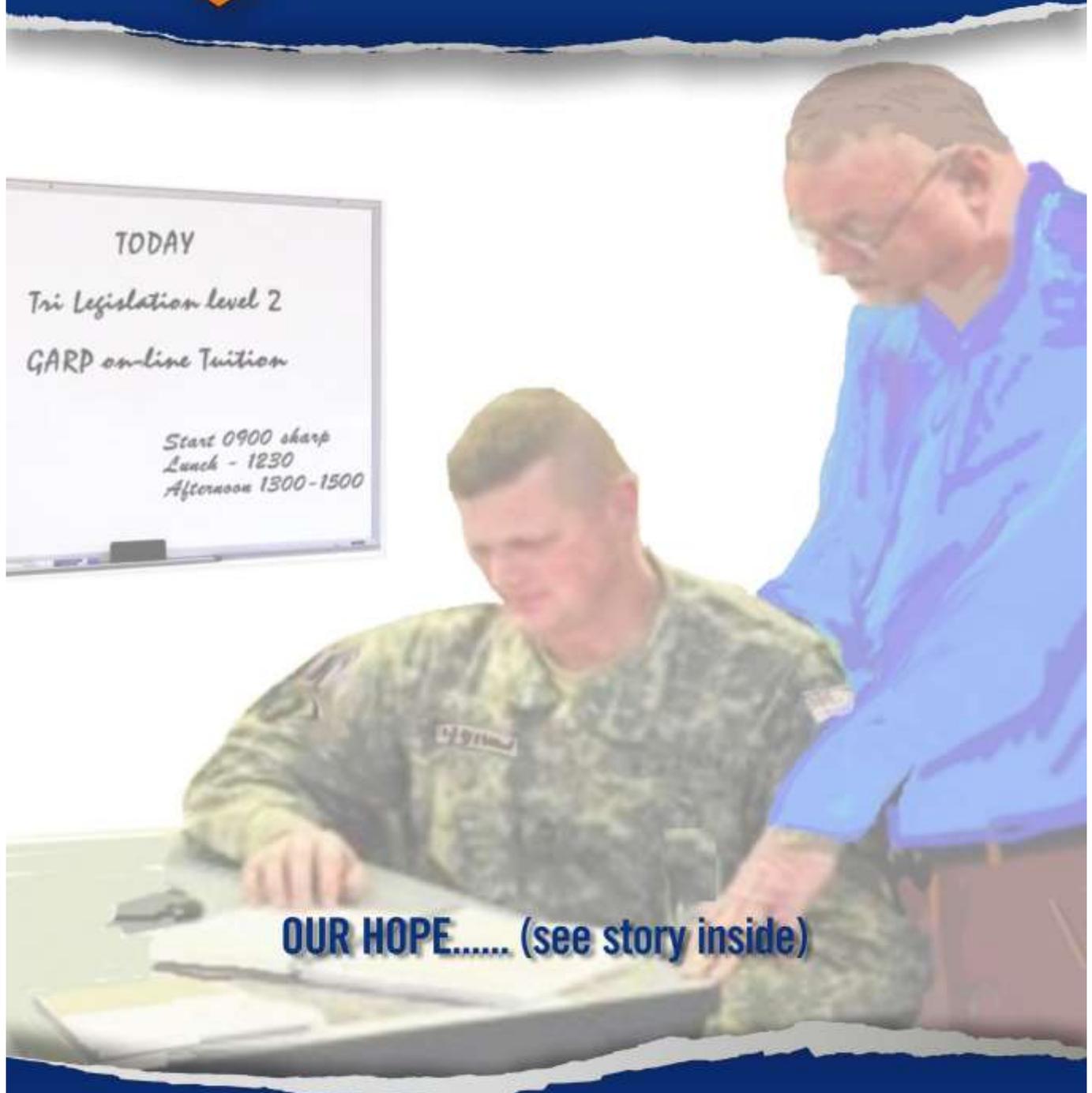




VIETNAM VETERANS PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

MARCH 2017



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VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION of AUSTRALIA Inc.

Incorporating

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Queensland Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans & Veterans Federation ACT Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Victorian Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation South Australian Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Federation of Australia (WA Branch) Inc.

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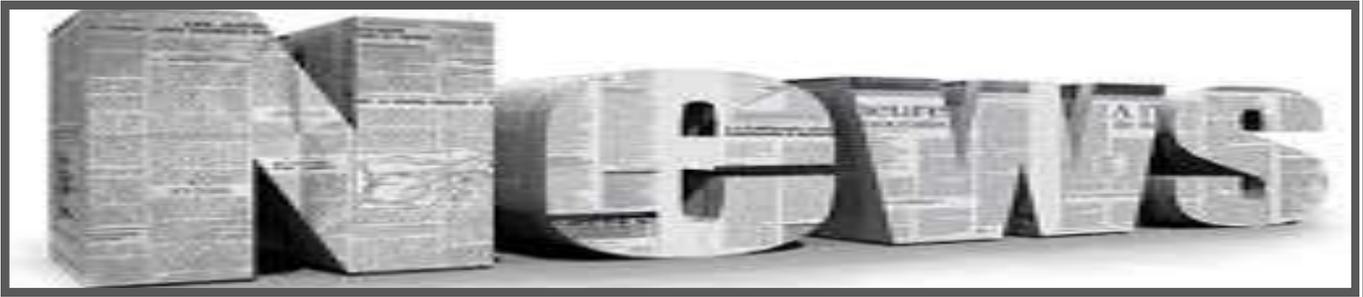
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OUR COVER
“OUR HOPE”
(TO ENCOURAGE THE YOUNGER VETERAN)
BY THE EDITOR



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Inside Front Cover NJF/VIDA WELLBEING
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If this bill passes, the Secretary (Head) of DVA can release any information the department has about you to the media, if he (and he alone) deems it to be in the public interest.

How does that make you feel?

Should you worry?

Probably not. It's unlikely the DVA Secretary will randomly make public the records of veterans.

But what if you are being treated unfairly by the Department and want to make your grievance public. Would you feel constrained knowing the Secretary has the unfettered power to proclaim your records are of public interest and release them to the media, or to whomever else he wants to.

So, despite assurances that the power would only be used in extreme circumstances, you may feel intimidated and shrink from making your grievance public, even though doing so would definitely be in the public interest as well as your own.

Do we even trust these Departmental assurances?

In other words, can the Department always be trusted?

Not in our experience.

And our experience goes way back.



The Minister for Veterans Affairs and the Prime Minister

The culprits

Take this incident for example.

On 27 July 1987, the National President wrote to the DVA Secretary requesting certain documents under the Freedom of Information Act. The documents referred to departmental policy on a matter close to Vietnam veterans' hearts; the extension of the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service to country areas.

In a letter dated 28 August 1987, the Department of Veterans Affairs refused the

The government has introduced legislation into parliament which says:

(1) The Secretary may, if the Secretary certifies that it is necessary in the public interest to do so in a particular case or class of cases, disclose any information obtained by any person in the performance of that person's duties under this Act to such persons and for such purposes as the Secretary determines.

request for a copy of the documents, offering only some selected excerpts. In justification of this censorship the Department claimed the documents were classified 'Cabinet-in-Confidence' and therefore exempt from Freedom of Information demands.

We knew that the documents had not been submitted to Cabinet and had therefore been fraudulently classified 'Cabinet-in-Confidence'. This knowledge formed the basis of a written complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman on 19 October 1987. Soon after, a further written request letter was sent, this time to the Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs, requesting an internal review of the refusal.

