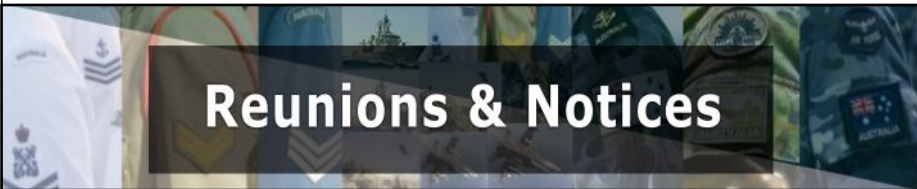
This decision, rejecting the implementation of a slower more phased reduction of National Service by the newly elected government, amounted to a culpable act of political payback directed at the army's higher echelons for backing what was seen at the time as the wrong side.

It was a tragedy that resulted in the loss of over half the regiment's battalions and the 'bleeding out' of many professional officers and experienced men, from a thus reduced and contracting defence force. In my opinion, it was a decision that is directly related to the difficulties faced by the country today, as we try to build both the image of and the numbers in, the defence forces, and in particular, the Royal Australian Regiment.



© By Bob Cavill
C Coy & Assault Pioneers
5 RAR. First Tour.





Reunions & Notices

RAAF 19 Apprentice Intake (SNAILS) 60th Anniversary Reunion

Date: 25 Apr 2025
The RAAF 19 Apprentice Intake (SNAILS) 60th Anniversary Reunion will be held in Wagga Wagga NSW
Reunion details
Location: Wagga Wagga NSW
Contact details
Name: Graeme Oxley
Phone: 0413 135 779
Email: gaioxley19@gmail.com

HMAS Leeuwin 83rd intake

Date: 3 May 2025
We would like to invite all members, partners and training staff to our next reunion - details, venue and time TBC.
Reunion details
Location: Adelaide, SA
Contact details
Name: Scott Adkin
Phone: 0407 651 086
Email: clarke83reunion@gmail.com
Website: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/15878348778>

Army Fire Service, 1962/2025

Date: 9 May 2025
Reunion details
Friday - meet and greet; Saturday night - dinner. Bring your play lunch money.
Location: Coffs Harbor C.ex Club, NSW
Contact details
Name: Peter Cairnes and Bill Donovan
Phone: 0427 558 685 / 0410 103 339
Email: billandleed@gmail.com

Naval Stores Reunion 2025

Date: 16 May 2025
16-17 May 2025. The reunion is for ex and serving Naval Stores personnel of all ranks.
Reunion details
Location: Sydney CBD, NSW
Contact details
Name: Alan Cady-Ellis
Phone: 0407 436 498
Email: runthruit1@yahoo.com.au

2SQN Association Reunion

Date: 25 May 2025
All former and serving members of 2SQN are invited to march with the Association in the Brisbane Anzac Day March and attend the Anzac Day reunion after the March. All inquiries to Arthur.
Reunion details
Location: Pig and Whistle Pub, 123 Eagle St Brisbane, QLD
Contact details
Name: Arthur Rennick, Secretary
Phone: 0494 151 872
Email: 2sqn.association.raaf@gmail.com
Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/2squadronassociationinc/>

6 RAR Association

Date: 6 Jun 2025
6-8 June 2025. Celebrating 60 years of 6 RAR. For more information or to register your attendance, please call or email.
Reunion details
Location: Brisbane, QLD
Contact details
Name: Allan Whelan, Secretary
Phone: 0427 632 402
Email: wheels6rarassn@gmail.com

Centenary of Artillery Locating 1925/2025

Date: 13 Jun 2025
We welcome all 130, 131, 132, & 133 Bty Locators to the event. Visit the website for program details and updates.
Reunion details
Location: Brisbane, QLD
Contact details
Name: Terry Erbs
Phone: 0403 500 642
Email: terry.erbs@gmail.com
Website: <https://www.locatingartillery.org/noticeboard>

RAAF Equipment Musterings

Date: 5 Jul 2025
Any Equipment related Mustering or current Logistics related Mustering personnel both ex and current are invited to attend our biannual reunion. If you're planning on coming, can you please email me with your details.
Reunion details
Location: CSI Ipswich, QLD
Contact details
Name: Greg Lyons (Jacko)
Phone: 0413 700 298
Email: gregjackolyons@gmail.com

Officer Training Unit, Scheyville Class 1/65 Diamond Jubilee Reunion

Date: 14 Jul 2025
14 - 18 July 2025. The focus will be on Wednesday 16th, the anniversary of our arrival at OTU Scheyville in 1965. This day will include a commemorative service, graduate lunch and gala dinner. Please contact either Laurie (below) or David Beasley, 0409 441 123, dugara@bigpond.net.au
Reunion details
Location: Maroochydore, QLD
Contact details
Name: Laurie Muller
Phone: 0418 788 493
Email: lcmuller@bigpond.net.au

RAAF Surface Finisher (SURFIN) Reunion

Date: 12 Sep 2025
12-14 September 2025. Laughter and a good time guaranteed.
Reunion details
Location: Ipswich, QLD
Contact details
Name: Garth Steinhardt
Phone: 0487 195 418
Email: ghstein@tpg.com.au

RAN Destroyer Escort Personnel

Date: 16 Oct 2025
15-16 October 2025. The reunion is for all personnel who served in any of the six Destroyer Escorts. All De Reunion Facebook page.
Reunion details
Location: Frankston Arts Centre, VIC
Contact details
Name: Rory Munn
Phone: 0414 897 484
Email: alldereunion@gmail.com

Headquarters & Headquarters Company 1st Australian Logistic Support Group (1 ALSG) ex Vietnam

Date: 24 Oct 2025

24 - 28 October. Please contact Tony or Trevor for more details. Trevor Sargent, 0400 803 554 or t.sarge47@gmail.com.