In a letter dated 11 December 1987, the Department advised that the requested internal review had been done, resulting in 'full access' to the documents being granted. What purported to be 'full' copies of the documents were supplied.

But 'full access' had not been granted. The concluding sentence had been removed from one of the documents, a sentence so heavily qualifying the preceding sentences that its absence substantially changed the meaning of the whole document. This deceit was discovered by us and a complaint made to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman immediately investigated.

It was found that the Department had indeed sent a faked document to us whilst deceitfully claiming 'full access' had been granted.

As a result of the Ombudsman's intervention the Department was forced to send the complete documents with an apology.

That is one example amongst many.

We shall disclose more in our next edition.

So this is a very bad piece of legislation.

At the time of writing Senator Jacqui Lambie was lobbying other Senators to vote against and reject the legislation when it reaches the Senate.

We can only hope she succeeds. ■



Senator Jacqui Lambie is lobbying Senators to reject the bill

NATIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

The National Office has settled at its new location in the Robert Poate Reintegration Centre, at Crace, in the ACT. The Centre is one of several operated nationally by Soldier On, and I view our co-location as one way of forging links with the younger generation of veterans.

Our office operates Tuesdays and Thursdays, and now comprises myself, Secretary/Treasurer – Ray Colburn, two Research Officers, and one Office Assistant.

Advocacy remains a prime focus of my activity from first claim application through to VRB procedures, and AAT appearances. I also continue as our representative on the DVA Ex Service Organisations Round Table (ESORT) quarterly meetings, and in the past 12 months I have also represented the Federation on the ESORT Hearing Services Working Group (HSWG), and on the DVA Digital Readiness Video Working Group.

The Office, through the Secretary/Treasurer, continues the administrative workload associated with membership records and finances, Office travel, and appointments. The two research officers respond to investigations relevant to the need of individual veterans and their claims, and to broader issues relevant to the ESORT, and veteran issues generally.

Current Issues

The DVA ESORT and Working Group meetings continue to address relevant issues, and I am confident that the Federation's input is valued. Nevertheless, the outcomes are variable and the pace of change can be slow. Major issues over the last six months have been:

- ESORT HSWG. The Summary Overview of the HSWG is on the DVA website www.dva.gov.au and search on Hearing Services Working Group. The Federation emphasised the disparity between aids available to veterans versus to public servants under Comcare. This did not result in better aids for veterans, rather there is to be a review of the Comcare provisions. DVA have undertaken to improve the level, and standard, of communication with clients regarding hearing services.
- **The Digital Readiness Bill.** This Bill has the aim of improving and enhancing DVA's claim processing through increased use of digital platforms. I have raised concerns (as has ADSO) regarding the provision for public disclosure and information sharing. In my opinion the current safeguards are insufficient. The Federation will continue to monitor developments with this Bill.
- Streamlining of conditions. In October 2016, DVA announced that it had streamlined the claims process for 14 conditions under MCRA. Only nine of the conditions were to be streamlined under the VEA. When queried, DVA's explanation was unsatisfactory, and the Federation has requested more detail and greater transparency.

- The Federation prepared a submission for the Senate Foreign Affairs and Trade Committee hearings on *Suicide by Veterans and Ex-service Personnel*, and I appeared before the committee. The Federation's submission, together with all submissions, can be viewed at www.aph.gov.au and following the links to Committees, and Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Committee. The Federation gained interest in its recommendation that veterans be covered by one piece of legislation, as opposed to the three (soon to be four) Acts that now exist. Other issues relevant to the administration of DVA were also raised in the Federation's submission.

Strategic Issues

- In the National Office we have been considering options to increase the number of volunteer advocates. The need is acute.
- Also on the agenda is the need to think ahead, say 10 years, and plan for the winding down of the Federation. I appreciate that some Branches may also be thinking along the same lines. I propose to present a preliminary discussion paper to the 2017 AGM in August (?) with a view to opening up discussion with Branches and members. Opinions on the way forward will vary of course, but I see a need to ensure a meaningful legacy as most important.
- I am concerned that there is a need for targeted political lobbying, and I am keen to increase my activity in this regard in 2017.

Conclusion

I look forward to the challenges that 2017 will bring, both with regard to the Federation's continued support for all veterans, and for the beginning of deliberations about our future.

Jim Wain
National President
February 2017



NSW BRANCH GENERAL ELECTIONS DUE. INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON CENTRE PAGES AS WELL AS THE BALLOT PAPERS ENCLOSED WITH THIS ISSUE. SEE PAGE 29.



FROM THE EDITORS DESK

Hi everyone, and a belated welcome to 2017, with our first issue for the year. I guess the attempts to encourage a broader input from around our State Branches has met with some approval from members in general, but needs some impetus to encourage a wider brace of articles from State headquarters. I will keep pushing toward a more national interest magazine.

Feedback from my 'special feature' article on the Vietnam War, has been both positive and encouraging, albeit a bit of negative appraisal from a few ex RAN and RAAF, who don't read between the lines. Your turn will come in the July issue.

News of the NSW election reminds me that Branches and Sub-Branched, who have had recent changes to their committees, should check that they have on-forwarded change in leadership, and/or secretaries, to the secretary at the NSW HO to ensure changes are included with details in this Journal as well as both National and NSW State websites.

It is encouraging to see the number of orders received for merchandise in our new online shop on the website: www.vfagranville.org/merchandise.

All NSW members should avail themselves of election ballot information, for 2 Vice-presidents, with the detail and information at page 29 of this issue.

Thanks go to the intrepid volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure your Journal has reached you. However, that can't happen if you have moved and not told anyone of your new address.

editor@vfagranville.org

WORTH A LOOK

Jessica Branch
flyingmanfilms@gmail.com

PTSD Awareness: Short Film - Tender
Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Jessica Branch and I am a producer of Tender, a new Australian Short Film which aims to raise awareness for defence force personnel living with PTSD.

Tender is a fictional story of a captured soldier who must find hope and strength to survive. The film explores some of the issues that may be faced by soldiers on the front line, and strives to remind audiences that for many, returning home from conflict is just the beginning of ongoing struggles. The film stars Jake Speer (Home and Away), Zac Drayson (Winter, Home and Away) and Philippa Northeast (Home and Away).

We invite you to watch the film and would love for you to share the following YouTube link with anyone who you think may be interested in the film.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJ4T9JAZMBY>

If you would like any more information about the film, or to discuss how you can help us to promote the film, please email me at flyingmanfilms@gmail.com. We would be happy to share links to your organisation on our social media and websites.

For more information you can visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/tenderthefilm/>

Or website: <http://www.flyingmanfilms.net/tender.html>

Kind Regards,
Jessica Branch

NSW PRESIDENT REPORT

I welcome all members and readers to our first edition for 2017, and hope we are all in good health, and high in spirit.

One great attribute of Australians, particularly the older variety such as myself, is their willingness to selflessly donate their time, energy and skills to assist those members of the community in need. Ex-service organisations are major beneficiaries of the volunteer mentality of many Australians. This Association is no different in that regard. Our NSW Branch Committee including the Executive, for example, is formed by volunteers elected by the membership. Each has their own positive contribution to make to the Association alongside other valuable volunteers who all perform useful roles within the Granville office. Our many NSW Sub-Branches operate on a similar basis.

Darryl Maher is one such volunteer working out of our Granville office as a very experienced pension officer and a man who has had many life experiences through his long service to this nation as an infantry soldier in the Australian Army, followed by a career in the NSW Police Force plus 18 years service to this Association as a volunteer pension officer. On 5 January this year Darryl decided to greatly **reduce his time in the office to devote more time to his beloved wife in her time of need.** Darryl's contribution to this Association has been nothing short of enormous as he has assisted many, many war veterans and service persons generally obtain their rightful entitlements from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. **We are deeply indebted to Darryl for his service to those who have served and wish he and his wife all the very best for the future.**

I invite our members, and others, to revisit our website www.vvfgranville.org to catch up on the latest issues in which the Association is involved on your behalf. You may also click on the merchandise page and place an order on-line for any of the extended product options. You will also note that should you wish to make a donation just click on the 'Donate Now' icon.

Each two years the Association conducts an election to fill all positions on the NSW Branch Committee in accordance with our Constitution. 2017 is an election year and all nominations closed on 5 February. All positions have been filled with the exception that there are three nominations for two positions of Vice President. Under the terms of our Constitution an election must be held and NSW members will have received a ballot paper as an insert to this issue of the Journal. You are encouraged to submit your vote according to the instructions contained in this Journal. Only votes from 2017 financial members will be counted.

Frank Cole
President
NSW Branch



Younger veterans slow to take on voluntary Pension Officer and Advocacy work

Before



After



**I'm tellin' ya. There were old guys here once. Vietnam Veterans.
Yeah! So where do we go for help now?**

R 17/2

“So when our Vietnam veteran volunteers gracefully withdraw their services there will be, it seems, a dangerous vacuum”

Our New South Wales branch has been helping well over 1,000 veterans annually, and other ADF personnel apply disability pensions for many years. As well it has guided about 300 a year to appeal DVA rejections of their pension claims.

Those totals are close to doubled when the Australian Capital Territory, South Australian, Queensland and Victorian branches contributions are included.

This work has been done, with some notable exceptions, by volunteer Vietnam veterans.

But in five years from now, nearly all Vietnam veterans will be over 70 years of age and many who are now hard working volunteers will

cease their work for one reason or another.

And, of course, other ex-service organisations now relying on Vietnam veteran Pension Officers and Advocates will similarly suffer.

Who will take over the task?

Are there a bunch of younger veterans ready to take our places?

There are certainly plenty of younger veterans’ organisations like *Soldier On* and *The Warriors’ Return* doing good work, but most do not help veterans with their disability compensation claims. With some exceptions, these organisations are interested only in reintegration activities, leaving the ‘bread and butter’ work of disability pension claims to others.

So when our Vietnam veteran volunteers gracefully withdraw their services there will be, it seems, a dangerous vacuum. The question is, who will fill it? Will DVA be forced to step in and have its officers do what our volunteers now do?

DVA stepping in, would, of course, be disastrous. It is essential that Pension Officers, **unequivocally on the veterans’ side, help with claims.** Indeed, it is frightening to think of how many worthy disabled veterans would have missed out on warranted compensation, had veteran Pension Officers and Advocates not assisted.

It is hoped, before it is too late, that **younger veteran volunteers flock to the cause.** ■

OUTREACH PROGRAM PENSION TOURS

Our Outreach Program continues to be extremely successful in reaching out to Veterans, service and ex-service community living in regional and/or remote areas.

Any Veteran, widow of a Veteran, and/or relative of a Veteran in rural NSW, seeking assistance of the Outreach Team in matters of Service Pensions, Disability Pension Claims, War Widow Pensions, and/or MCRS Claims, etc., should contact the *OUTREACH COORDINATOR*, who will organise assistance.

See page 41 for details.

Want to compare your Vietnam experience with the experience of others?

Go to the *Australians at War* Film archive

In the year 2000, a landmark television series was broadcast in Australia. Commissioned by the Department of Veterans' Affairs it was produced by Michael Caulfield and Liz Butler of Mullion Creek Productions. It won a Logie award for best documentary of the year and a permanent place as a teaching resource in virtually every high school and university in the country. It was called *Australians at War*.

From its success grew a desire to establish a national collection of wide-ranging, filmed interviews with veterans of all Australia's wars, conflicts and peace-keeping missions from World War One to Afghanistan. A collection that would provide an unparalleled resource for veterans, historians, students, teachers, researchers, writers, film makers and all Australians interested in our wartime heritage.

Mullion Creek Productions and the Department of Veterans' Affairs put together a consulting group of some of Australia's most eminent military historians to plan and oversee the project. After a year's preparation, production commenced.

It has produced the largest oral history of its kind in the world.

It's worth listening to the stories of some of the Vietnam veterans interviewed to see how their stories compare with your own. ■

How to get there

Go to the web-site, *Australians at War Film Archive*:

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/>

There you will find a page headed by a video of an interview with a veteran.

Under that video screen you will see a tab titled *Advanced Search*.

Click on the *Advanced Search* tab.

A web page will appear headed *Search*.

The first heading under the page heading is *Theme*.

A tab invites you to *Select a Theme*.

Click on *Select a Theme*.

A list drops down. Select *Vietnam*.

Click on *Search* at the bottom of the page.

A list of 338 interviews with Vietnam veterans appears.

Click on any you would like to hear. ■



Also available at this web-site is the 1ATF Data Base .

Also known as the *Australia's Vietnam War* website , it was created by the Military Operations Analysis Team (MOAT) headed by 8RAR Vietnam veteran, Bob Hall, at the University of New South Wales (Canberra).

It provides a unique way of exploring the Vietnam War in great detail, through the use of an interactive *Battle Map*.

You can look up the details of any incident,

including any you participated in, by time or place.

Visitors to this site may register for an account and contribute personal stories, photos and videos against combat events on the Battle Map.

The aim of this is to enrich the history of the Vietnam War for future generations.

This is an amazing interactive web-site, a great credit to Bob Hall and his team.

We suggest you have a look. ■



We've discussed it before, but it's so important, here it is again.

What you should know about 'indexation'

If a government wants to reduce your TPI, Service or other pension in the sneakiest way, it may choose to change the pension's 'indexation'.

This is because, at first, the change to the pension is almost unnoticeable. It is only after a few years of its cumulative effect that the true damage becomes evident.

What, you ask, is 'indexation'?

Our pensions remain static whilst the cost of living rises and wages increase. So every six months an amount is added to our pensions so they can catch up to these increases.

This is known as 'indexation'.

It is important to understand that 'indexation' does not 'increase' the real value of your pension, it simply allows it to catch up.

In simplified terms, our present indexation allows pensions to catch up to increases in the cost of living or increases in the average wage, whichever is the greater.

It is important that both 'cost of living' and 'wages' are included in the indexation calculation because, except for recent post Global Financial Crisis (GFC) years, increases in the average wage

have significantly outpaced increases in the cost of living. It is inevitable that increases in the average wage will, in the future, again significantly outpace increases in the cost of living.

So if a government wants to decrease your pension it can change the indexation method to only take into account increases

in the cost of living, ignoring the greater increase in the average wage.

Our present government introduced legislation into parliament to do just this. The only reason it did not proceed was that the Labor, Greens, Jacqui Lambie and other cross benchers in the Senate made it clear they would defeat the legislation should it come before them.

But it is a tactic the government clearly





Blue Ryan addressing a protest outside Parliament House during the ten year campaign to get fair indexation for the TPI pension.
We must be prepared to do it again.

approves of. It may be on the back-burner now but what of a future in which the Coalition has control of the Senate as well as the House of Representatives.

Should a government succeed in so changing the indexation method, whilst we would not notice much difference in the early stages, the cumulative effect over time would be financially devastating.

The government may spin such changes in two ways.

First it may, with soft voice, assure us that the change won't make much difference. This would be a lie.

Secondly it may plead that such changes are a sacrifice we must make to help repair the budget deficit. But why pick on those least able to pay and anyway, haven't war veterans sacrificed enough?.