Reunion details

Location: Busselton, WA

Contact details

Name: Tony Brown

Phone: 0428 852 736

Email: tony11raye13@gmail.com

3RAR Back to Woodside Reunion 2025

Date: 24 Oct 2025

We are bringing together members, family and friends of the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment 'Old Faithful'. There will be a meet & greet on Friday 24th, dinner on Saturday 25th and lunch on Sunday 26th. To register your interest and for further details, visit the website.

Reunion details

Location: Adelaide Hills Convention Centre, Hahndorf

Discovery Park, SA

Contact details

Name: Ken Nash

Phone: 0437 335 438

Email: nashywoof3@gmail.com

Website: www.3rarback2woodside.com

Air Defenders Malaysia Reunion

Date: 10 Nov 2025

Reunion during the week of Remembrance Day 2025 to mark:

* The 60th Anniversary of the introduction of National Service in 1965

* The raising of 110 LAA Battery at Woodside in 1965

* Many National Servicemen celebrating their 80th Birthday in 2025.

Reunion details

Location: Adelaide, SA

Contact details

Name: Bob McEvoy

Phone: 0412 310 947

Email: bottleart19@gmail.com

2025 JR Reunion - NAVY - (Tingira Boys)

Date: 10 Nov 2025

10-14 November 2025. Hosted by the Tingira Australia Association.

Reunion details

Location: Fremantle, WA

Contact details

Name: Mark Lee

Phone: 0417 223 040

Email: tsec@tingira.org.au

Website: www.tingira.org.au

HQ1ATF Association

Date: 17 Nov 2025

17 - 21 November 2025. The welcome dinner will be held on Monday 17 November.

Commemorative dinner on the 20th at the Gateway Motel restaurant. Dinner will be preceded by a 5 pm public Dedication Service at the RSL Memorial.

Reunion details

Location: Painters Island Holiday Park, Wangaratta, VIC

Contact details

Name: John Verhelst

Phone: 0437 212 121

Email: john@jhconsult.com.au

Website: www.hq1atf.org

WANTED KNOWN:

'A' Battery Association Inc.

"WARNING ORDER 2026!"

155th Birthday & Reunion

Date: 31 Jul 2026

31 July - 1 August 2026. Celebrating the 155th Birthday of both the Royal Australian Artillery and 'A' Battery, culminating with a formal cocktail party at the Brisbane Tattersall's Club on 01 August 2026. Register your interest in attending and to be placed on the event mailing list, by sending an email to the association. Official attendance registration and payment requirements will be promulgated NLT 31 July 2025. More information on this event can be found on the association's website, under "Upcoming Activities". "Once 'A' Gunner, always 'A' Gunner!" Once in 'A' Battery, always in 'A' Battery!" Email the below or management@abtyassn.org.au

Reunion details

Location: Brisbane, QLD

Contact details

Name: 'A' Battery Association Incorporated

Phone: 0411 166 904

Email: abtyassn@abtyassn.org.au

Website: https://www.australianartilleryassociation.org/a_bty_association/index.html

VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

FULL STATE AND SUB-BRANCH LISTING

NATIONAL HEAD OFFICE (VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE)

VFVA Inc National President: **William (Bill) Roberts OAM JP** Email: billr@vdfagranville.org
 PO Box 170, (8 Mary St.) National Secretary: **Ron O'Connor JP** Email: secretary@vdfagranville.org Granville,
 NSW 2142 Tel: 02 9682 1788 Fax: 02 9682 6134 Web: <http://www.vvfa.org.au>

NEW SOUTH WALES**VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE**

VVPPAA NSW Inc.
 8 Mary St PO Box 170
 Granville NSW 2142
 Ph: (02) 9682 1788
 Fax: (02) 9682 6134
www.vvdfagranville.org
secretary@vdfagranville.org
 President: TBA

Secretary: **Ron O'Connor JP**
 Hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1600

CENTRAL COAST

PO Box 505 Ettalong 2257
 Ph: (02) 4344 4760
 Fax: (02) 4344 5467
centralcoastveterans@bigpond.com
 President: **Alan Ball**
 Secretary: **Eric Daniel**
 Hours: Mon, Wed 0930-1330

CENTRAL WEST

7 March St
 Orange NSW 2800
 President: **Lindsay Wright**
 (02) 6362 5959
 Secretary: **Warren Willis**
 Mob 0447 066 996
warren.willis@bigpond.com

CLARENCE VALLEY

PO Box 137
 Grafton 2460
 Ph: (02) 6649 4186
 President: **Ron Shoebridge**
 Secretary: **Lorraine Burt OAM**
newsouthwalespva@gmail.com
 Hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1700

EUROBODALLA

28 Emmott St.
 Moruya 2537
 Ph: (02) 4474 2362
 President: **Russell Graham**
 Mob 0418 721 745
 Secretary: **Helen Kop**
 Mob 0419 201 788
helen_kop@bigpond.com

GREAT LAKES

Unit 3, 80-82 Kularoo Drive
 Forster, 2428
 Office: 0480 283 744
vvaglforster@gmail.com
 President: **Derek Hinde**
 Secretary: **Paul Dawson**
 0413 886 265
 Hours: Mon & Thur 1000-1300

HASTINGS MANNING MACLEAY

PO Box 5330
 Port Macquarie 2444
 Office at Wauchope RSL Sub-Branch
 Office Ph: (02) 6581 5230
 Advocate only: 0493 717 807
Vets614@gmail.com
 President: **Bill Wagner**
 Secretary: **Jill Opie**
 Hours: 1000-1330 Tue, Wed, Thu.

ILLAWARRA

Legacy House 96 Market St
 Wollongong NSW 2500
 Ph: (02) 4228 6774
vvaaill@aapt.net.au
 President: **Robert Cohen**
 Secretary: **Pam Bowmaker OAM JP**
 Hours: Tue, Fri 9:30-12:30

MUDGEE & DISTRICTS

Inglis St, Railway Station
 PO Box 511 Mudgee NSW 2850
 Ph: (02) 6372 7740
secretary@vvfamudgee.org
 President: **Ken Atkinson**
 Mob 0428 246 147
 Secretary: TBA
 Hours: Mon, Tue, Wed 9:30-3:30

NEWCASTLE & HUNTER

17 Tyrrell St., PO Box 288
 Wallsend 2287
 Ph: (02) 4951 2666
nclvets@bigpond.net.au
 President: **Michael Frost**
 Secretary: **Dave Hansen**
 Hours: Mon, Thu 0900-1300

RIVERINA

PO Box 7120
 Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
 President: **John Ploenges**
 Ph. (02) 6922 9766
 Secretary: **Ralph J Todd**
 Mb: 0457 258 891
 Email: ralphthodd@bigpond.com

SHOALHAVEN

PO Box 3229
 North Nowra NSW 2541
 President: **Clyde Poulton**
 Mob 0412 642 848
 Secretary: **Carl Robinson**
shoalhaven.vietvets1@gmail.com

SOUTH WEST SLOPES**VIETNAM VETERANS INC.**

3 Thomas Street
 Junee 2663
jc18746@bigpond.com
 Ph: (02) 6924 1924
 Mob 0408 296 765
 President: **John Curtis**
 Secretary: **Barbara Curtis**

TAYLORS ARM

798 North Bank Rd
 Taylors Arm 2447
 President: **TBA**
 Ph: 02 6564 2153
 Secretary: **Stephen Spear**
 Mob 0439 642 181
 Email: cvpb16@hotmail.com

WENTWORTH-COOMEALLA**Ramon Deed Veterans Retreat**

PO Box 397
 Dareton NSW 2717
 Ph: 03 5027 4447
rdveteransretreat@iinet.net.au
 President: **Michael Chopping**
 Mob 0481 306 854
 Secretary: **Geoff Forde**
 Mob 0419 114853

VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

FULL STATE AND SUB-BRANCH LISTING

VVPPAA (NSW BRANCH)**ZONE REPS****FAR SOUTH COAST****Gary Berman**

Bega RSL SB

Ph: 6493 0449

Mob 0409 888 248

gandsberman@bigpond.com

VICTORIA**VVF Victorian Branch Inc**

ALL MAIL TO: P.O. Box 167

Newcomb Vic 3219

13 Tyson Loop

Charlemont Vic 3217

President: **John Arnold OAM**

johnrayarnold@gmail.com

Secretary: **Iris Cargill JP**

Mob 0488 053 973

ritscargill@yahoo.com

Mon - Wed 0900 -1400

VIC SUB – BRANCHES**Hamilton: Bill Garrett**

0438 722 144

Grampians: Ron Jensen

0409 023 487

Respite Housing For Veterans in need

Bowder Veterans Housing

160 Coppards Rd Whittington 3219.

Mob: 0488 053 973

ACT STATE BRANCH**VV&VF ACT Inc**

9 Burkitt Street, Page. 2614

Veterans Support Centre Belconnen

Ph: 02 6255 1599

office@vscact.org.au

www.vvfact.org.au

President: **Ward Gainey JP**Secretary: **Leanne Connor****QUEENSLAND****VVF Queensland Branch Inc.**

18 Leagues Club Drive

PO Box 2817

Nerang Business Centre

Nerang Qld 4211

Ph: 07 5578 2233

Fax: 07 5578 2822

State President: **Peter Handy JP**

Mob 0448 195 020

president@vvfql.com

State Sec/Treas: **Peter Cameron OAM**

Mob 0408 276 044

treasurer@vvfql.com

www.vvfql.com

VVF Brisbane/Gold Coast of Australia**Regional Sub-Branch Inc.**

18 Leagues Club Drive

PO Box 368

Nerang Qld 4211

Ph: 07 5502 2836

admin@vietnamveterans.net.au

President: **Andy Bryson**

Mob 0424 476 027

Secretary/Treasurer: **Peter Cameron OAM**

Mob 0408 276 044

TOWNSVILLE**Veteran Support Centre NQ Inc****TOWNSVILLE**

PO Box 280, Garbutt East

JC Butler Bldg

1 Charters Towers Rd

Townsville, 4814

Ph: 07 4772 4655

secretary@vsctsv.org.au

President: **Barry Martin OAM**Secretary: **Alison Abby****SOUTH AUSTRALIA****VVF South Australia****Branch Inc.**