We fought for ten years for fair indexation for the TPI Pension. That is, indexation that included in its calculation the increase in the average wage as well as increases in the cost of living.

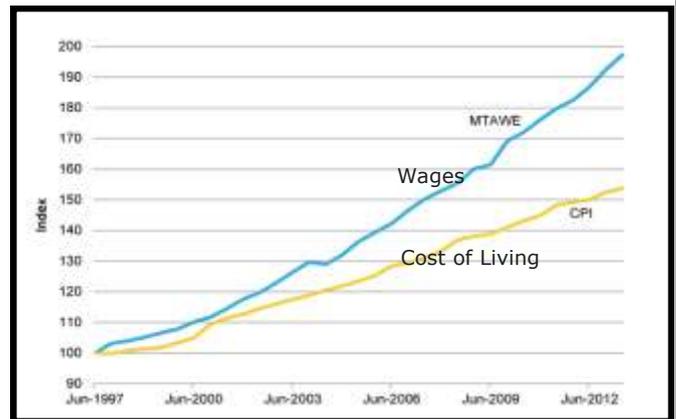
We won concessions along the way and in 2007 we succeeded in having fair indexation applied to the whole pension.

Now, because of those successes, the TPI Pension is worth some \$5,000 a year more than it would have been without them.

This, of course, would be wound back over

time if 'increases in the average wage' were not included in the indexation calculation.

We must be prepared to fight again.■



The graph above compares increases in the average wage with increases in the cost of living from June 1997 to June 2012.

Whilst there has been a much narrower margin since the GFC, it is inevitable that the gap will widen again in the future.

The indexation of Veterans Affairs pensions must be calculated using the greater of increases in the average wage and the cost of living.

Otherwise the financial position of Veterans Affairs pensioners, already under strain, will be seriously eroded.■

More cuts to veterans' benefits

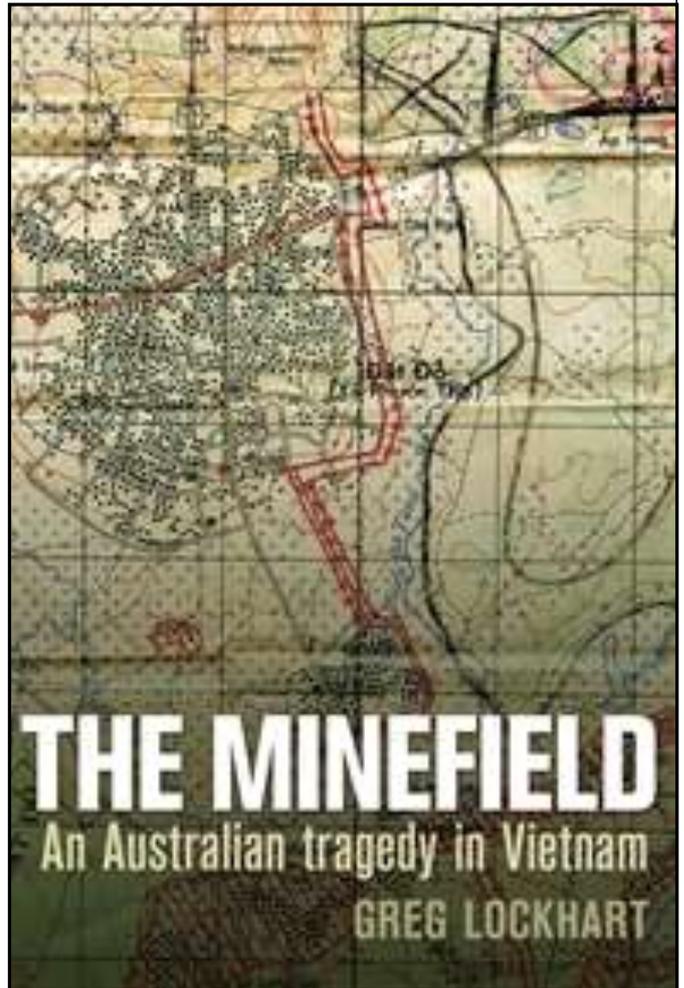
The Government has introduced the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Omnibus Savings and Child Care Reform) Bill 2017*.

The energy supplement (\$14.10 a fortnight) now received by Veterans Affairs pensioners, will not be paid to new recipients.

This follows the Government ceasing to index the supplement for existing recipients so that it will lose real value quickly.

And, of course, on 1 January 2017 some 2000 veterans lost their part Service Pensions because of a harsher assets test.

What's next?.



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For comments about the articles please write to:

'The National Secretary'

Email: racyjoyc@gmail.com

NON-LIABILITY HEALTH CARE

The Government's 2016-17 Budget measure to extend the eligibility for non-liability health care (NLHC) treatment for mental health conditions is now in effect.

This means that all those who have served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) permanent forces are now eligible for health care for a range of mental health conditions without needing to prove that the condition has arisen from, or is linked to, their service. Reservists are also eligible if they have any period of continuous full-time service.



The conditions covered under this arrangement are:

- post-traumatic stress disorder;
- depressive disorder;
- anxiety disorder;
- alcohol use disorder; and
- substance use disorder.

Treatment is provided through a DVA Health Card – For Specific Conditions (White Card) and may include services provided by a general practitioner, medical specialist, psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist or psychiatrist, as well as hospital services, specialist PTSD programs, and pharmaceuticals.

The White Card also confers eligibility to access counselling services through the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service - VVCS.

The new arrangements also make it easier to apply. Applications no longer need to be lodged on an official form, but can instead be made over the phone or by email. In addition to this, a diagnosis is no longer required prior to being approved for NLHC treatment. Instead, a diagnosis from a general practitioner, psychiatrist or clinical psychologist can be provided to DVA within six months of approval. Once a diagnosis of one or more of the five conditions is provided, treatment approval becomes permanent.

For more information:

DVA Factsheet: <http://www.dva.gov.au/factsheet-hsv109-non-liability-health-care>

Phone DVA on 133 254 (metropolitan callers) or 1800 555 254 (regional callers)

E-mail NLHC@dva.gov.au

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

One of our members who served with 3 Cav Regiment during the battles for Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, visited the USA and has recently expressed his view on how US citizens appreciate those who are serving in the US Armed Services.

Apparently, in the USA it is a common occurrence for citizens to approach persons (strangers) in military uniform, shake their hand and say "Thank you for your service!"

Many Australians have a similar approach and perform this ritual when the opportunity arises. Why not adopt this practice yourself whenever you encounter a person in military uniform. Politicians and others do not always get it right when looking after serving Australians. You can show you care by adopting this simple greeting.



For those who remember Ray Fulton

SUICIDE PREVENTION

The best way to prevent suicide is to recognise warning signs and know how to respond if you spot them. If you believe that a friend or family member is suicidal, you can play a role in suicide prevention by pointing out the alternatives, showing that you care, and getting involved.

Signs are many but most include words of warning telling people that they will kill themselves, purchasing or possessing weapons or drugs, withdrawal from family and friends.

What you can do is:

Be yourself and talk calmly. Listen and let them talk. Be sympathetic not judgemental. Offer hope, but above all, take them seriously.

For more immediate advice or assistance, contact

LIFELINE AUSTRALIA 13 11 14

AUSTRALIAN HEARING TURNS 75yrs

Australian Hearing is the current incarnation of the Acoustic Research Laboratory that was set up in 1942. Its initial purpose was the investigation of noise on behalf of the Australian Military during World War II. After the war, it helped those children whose hearing was affected by earlier rubella outbreaks.