The Yerbury Centre

Unit 1, 31-39 Norfolk Rd

Marion SA 5043

Ph: 08 8296 2411

Mon – Thur 1000 – 1500hrs

vvfsa@tpg.com.au

http://vvfsa.org.au

President: **Mal Thiele OAM JP**Secretary: **Don Cochrane****SA ZONE REPS****BROKEN HILL****Des Kennedy**

M: 0412 458 054

MILITARY MUSEUM**BUBLACOWIE**Welfare Officer: **Chris Soar**

Mobs 0448 994 561/0428 377 287

Ph: 08 8853 4379

REPS**ALICE SPRINGS AREA****Alan Wilkes****KATHERINE AREA****Scott Landers****WESTERN AUSTRALIA****VVFA WA Branch**

30 Cornish Ave

Woodvale WA 6026

President: **Milton Kirk JP**

Ph 08 9409 6682

vvfawabranch@gmail.com

TASMANIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY MEMBERS WANTING ADVOCACY SERVICES ARE ASKED TO CONTACT THE OUTREACH PROGRAM CO-ORDINATOR AT GRANVILLE

Mr. Dennis Hanmer OAM on 02 9682 1788

Currently in the ADF, Transitioning, a younger Veteran?

We invite you to join our association and become a member.

Simply select your preferred Branch or Sub-Branch from the list above, complete the form on page 29, and mail it, or email a copy, to the address indicated.

Please consider leaving a bequest in your will

Every Veteran deserves a lifestyle and better treatment than is currently available.
Every Veteran should be able to successfully attain their rights to pensions and just compensation.

Yet we still receive veterans unaware of their rights, what they may be entitled to, and where and how to apply or enter a claim.

Through your Will, you have the power to help us achieve our goals. Help surviving veterans, and those that follow them, to receive their true entitlements.

Through your Will you have the power to make a difference. Any gift you bequest to our Association, no matter how large or small, will assist a fellow veteran.

You don't need to be wealthy or have tens of thousands of dollars to make a difference to the lives of veterans and those who follow us. Many people leave amounts both large and small through their wills to our association.

Combined each amount assists our association to carry on the vital support network we provide to the veteran community.

Operation Life



Register Now!!

CALL **1800 011 046**

OPEN
Veterans & Families
Counselling
ARMS

Operation Life workshops emphasis is on suicide prevention – they aim to help members of the services and veteran community to recognise someone who might be thinking of suicide, and link them with appropriate assistance. There are 3 types of workshops

- Suicide alertness for everyone (Safetalk) ½ day presentation
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) 2 day skills course ASIST Tune Up ½ day refresher workshop

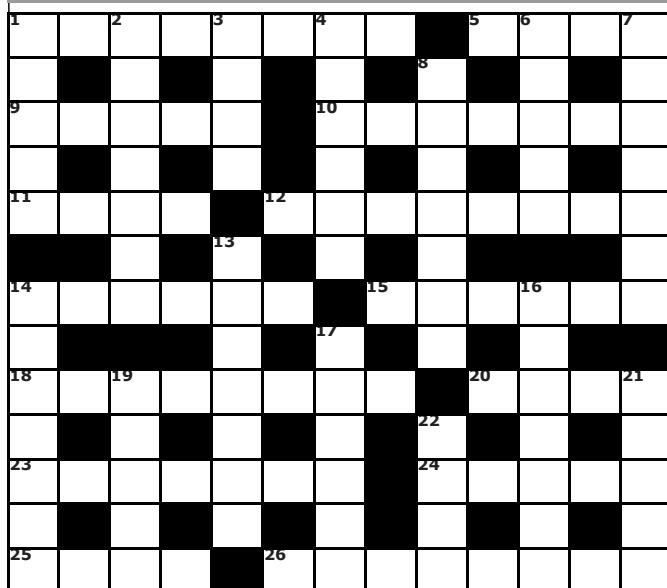
Workshops are open to anyone concerned about veterans, their family, friends and mates in the service and veteran community. Welfare, Compensation Advocates and other helpers from ESO's are welcome and encouraged to attend.

FORMERLY

Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service



CROSSWORD CORNER



ACROSS

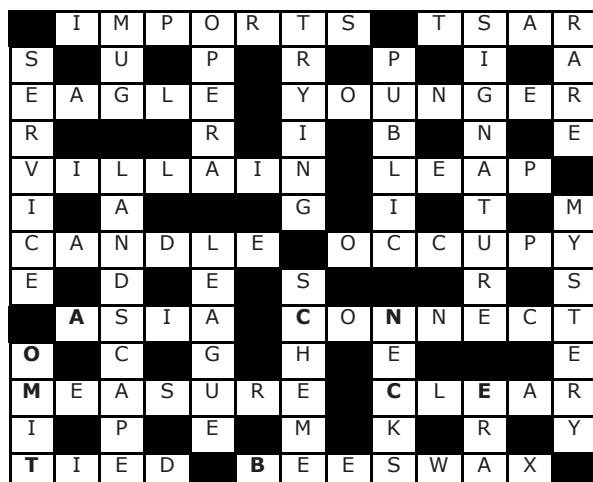
1. Cutting tools
5. Snatch
9. Bar for prising
10. Breakfast grains
11. Neat
12. Added to
14. Riding seat
15. Poem sections
18. Reversed
20. Blemish on skin
23. Ideal
24. Hideaways
25. Bowl
26. Groups of words

DOWN

1. Divide
2. Raided a country
3. Certain
4. Repeat from memory
6. Arrive at
7. Apart from
8. Makes
13. Surprised
14. Lined in colour
16. Newspaper part
17. Improved
19. School periods
21. Relaxes
22. Unit

Solution next issue

DECEMBER 2024 SOLUTION



THE UNKNOWN COMIC

An elderly woman had just returned to her home from an evening of church services when she was startled by an intruder. She caught the man in the act of robbing her home of its valuables and yelled, "Stop! Acts 2:38!" (Repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.)