Australian Hearing is a statutory authority constituted under the *Australian Hearing Services Act 1991*, reporting to the Minister for Human Services, and is within the Department of Human Services portfolio. Australian Hearing is the largest Australian government-funded hearing aid dispensing company providing hearing care and technologies. One of their areas of interest is hearing testing and supply of hearing aids to the service and veteran community.

The Commonwealth Department of Health (now the Department of Health and Ageing) took over the Laboratory and was renamed the Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratories, with the aim of providing hearing services for children and veterans. It was renamed in 1973 the *National Acoustic Laboratories*.

The *Australian Hearing Services Act 1991* established it as Australian Hearing Services, a Commonwealth Government statutory authority. The name National Acoustics Laboratories was retained for its research division. When the Department of Human Services was formed in 2004, the agency now known as *Australian Hearing* was moved into its portfolio.

QUEENSLAND & AVCAT

Chara's Story

When I was on the cusp of graduating high school I wasn't sure of much, other than my privilege to be able to choose to go on to do further study at university. Many fears came with this prospect, particularly whether or not I would have to work whilst studying. If this was the case, my biggest challenge wasn't going to be the work-study balance. It was going to be whether or not I would be able to spend time with the most important man in my life - my father.

This is where AVCAT stepped in. I am incredibly fortunate to have been a recipient of the Long Tan Bursary. AVCAT has provided me with on-going financial support every semester since I began full-time studies at the University of Queensland in 2014. More importantly, the team at AVCAT continually provide overwhelming moral support. They understand just how important my father is to me, and what his contribution means for the society we live in today.

In contemporary Australia, teenagers are faced with many questions, particularly relating to their future.

When I was in my late teenage years, I was deciding what I could and should be doing with my life. Sadly, as many of you know first hand, this was not a freedom countless young men could decide in the decades of the 60's and 70's. The decisions I was and continue to be faced with will never match that of the ones our Vietnam Veterans had to make when they were young.

Whilst people in my position may never be able to fathom that level of sacrifice, it's uplifting to know that there are people and organisations out there like AVCAT who do what they can to thank and compensate the men - and women - who fought to make their children's future safe. At the very least, it is because of the support from AVCAT, the Vietnam Veterans Federation Association's men's shed in Nerang, Qld and amazing people like my father that I will be able to make some positive contribution to the very community that continually has faith in my abilities.

Chara Scroope, student of Philosophy and Religion Studies at the University of Queensland.

Chara's letter to her mum and dad: *It was good to hear your voices. I forgot to tell you some very good news I received yesterday from my professor. I have won another essay prize. This one is very prestigious as only one student can win it each year. It is awarded by the theosophical society, and the prize is for writing an essay about eastern and western perennial philosophy. This award will be officially recognized on my academic transcript, and I am awarded with \$750!!! I am so happy and in disbelief of this achievement. Anyway I will keep in touch and let you know when I am leaving Sri Lanka. Take care and talk soon. Love always Chara*

(See our AVCAT article/advert on page 40)



WESTERN AUSTRALIA REPORT

The decision to transfer administration of WA Branch members details including annual renewals to Granville has proved successful and now that all have caught up with the new provisions renewals are being processed with success.

Processing of claims in WA is showing signs of slowing down considerably, mainly I suspect due to the age of Vietnam Veterans, most have by now sorted a lot of their claims and or are past retiring age, also there are no where near as many vets on the West coast as there are on the East in spite of the better climate and class of football teams.

Vietnam Veterans claims now mostly consist of upgrades to existing disabilities which has also lead to a drop off in the number of VRBs that we have had to deal with. Additionally there are no where near the number of ADF personnel in WA as there are scattered along the Eastern seaboard so we are not seeing a lot of younger veterans though we do still get the occasional enquiry. I don't have access to any of the ADF bases in WA and that is not likely to change in the near future given the shroud of secrecy that seems to abound in WA. Paranoia or not, I don't know, but it is there.

One area where there has been an increase is in claims for Vietnamese veterans, I processed one claim for a veteran some months back and was successful in obtaining the Service Pension for him and I think the rumour mill has generated a bit of action in that area, it is a pleasure to help these men out.

We have never had the good luck or help that some of the other States have had in obtaining premises and setting up the "Mens Sheds" type activity so unfortunately for me my home is my office, counselling rooms and whatever else is required. Not that we didn't try I've lost track of the number of councils approached for assistance over the years however in the end all to no avail.

I have little else to report other than to advise that we will continue to help any veteran when ever we can. So on that note best wishes to all and I encourage all WA Branch members to see if you can recruit some of your mates into joining the VVFA.

Cheers
Milton Kirk
President WA Branch

This Month 75 years ago, 1942

HMAS Perth, was sunk at the Battle of the Sunda Strait, during the Second World War, on 1st March 1942 , 75 years ago.

Of the 681 sailors, airmen and civilians aboard the *Perth*, 353 were killed in the battle and four sailors who survived the fighting died of their wounds after reaching shore.

The remaining survivors were taken into Japanese captivity where 106 died while prisoners of war and the surviving 218 returned to Australia after the war.

The *Perth* and the United States Cruiser, USS *Houston*, had been the only two large ships to survive the Allied defeat in the Battle of the Java Sea in February 1942.

FREE PENSIONS & ADVOCACY SERVICE

- We represent former as well as current members of the defence force.
- We represent veterans of all conflicts from World War II to Afghanistan.
- We have many years of experience helping with claims in all the Military Compensation schemes.
- If your initial claim has been unreasonably rejected we have experienced Advocates to prepare and present an appeal to the Veterans Review Board.
- Should an appeal to the Veterans Review Board be unsuccessful we can, for entitled veterans, arrange legal representation and legal aid for Administrative Appeals Tribunal hearings.
- These services are free.
- Neither is there any obligation to join our Federation although you would be welcome to do so.

Contact any of our Branches or Sub-Bran­ches from the lists elsewhere in this Journal. Alternatively, visit our website, www.vvfa.org.au, and email from the lists included.

Tasmanians wishing assistance are asked to call Dennis Hanmer OAM from our Outreach Program at our Sydney Head Office on 02 9682 1788.

MEMBERSHIP

**Belonging
Advocacy
Success**

Membership is due on 1 January each year.

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.

TWO HEROES.....75 years on



Wilbert (Darkie) Hudson (MM) was a Gunner with the Australian Army during World War II and the first of two recipients of the Military Medal for bravery against the enemy on Australian mainland soil. Born in Merrylands, NSW in 1920, and known as "Darkie" by his army mates because of his dark-tan, ("Toasted by the Japs" – as Darkie told it). Gunner Hudson was stationed in Berrimah, a suburb of Darwin, during the Japanese attack of Darwin on 19 February 1942. During the attack Gunner Hudson shot down one of the planes and was awarded the Military Medal for his actions.

Later, in June 1942, Hudson was stationed on a naval oil tank in Darwin, which came under a bombing raid by Japanese forces. During this attack Hudson received third-degree burns, but returned fire still. Caught having a shower when the attacks came, he had bolted for the weapons pit in only a towel. Afterwards, with other survivors he was sent to the Army hospital at Adelaide River, before being sent to the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in Melbourne. Great media interest was generated about the survivors of the tanker bombings and they became known as the "Burns Boys".

After his marriage in 1945, Wilbert Hudson and his wife moved to Greystanes, joining Merrylands RSL Sub-Branch that same year. 'Darkie' sadly passed away on 7 July 2002, aged 82, and a memorial was erected at Greystanes NSW, in 2010, in his honour.



Frederick 'Fred' Wombey (MM) was a Lance Bombardier with The Australian Army during World War II, and the second Military Medal recipient for bravery against the enemy on Australian mainland soil, on the same day as 'Darkie', 19 February 1942, but not gazetted until September '42.

Freds citation reads; 'On two occasions at least during attacks on oil tanks at Darwin by enemy dive-bombers and machinegun fire from the air he ordered the gun crew to take cover while he waited for the attacking planes to be sufficiently near to be a good target. His action was partly responsible for the failure of the enemy to dive-bomb the vital area he was defending'.

Born in Sydney in 1922, Lance Bombardier Wombey, or simply 'Fred' to one and all, was brought up on the family apple orchard near Tallong NSW.

Sadly Fred passed away on 2 January 2010 aged 87, and oddly, a few months short of the raising of the memorial to Darkie Hudson. A memorial service was held by the St. Marys' NSW community, including members of his family and, the Vietnam Veterans Association 'Outpost' at St Marys', on 7 January 2010. In 2016 Freds' son returned to Tallong on ANZAC Day wearing his dad's medals.

Jump forward to now. 75 years later. Prime Minister Turnbull, speaking of the anniversary of the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942, spoke of the courage but not of the bravest..... Pity.

Minister for Veterans Affairs, Tehan released a media item which included the words "On the 75th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin the country will stop, pause and reflect on a significant moment in our history and how it has shaped Australia." Anything about bravery, sorry, no..... Pity.

Bob Freshfield
27 February 2017

(From) NORTHERN DAILY LEADER Tuesday January 12, 2017



Reprinted here with the kind permission of Marie Hobson.

War vet focus of display

By Marie Hobson
Gunnedah

GUNNEDAH Water Tower Museum has a new display featuring Vietnam veteran, the late Phillip Gregory Barwick.

The Barwick family donated Phillip's uniform and a citation, as well as an artwork of Trooper Barwick riding in the open top of an army tank. It was painted by one of his army mates.

A new mannequin has been purchased by the Gunnedah and District Historical Society to display the uniform, which is the start of a new section featuring Vietnam veterans.

The Late Phillip Gregory Barwick was a conscript who became one of the many long-term casualties of the Vietnam War.

The son of Harry and Ruby Barwick of Carellan, Kelvin, Phillip was called up for National Service in 1969 and was sent to

Vietnam on the last day of September 1970. He was attached to A Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment from October 10, 1970 to December 16, 1970 and was then transferred to C Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment, from December 17, 1970, until his medical discharge on July 12, 1971.

Trooper Barwick returned to Australia with shocking injuries, including the loss of both eyes, from a rocket propelled grenade onto the machine gun he was operating on his army tank. His devastated parents saw him through 18 months of pain and rehabilitation at Concord Hospital, (Ryde), before he recovered enough to be trained to use a switchboard.

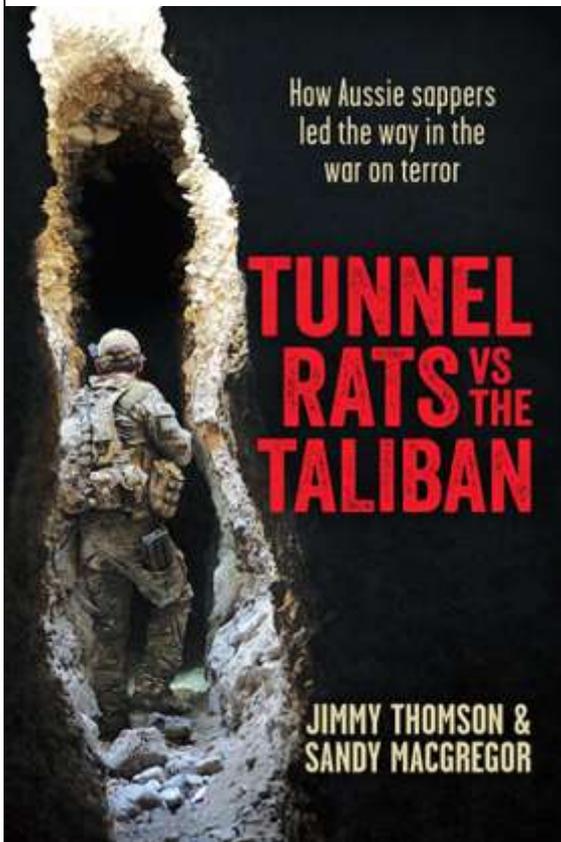
Once a talented sportsman, Phillip Barwick returned to his former place of employment at Peel Valley County Council, Tamworth, with his guide dog, Donna. He also learned Braille and was soon in demand as a speaker for the Guide Dogs association. In 1983, Phillip received a life-saving kidney from his sister, Helen, but the long term effects of his war injuries took a toll on his body, and he died from kidney failure in 1988, leaving a wife, Kath, and a son, Rohan.

The Barwick family erected a memorial on the hill above their home at Carellan where the once carefree child roamed as a boy. When the new Kelvin community hall opened in May 2005, third generation Kelvin resident, John Barwick, presented a plaque in memory of his brother, Private Gregory Barwick, a casualty of the "not-talked-about-war".

The Gunnedah and District Historical Society is keen to expand its Vietnam War display and is seeking photographs of all local veterans. Anyone who can assist is asked to email a resolution image in large file to Marie Hobson at mhobson5@bigpond.com, or deliver to the *Water Tower Museum* during opening hours on Saturday from 10am-2pm or Monday mornings.

See our reunions and notices on pages 42 & 43 of this issue.....

BOOK REVIEW



Tunnel Rats vs the Taliban

How Aussie sappers led the way in the war on terror

By
Jimmy Thomson and Sandy MacGregor

ISBN: 9781760294168

RRP AUD \$22.99

The extraordinary story of Australian sappers on the frontlines of the war in Afghanistan.

They were young, they were tough and they were everywhere. They were both the backyard builders and the frontline troops in Australia's war against the Taliban.

This is the powerful story of the sappers, the Army engineers in Afghanistan whose raw courage and skills were inspired by the original Australian Tunnel Rats of the war in Vietnam. These Tunnel Rats of Afghanistan have rooted out the enemy from deep inside their caves and mountain hideouts, have

defused thousands of improvised explosive devices (the booby traps and landmines of this most recent of wars), built bridges and schools to win a war of hearts and minds, and fought side by side with special forces commandos and SAS troops. They, too, lost a disproportionate number of their comrades and many returned home with the devastating baggage of war, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Inspiring and action packed, this is the story of a special breed of soldier operating in a modern war against an enemy with medieval morals . . . and bombs triggered by mobile phones. It is a story that connects the unsung heroes of Vietnam with the modern heroes of Afghanistan.

This is the fourth collaboration between Thomson and Macgregor, and brings the Sapper wars up to date. Other titles include *'No Need For Heroes'*, *'Tunnel Rats'* and *'A Sappers War'*. The latest edition is available in book form through Allen & Unwin and most good book shops. Also available on CD and ePub editions for most readers.

JIMMY THOMSON is a journalist, author and screenwriter. He is the author of *Snitch*, *Watto* and *Wendell Sailor: Crossing the line*, and co-wrote *Tunnel Rats* and *A Sappers' War* with Sandy MacGregor. As a young captain SANDY MACGREGOR, a graduate of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, commanded the original Tunnel Rats of 3 Field Troop in Vietnam and was awarded the Military Cross. He served in the Army for 30 years, finishing as a colonel in the Reserves.

Cover and text reprinted here with the kind permission of Allen & Unwin Sydney.

Notice General meeting

THE VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC.