The burglar stopped in his tracks. The woman calmly called the police and explained what she had done.

As the officer cuffed the man to take him in, he asked the burglar, "Why did you just stand there? All the old lady did was yell scripture to you." "Scripture?" replied the burglar. "She said she had an axe and two 38's!"

So one day, a gynaecologist got bored with his job and decided to learn to be an auto mechanic. He worked really hard and studied day and night. When the results of his final exam came in, he was quite perplexed. It showed that he got 150% on the test. The doctor figured this had to be a mistake so he called his instructor and asked how he got a 150% on the final exam.

The instructor told the Doctor that for the first part of the test he took apart the cars engine perfectly. That counted for 50 points of your test. Then you went and put the engine back together perfectly. That was another 50 points. And, those last 50 points? Well that's because none of us have ever seen anyone do it through the muffler before.

Two little boys were at a wedding when one leaned over to the other and asked, "How many wives can a man have?"

His friend answered, "Sixteen... four better, four worse, four richer, and four poorer."

My son complained that he was always leaving his mobile phone somewhere and it took him ages to find it. So I told him, "You know what they should invent? A phone that stays connected to its base so it never gets lost."

Are people who take care of chickens, really chicken tenders.

Our name has changed but we will continue to provide professional, military aware, support to all current and former serving ADF personnel and their family members.



Free and confidential counselling to support your mental health and wellbeing is available 24/7. We also run group programs and suicide prevention training.

JUST CALL 1800 011 046

If overseas call +61 8 8241 4546

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service

FORMERLY KNOWN AS



**Call
24/7**

A service founded by Vietnam veterans

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SENT ALMOST 60,000 OF US TO FIGHT IN VIETNAM

WE LOST 523 KILLED AND ANOTHER 2,400 WOUNDED IN 11 YEARS OF FIGHTING

BEST ESTIMATES ARE THAT AT LEAST 24,477 HAVE PASSED AWAY BETWEEN 1973 AND 2023

THAT IS A RATE OF 490 VETERANS PER YEAR

DVA ESIMATES THAT THERE ARE ABOUT 35,000 VIETNAM VETERANS REMAINING IN AUSTRALIA

Current male life expectancy in Australia is 83.3 years given that the average Vietnam Veteran is now aged 75 - 80 there is every chance that in another 10 years there will be very few of us left.



YOUNGER VETERANS NEED TO HEED OUR CALL NOW. VIETNAM VETERANS TOOK UP THE BATTLE TO GAIN OUR RIGHTS TO VETERANS ENTITLEMENTS

OUR QUALIFIED COMPENSATION ADVOCATES AND WELLBEING OFFICERS ARE ABLE TO PASS ON ALMOST 40 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE DEALING WITH DVA

IN 2 SHORT YEARS THE NEW GOVERNANCE OF VETERANS CARE AND ENTITLEMENTS WILL BE CHANGING.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, YOUNGER VETERANS WILL NEED TO STEP UP AND TAKE THE BATON TO HELP THEIR FELLOW DIGGERS.

SHOW THEM YOU CARE. SHOW THEM VETERANS MATTER

JOIN NOW TO REAP THE BENEFITS OF EXPERIENCE WHILE YOU STILL CAN!



VIETNAM VETERANS PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) Inc.

Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.

1 JAN—31 DEC

Website: www.vvfagranville.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

SURNAME		FIRST NAME		SECOND NAME	
STREET ADDRESS					
SUBURB/TOWN			STATE		POST CODE
HOME PHONE		MOBILE PHONE		OTHER PHONE	
EMAIL ADDRESS [PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY]					
SERVICE NUMBER		SERVICE UNIT		O'SEAS AREA OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE	
NEXT OF KIN		RELATIONSHIP		CONTACT PHONE [NOK]	
ITEM	QUANTITY	PRICE		TOTAL	
MEMBERSHIPS SUBS	(YEARS)	@\$30.00 PER YEAR		\$	
DONATION	(AMOUNT ONLY)			\$	
RAFFLE TICKET/s		@\$2.00 EACH		\$	
MERCHANDISE					
				\$	
				\$	
				\$	
				\$	
				\$	
Contact Granville for Stock item lists numbers and prices		TOTAL AMOUNT DUE		\$	
PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD (Tick one only) CASH ___ CHEQUE ___ MONEY ORDER ___ CREDIT CARD ___					
CREDIT CARD DETAILS (Mastercard or VISA only)					
CARD HOLDER NAME [PRINT]			CREDITCARD NUMBER		
EXPIRY DATE		AMOUNT CONFIRMED		CARD HOLDER SIGNATURE	
(Mnth/Yr)	/	\$			
All cheques and money orders payable to VVPPAA NSW Branch Inc. Mail to PO Box 170 Granville, NSW 2142 Credit Card payments may be phoned in to (02) 9682 1788 Mon-Fri 9:30am – 3pm.					
OFFICE USE ONLY					
MEMBERSHIP RECEIPT DATE:			DONATION RECEIPT DATE:		
MEMBERSHIP RECEIPT N ^o :			DONATION RECEIPT N ^o :		
MEMBERSHIP CARD NUMBER:			COMPLETED & ISSUED BY (PRINT):		
COMPLETED & ISSUED BY (PRINT):			BANK SHEET ENTRY BY (PRINT):		

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

SURNAME

FIRST NAME

SECOND NAME

--	--	--

OLD DETAILS [*PRINT CLEARLY*]

OLD ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

NEW DETAILS [*PRINT CLEARLY*]

NEW ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

EMAIL ADDRESS [*PRINT CLEARLY*]

--

YOUR SIGNATURE

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

Complete all sections and post to:

The Secretary
VVPAA NSW
PO Box 170
Granville
NSW 2142

OFFICE USE ONLY**MEMBERSHIP REGISTRY****DETAILS CHANGED****DATE:** ____/____/____**INITIALS:** _____

VETERANS MORTALITY REPORT

As you are aware, Vietnam Veterans are dying at a rate higher than while on Active Service. This situation is perhaps a natural phenomenon compared to non-serving members of the public, who might die of an illness which is equally distributed through the population of the same age group.

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc has for many years maintained records of the deaths of Vietnam Veterans and the cause of death if known. This has proved invaluable regarding the health standards of Vietnam Veterans when compared to the general public. We seek your assistance in reporting the death of Vietnam Veterans, past or recent, to allow the Federation to expand and preserve its record base.

Kindly circulate a copy of this page through your RSL Club, Unit or Corps reunions and meetings and raise it as an issue. The information gained from these reports will greatly assist all Vietnam Veterans and their families regarding future claims for benefits.

Please print clearly

VETERANS DETAILS

SURNAME

FIRST NAME

SERVICE NUMBER

--	--	--

SVN UNIT/S

TOUR DATES

--	--

CAUSE OF DEATH (If known)

--

SR Service Related

UNK Unknown

S Suicide

O Other)

DATE OF DEATH (If known)

LOCATION AT TIME OF DEATH

	(TOWN)	(STATE)
--	--------	---------

YOUR NAME

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

SIGNATURE

--	--	--

RETURN FORM TO: The Welfare Officer

VVPPAA NSW Branch
PO Box 170
Granville NSW 2142

Phone: 02 9682 1788
Fax : 02 9682 6134
Email: secretary@vvfagranville.org

MERCHANDISE LIST

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	PRICE		ITEM	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
1101	NSW PLAQUE	50.00		1404	LAPEL PIN RAR	8.00
1103	NSW BADGE	10.00		1405	LAPEL PIN RAAF	8.00
1105	NSW STICKER	6.00		1406	LAPEL PIN CROSS	8.00
1107	RED PEN VVFA	8.00		1411	LAPEL PIN FAMILY	7.00
1108	NSW STUBBY HOLDER	8.00		1500	STICKER TWIN SET REG	7.00
1109	STUBBY HOLDER TRICOLOR	10.00		1501	STICKER REGULAR	7.00
1111	VVFA GREEN CAP	22.00		1507	STICKER TWIN SET NASHO	7.00
1112	VVFA BLUE CAP	22.00		1502	STICKER NASHO	7.00
1113	VVFA WHITE CAP	22.00		1503	STICKER DAMN PROUD	8.00
1114	VVFA BLACK CAP	22.00		1504	STICKER LOVE or LEAVE	5.00
1120	Mr GADGET	8.00		1506	STICKER SUPPORT	7.00
1121	NOTEBOOK/PEN	8.00		1508	STICKER SUPPORT NAVY	7.00
1122	COOLER TOTE	14.00		1509	STICKER NAVY VET	7.00
1125	KEYRING NAVY	8.00		1510	STICKER SUPPORT ARMY	7.00
1126	KEYRING ARMY	8.00		1511	STICKER ARMY VET	7.00
1127	KEYRING RAR	10.00		1512	STICKER SUPPORT RAAF	7.00
1128	KEYRING RAAF	8.00		1513	STICKER RAAF VET	7.00
1129	KEYRING VVFA	9.00		1514	STICKER AFGHAN VET	5.00
1130	LANYARD	10.00		1515	STICKER IRAQ VET	5.00
1201	THE MINEFIELD	45.00		1516	STICKER SOMALIA VET	5.00
1308	BUCKLE RAAMC	35.00		1517	STICKER TIMOR VET	5.00
1309	BUCKLE RAASC	35.00		BOOKS	ON SALE ON LINE OR AT THE OFFICE	
1312	BUCKLE RAAOC	35.00		3440	HOW TO RESEARCH AND HONOUR RETURNED	39.00
1401	LAPEL PIN RAN	5.00		3442	THE THIRD CHOPSTICK	35.00
1402	LAPEL PIN ENS	5.00		3445	THE LONG SHADOW	60.00
1403	LAPEL PIN ARMY	8.00				