A General Meeting of NSW Branch members is required to vote on any change to the NSW Branch Constitution. The NSW Branch Committee has approved certain changes to the Constitution which seek to:

1. Provide for Winding up of the Association
2. Clarify the number of consecutive terms of office for office bearers and committee members
3. Allow for electronic voting.

The General Meeting will be held at Merrylands RSL Club, 14 Military Road, Merrylands New South Wales at 10.45 am on Saturday, 20th May 2017.

The proposals to vary the Constitution are:

AIM

To vary the NSW Branch Constitution to provide for the Winding Up of the Association.

VARIATION REQUIRED

Delete the heading of Clause 14, MEMBERS LIABILITY” in its entirety and insert in lieu “WINDING UP”

Insert in the Constitution contents list between the name “Subscriptions and “Internal disputes” the additional name “Winding up”, Part “II”, Paragraph “14”, Page “9”.

AIM

To vary the NSW Branch Constitution to insert a clause to address the number of consecutive terms of office for office bearers and committee members.

VARIATION REQUIRED

Section 19 - add a new subsection (7) which states that “There is no maximum number of terms of office for the office bearers or ordinary committee members”

AIM

To vary the Constitution to allow for electronic voting.

VARIATION REQUIRED

Section 20 - add a new sub section (8) which states that “Notwithstanding sub section (6) above the Committee may decide to hold such ballot by electronic means.

No further business will be conducted at this meeting.

Ron O'Connor JP

Hon. Secretary

NSW Branch



MEDIA RELEASE

THE HON DAN TEHAN MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR CYBER SECURITY
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE CENTENARY OF ANZAC

7 March 2017

Improved self-help resource available

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Dan Tehan said improvements to an online resource for current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) would better help them manage stress.

Mr Tehan said the *High Res* website had been updated following user feedback to make it easier to use.

"The *High Res* website is a valuable tool that current and former ADF personnel can use to help them manage stress," Mr Tehan said.

"Improvements to the website include a simple step-by-step guide to developing a personal action plan, tips for better sleep and self-help tools on controlled breathing, muscle relaxation, managing negative or distracting thoughts and emotions.

"Current and former ADF personnel are increasingly seeking digital support and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is meeting this growing need through a range of mental health websites and apps.

"I encourage serving and ex-serving members of the ADF and their families to visit the refreshed *High Res* website."

The *High Res* resource can be accessed through DVA's *At Ease* portal at (<https://at-ease.dva.gov.au/highres/>).

Media Contacts:

Minister Tehan's office: Byron Vale - 0428 262 894
Department of Veterans' Affairs Media: 02 6289 6203

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free confidential counselling. Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 8 8241 4546). VVCS is a service founded by Vietnam veterans.



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

Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.

2017

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

[1ST JANUARY – 31ST DECEMBER]

SURNAME	FIRST NAME	SECOND NAME
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

STREET ADDRESS

SUBURB/TOWN	STATE	POST CODE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

HOME PHONE	MOBILE PHONE	OTHER PHONE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

EMAIL ADDRESS [PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY]

SERVICE NUMBER	SERVICE UNIT	O'SEAS AREA OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

NEXT OF KIN	RELATIONSHIP	CONTACT PHONE [NOK]
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

ITEM	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
MEMBERSHIPS SUBS	(YEARS)	@\$30.00 PER YEAR	\$
DONATION	(AMOUNT ONLY)		\$
RAFFLE TICKET/s		@\$2.00 EACH	\$
MERCHANDISE			\$
			\$
			\$
			\$
			\$
Stock item numbers and prices are available on line and from merchandise lists at branches		TOTAL AMOUNT DUE	\$

PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD (Circle one only) CASH CHEQUE MONEY ORDER CREDIT CARD
CREDIT CARD DETAILS (Mastercard or VISA only)
 CARD HOLDER NAME (PRINT) _____ CREDIT CARD NUMBER _____

<input type="text"/>				
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EXPIRY DATE	TRANSACTION AMOUNT	SIGNATURE
(Mnth/Yr) ____/____	\$ _____	<input type="text"/>

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):

VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC..
2017 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - AGENDA

The 2017 Annual General Meeting of the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc., will be held at Merrylands RSL Club 10.30am Saturday, 20 May 2017.

AGENDA

Opening of Meeting by the Chairman

Apologies

Confirm the Minutes of the AGM 2016.

Business Arising from the Minutes of the AGM 2016

President's Report

Treasurer's Report

Secretary's Report

Membership Report

Election results (for Office Bearers)

President

Senior Vice President

Vice Presidents (2)

Secretary

Treasurer

Committee Members (10)

Appointment of Association Auditors

Appointment of Association Legal Representatives

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 Monday 4 May 2017.

Next AGM to be held on a date to be confirmed during May 2018.

Ron O'Connor

Hon. Secretary

NSW Branch

NSW BRANCH MEMBERS – IMPORTANT NOTICE

The NSW Branch conducts an election every two years for office bearers and Committee persons. The election was detailed in the last issue of this Journal and nominations closed on 3 February 2017. Only one nomination was received for each position with the exception of the positions of Vice- President (as distinct from the Senior Vice-President position). There are two Vice-President positions to be filled and we have three nominations for those positions. This necessitates an election, details of which are included as inserts to this issue of the Journal.

The election material has only been included into the Journals for 2017 financial members in order to comply with electoral provisions. Members who have not renewed their membership for 2017 will have a ballot paper forwarded to them by the Returning Officer provided that their renewal form is received at the Granville office by Friday 31 March 2017. The final date for receipt of ballot papers is Wednesday 17 May 2017.

Members are encouraged to renew their membership and to participate in this ballot.

Frank Cole
President
NSW Branch



MERCHANDISE

ABOUT OUR MERCHANDISE

Merchandise is one way we raise funds that enable our association to provide assistance to all service and ex-service, war-widows, their dependents and families, and our allies of all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping services.

We have recently, (since December 1st), added an online shop to the NSW website, (www.vvfganville.org), and all reports are that it is working well. So why not try it out.

Recently, we also included the ability to buy raffle/order raffle tickets online through the 'Merchandise' portal. And, even more recently, there is a 'Donate Now' button that will allow you to alert us of your intention to donate, whereby we will contact you to verify the amount and prompt you for payment details.

The merchandise shop, raffle ticket purchases, and donations, all activate an order form at checkout which is converted to an email and forwarded to our Granville office.

Once received, you will be contacted, from the details as supplied by you, and the items, price and delivery confirmed over the phone. At this point you will have the opportunity to nominate the method of payment.

We will accept, Credit Card (VISA or Mastercard), Cheque, Money Order, or cash if you are calling at the office to collect. We can also arrange direct debit transfer for those inclined. As a means of payment for your chosen items.

Note that we now have a new plaque design with space thereon that you may wish to add a nameplate or Service Corps badge, etc. at your convenience and expense. We will not be supplying this option. New pens are now available that should accept the 'Parker' type larger refills.

There are a number of runout specials now on as indicated by a red asterisk * on the website. A few items, like number plate surrounds have increased in price to reflect changes to post costs.

Finally, Greg Lockharts book on 'The Minefield' is back in stock so get your copy soon. A must read for all.