MERCHANDISE IMAGES



1101



1103



1105



1107



1108



1109



1111



1112



1113



1114



1120



1121



1122



1125



1126



1127



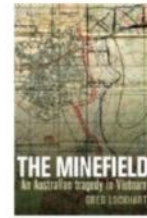
1128



1129



1130



1201



1308



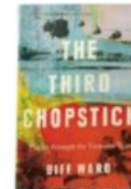
1309



1312



3440



3442



1401



1402



1403



1404



1405



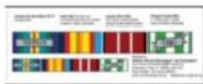
1406



1411



3445



1500



1501



1507



1502



1503



1504



1506



1508



1509



1510



1511



1512



1513



1514



1515



1516



1517

MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

NAME:				
ADDRESS:				
TOWN:			STATE:	PC:
PHONE:		ALT PHONE:		
EMAIL:				
ITEM N ^o .	DESCRIPTION	PRICE ea	QTY	TOTAL
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
		\$		\$
XXXXXX	POSTAGE & HANDLING	\$		\$
XXXXXX	RAFFLE TICKET/S	\$ 2.00		\$
XXXXXX	DONATION AMOUNT	XXXXXX	XXXX	\$
XXXXXX	TOTAL ORDER VALUE	XXXXXX	XXXX	\$
DELIVERY ADDRESS:				
(IF DIFFERENT TO ABOVE)				
PAYMENT METHOD M/CARD VISA (Cross out card type that does not apply)				
NAME ON CARD:				
CARD NUMBER:				
EXPIRY DATE:	/	APPROVED AMOUNT: \$		
SIGNATURE & DATE:				

MERCHANDISE SPECIALS

ONLY WHILE STOCKS LAST
ALSO AVAILABLE ON LINE

<http://www.vvfganville.org> and select "SHOP" button

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	PRICE AU\$
3301	BUCKLE VETERAN	15.00
3302	BUCKLE VET RAR	15.00
3133	KRING ARMY AVI	6.00
3134	KRING RAE	6.00
3140	KRING RAAC	6.00
3402	PIN MAP REGULAR	6.00
3403	PIN MAP NASHO	6.00
3404	PIN MAP VETERAN	6.00
3406	PIN VIETNAM VET	6.00
3407	PIN SLOUCH BRNZ	6.00
3408	PIN SLOUCH COL	6.00
3409	PIN Chopper	6.00
3412	PIN 'Vietnam' Chopper	6.00
3414	PIN AVF 62-73	6.00
3415	PIN RAA	6.00
3416	PIN RAE	6.00
3420	CAP (black) 62-75 V	22.00
3500	RED PEN TORCH SET	10.00



**NEVER TO BE REPEATED. ONCE STOCKS HAVE GONE THEY'RE GONE!
SAVE EVEN MORE. BUY ALL OF THE REMAINING STOCK, INCLUDED IN THE
SPECIALS LIST ABOVE, OF ONE OR MORE ITEMS AND GET A THIRD OFF!!
CALL THE OFFICE TO ESTABLISH YOUR DEAL. AND PRICING.**

On line 'shop' or use the form opposite and mail to Admin at Granville.
Postage will be on a per order basis at cost.



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
R93179	POAH	VR	CLARK	HMAS MELBOURNE 1/ SYDNEY 8	5/9/24	3/4/45
R64222	OM	KJ	MCGUINESS	HMAS SYDNEY 4	17/1/25	14/2/50
R67018	OS	CAC	HERRALD	HMAS SYDNEY	1/1/25	30/5/50
R57748	LSTWD	F	GIUSTI	HMAS SYDNEY / PERTH	6/2/25	16/11/41
	Removed	after	publication	Apology noted July issue		
R58766	EM	BF	HOPKINS	HMAS HOBART	18/9/24	18/1/45
R65726	ASUC	RW	MACKLIN	HMAS BRISBANE	31/7/24	17/9/49
R53680	ASQG	DHJ	BENJAMIN	HMAS DUCHESS 2 / MV JEPARIT 11	13/6/23	13/6/40
R55158	NAMAE	I	WASKIW	RAN HELICOPTER FLIGHT	7/9/24	17/1/42
43719	CAPT	FE	PALMER	AATTV	3/1/25	9/5/38
36548	CAPT	PH	DAVIS	AATTV	21/1/25	25/12/37
1200461	SIG	DA	CHRISTIE	3 SAS SQN	2/9/24	12/9/45
2786078	PTE	BT	WOOD	HQ AFV	31/1/25	16/9/46
1733260	LCPL	WR	ALLOWAY	HQ 1 ATF	5/2/25	29/4/47
3173882	PTE	KL	EARNEY	1 ARU / HQ 1 ATF	21/1/25	12/6/47
5716536	PTE	PJ	MAGUIRE	1 ARU / HQ 1 ATF	29/12/24	24/8/48
2785151	PTE	R	MAZURKIEWICZ	2 RAR / HQ 1 ATF	23/1/25	3/5/46
2788139	CPL	SS	SINCLAIR	1 ARU/ 3 RAR / HQ 1 ATF	20/1/25	8/11/47
216439	PTE	LH	ROSS	8 FLD AMB / 1 AFH 2	16/1/25	15/11/32
2183866	PTE	GC	CONYERS	161RECCE FLT / 1 AFH	11/8/24	29/3/46



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
2782924	LCPL	JA	PHILLIPS	32 SMALL SHIPS SQN 3	29/9/24	16/2/45
36626	SSGT	E	SMITH	1 IAMS WS/ 1 AS WS/ 2AOD	30/1/25	22/2/42
44384	LCPL	GF	CROWHURST	2 AOD	13/10/24	2/5/49
2782979	PTE	CJ	BEDWELL	2 AOD / 2 COD	4/11/24	7/7/45
2789526	PTE	MA	GROSSE	1 OFP	16/6/24	10/12/47
218409	LCPL	RF	STEVENS	110 SIG SQN	9/9/24	22/11/48
218668	PTE	R	MOORE	1 FD REGT	6/9/24	13/2/44
1200945	CFTM	MP	SEARY	1ST FD SQN WS	12/1/25	22/7/49
243116	SGT	RH	LITTLEFAIR	101 FD WS	6/1/25	7/9/42
1200628	CPL	IS	HARRIS	17 CONST SQN 2	24/9/24	31/3/41
1731215	BMDR	BJ	FORBES	1ST FD REGT	25/1/25	6/6/45
37405	WO2	DE	SPARK	1ST FD REGT	22/6/24	7/9/35
2788630	GNR	BJ	CARTER	12 FD REGT	5/12/24	30/1/47
216585	CPL	K	WAGNER	HQ 1 ATF / BSQN 3CAV	12/6/23	7/6/47



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
5411372	PTE	RJ	NORTHEY	1 RAR	18/11/24	5/5/44
2787658	PTE	LL	WHITE	1 ARU / 1 RAR	2/9/24	16/3/47
2786585	PTE	GK	DELVES	1 RAR	30/9/24	29/5/46
215673	LCPL	CD	COOPER	1 RAR	29/10/24	21/9/46
2783046	PTE	E	ASHBY	2 RAR	26/9/24	21/12/45
218905	PTE	KH	POLLEY	2 RAR	10/1/25	6/7/49
2784850	PTE	GR	CANTRILL	2 RAR	4/1/25	2/10/45
43952	CPL	P	HARAN	2 RAR / 3 RAR	10/2/25	11/2/48
39014	CPL	JE	MATTHEWS	1ARU/6RAR/7RAR/3RAR	22/10/24	2/8/45
2789008	PTE	PW	FIELD	1 ARU / 4RAR	19/1/25	23/6/46
218013	PTE	SM	PORTER	5 RAR	30/1/25	1/8/49
15736	SGT	DR	JOHNSTON	6 RAR 2	6/1/25	24/2/39
17841	CPL	EA	HARTLEY	6 RAR	4/1/25	7/12/37
2782693	PTE	JA	HASLER	1ARU/HQ1ATF/6RAR	13/12/24	4/5/45
16219	CPL	KA	THISTLEWAITE	101FDWS / 6 RAR	10/1/25	20/4/40
2791401	LCPL	MR	WRIGHT	7 RAR	15/9/24	25/5/28
2784962	CPL	DW	FIELD	HQALSG/1ARU/7RAR 2	19/1/25	20/3/45
2412553	PTE	J	DOULIS	1 ARU / 7 RAR	7/1/25	3/10/39
73163	PTE	LA	SCHULZ	7 RAR	2/1/25	23/2/46
219358	PTE	NW	COOPER	1 ARU / 5 RAR / 7 RAR	7/10/24	9/8/44
4410756	LCPL	ER	WEATHERALL	1 RAR / 8 RAR	15/2/25	21/4/46
2793554	PTE	AV	LONGSON	1 ARU / 8 RAR	12/11/24	28/3/50
39929	PTE	PW	JEANS	8 RAR	28/12/24	28/9/46
4720765	PTE	GJ	HARRIS	8 RAR	25/12/24	18/8/48
2789597	PTE	RW	LONG	8 RAR	9/12/24	10/12/47



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
2789418	PTE	CJ	CARTER	1 ARU / 9 RAR	7/10/24	25/1/47
39455	PTE	LG	PURDIE	1 ARU/ 3 RAR / 9 RAR	12/9/24	12/12/49
217704	PTE	JJ	FERGUSON	9 RAR	21/1/25	8/10/46
2788838	PTE	PJ	NUMMY	9 RAR	2/2/25	15/9/47
A223690	ACRM	RJ	PRICE	NO1 OPS SUPPT	10/10/24	2/11/39
O316344	LACRM	MDA	PETTIGREW	BASE SUPPT FL / 35SQN	27/9/24	18/10/46
O27172	SQNL	NW	WHYBURN	36SQN 6 / 37 SQN 10	7/12/24	29/10/33
A17497	LACRM	KF	NEILSEN	NO 2 SQN	11/9/24	16/11/44
A39391	CPL	PR	LIBBIS	NO 9 SQN	28/8/24	3/9/34

Loving Lord, bless them forever in Your eternal peace.
 Let the sounds of strife, the cries of battle, the wounds of war
 be calmed for all eternity in Your loving and endless grace.
 Let these great warriors find rest at last,
 Ever reminded that we who are left behind
 Cherish their spirit, honor their commitment, send them our love,
 and will never forget the service that they gave.

PLEASE NOTE

We make every endeavour to ensure the accuracy of all names published in "The Last Post". If any omission or error has been made we apologise unreservedly...please contact the editor if you feel an error has been made. bobj@vafagranville.org, or at the office on 02 9682 1788

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