A MESSAGE FROM NSW STATE SECRETARY

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. Periodically, we will publish a list of individual NSW Branch donors of amounts of \$200 or more. Whilst all donations are gratefully received, and combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are too numerous to list. Donors to the NSW Branch of \$200 or more since the last Journal were:

\$10,000	Ray Hopkins Catherine Cooper
\$5,000	Terry Dixon
\$3,000	Anonymous
\$1,000	Michael Walker, Brian Hunter Warren Axford
\$870	Anonymous
\$500	Tanya Edwards-Hackett, Kevin Faust Martin Taylor, Tram McCombe Geoffrey Jones, Anonymous (2)
\$300	Stephen Bunter, William Smith John Robicheau, Henry Walker Ray Bailey, Geoffrey Peattie Anonymous
\$270	Thomas Grills
\$250	Wesley Hindmarsh
\$200	Dennis Jones, Noel Beattie Ronald Giveen, Rowan Gillard Warren Coupland, Colin Kelson John Kelly, Albert Brown, Ken Jago Geoffrey Carr

Whilst the above 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.

RON O'CONNOR
SECRETARY NSW

SPECIAL FEATURE— SERIALISED HISTORY PART 2

CONTINUING THIS ISSUE WE BRING AN EXPOSE INTO ONE OF THE MOST DEVISIVE PERIODS IN AUSTRALIA IN THE 20TH CENTURY...

THE VIETNAM WAR — AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

Compiled from records, official reports, and historical accounts by Bob Freshfield.

8. The major battles

Each year of Australia's involvement seemed to bring with it at least one or two major confrontations that would become known to Australians as 'battles'. While the battle details that follow are brief, it should be remembered that readers are encouraged to seek further, more descriptive, research material available throughout the internet and unit histories.

Probably the best known and publicized of these was *'The Battle of Long Tan'*. However, as we shall read, it was not the only major battle of the war nor even the largest.

May 1966 saw elements of 1RAR and 5RAR deploy with the Americans 173rd Airborne Company, to secure and set up a Task Force Base at *Nui Dat* near to the center of the province and alongside a major road route (2), that ran from *Vung Tau*, via *Ba Ria*, in the south, north into *Long Khan* Province.

By early June the task force base, 1ATF, was complete with *Artillery* emplacements, *Armoured Corps* with their tanks and APCs', *SAS Squadron* manning the highest point, at what would become known simply as *SAS Hill*, and sundry units like *Signals Corps* and Task Force Headquarters (HQ). 5 RAR arrived in-country during May 1966, and 1 RAR completed its first 'tour-of-duty' in June 1966, to be replaced by 6 RAR.

The 5th and 6th Battalions of the Regiment, each with four rifle companies and a support and administration company as well as their own HQ, took up positions occupying perimeter areas along the base's extended boundaries. Exclusion zones were cleared for added security in approaches to the base. This required the relocation of some villages including *Long Tan*, a known *Viet Cong* hotspot.

Meanwhile, in response to the threat posed by 1

ATF a force of between 1,500 and 2,500 men from the *Viet Cong 275th Regiment*, possibly reinforced by at least one North Vietnamese battalion, and *D445 Provincial Mobile Battalion*, was ordered to move against *Nui Dat*. On the nights of 16 and 17 August 1966, *Viet Cong* mortars and recoilless rifles (RCLs) bombarded *Nui Dat* from a position 2 kilometres (1.2 mi) to its east, damaging the base and wounding 24. The *Viet Cong* positions were then engaged by counter-battery fire and the mortaring ceased.



THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN

Australian radio signalers had tracked 275 *Viet Cong Regiment* transmissions as they moved west to a position just north of the old *Long Tan* village site, but earlier patrols by the Australians had failed to locate the *Viet Cong* unit. On the morning of 18th August 1966, *B Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR)* departed *Nui Dat* to locate the firing points and the direction of the *Viet Cong* withdrawal. A number of weapon pits were subsequently found, as were the positions of the mortars and RCLs.

At around midday *D Company 6RAR* took over from *B Company* and began an active pursuit of a *Viet Cong* squad that had withdrawn in the late afternoon. One of *D Company's* platoons was then engaged by small-arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire.. Numbering only 108 men, *D Company* was facing a much larger force. Pinned down, they called for artillery support as a monsoon rain began, reducing visibility.

Heavy fighting ensued as the attacking battalions of the *Viet Cong 275th Regiment* attempted to encircle and destroy the Australians. After several hours *D Company* was nearly out of ammunition, when 2 'Hueys' from No. 9 Squadron RAAF arrived overhead to resupply them. Heavily outnumbered but supported by very close, accurate, artillery fire, *D Company* held off a regimental assault before a relief force of APCs from 3 Troop 1APC Squadron, carrying Infantry from *A Company 6RAR* fought their way through as darkness fell and forced the *Viet Cong* to withdraw just as they appeared to be preparing for a final assault. Withdrawing to establish a landing zone to evacuate their casualties, the Australians formed a defensive position overnight.

The Australian forces returned to the battle site, in strength, the next day, and located a large number of *Viet Cong* dead. Although believing they had suffered a major defeat, as the scale of the *Viet Cong's* losses were revealed, the Australians realised they had actually won a major victory. *D Company 6RAR* lost 17 killed, and 1 more Australian from

1APC Squadron was also killed, and 24 were wounded.

The *Viet Cong* lost at least 245 dead, with blood trails left as dead and wounded were carried away by the enemy. A decisive Australian victory, *Long Tan* proved a major local setback for the *Viet Cong*, indefinitely forestalling any further movement against *Nui Dat*. Although there were other large-scale encounters in later years, *1 ATF* was not fundamentally challenged again. The battle established the task force's dominance over the province, and allowed it to pursue operations to restore government authority. A *Presidential Unit Citation*, from the USA, was awarded to the men of *D Company 6RAR*.

What should not be forgotten is the continual close in and accurate bombardment of the enemy, throughout the battle, by *American, New Zealand* and *Australian Artillery*, nor the heroism of the *RAAF* crew that flew in the ammunition re-supply in weather that would normally have grounded them.

By April 1967 *5 RAR* was replaced by *7 RAR*, and *2 RAR* with a *New Zealand* contingent of *Infantry* and *Artillery*, forming *2RAR/NZ*, arrived in April and May of 1967 to bring *1 ATF* to one of its fullest capacities of the ten year war, with 3 battalions and sundry other units.



THE BATTLE OF SUOI CHAU PHA

Nearly one year after the *Battle of Long Tan* and after operations that saw *Australian* troops undertaking counter-insurgent strategies, with regular patrols and ambushes along known enemy supply routes, it had become more and more apparent that the *Viet Cong* and larger force *NVA* units had ceased to exist in large operational units in *Phouc Tuy Province*.

However, it was more likely that the *Viet Cong* and *NVA* regiments had decided to recuperate from their losses and entered into a period of re-supply, retraining, and recruitment, keeping as much as possible away from the patrolling *Australians* and their operations.

So it was that on 5 August 1967, during a search and destroy operation north west of *Nui Dat* in the *Hat Dich* area, *A company 7 RAR*, after being inserted into their *Landing Zone* undetected, surprised a forward sentry outpost of the *3rd Battalion, 274 Regiment*. The next day, patrolling aggressively, *A Company* encountered a much larger force of reinforced company sized unit of the same *Viet Cong* regiment. Thus began a full on encounter battle in dense jungle through driving monsoonal rain, with neither side gaining any real advantage.

Over several hours each side battled to outflank one another, at times the opposing forward platoons came face to face with each other trying to achieve the same objective. With casualties mounting *Artillery* was called upon with *Australia* gaining the upper hand, when, just as the *Viet Cong* massed and stood to charge at the *Australian* troops, a barrage of artillery, called in to within 50 meters of the *Australian* forward troops, blasted the *Viet Cong* with such devastation that they began a fierce tactical withdrawal repeatedly firing back at the *Australian* positions as they melted back into the jungle.

In total, the *RAA 106th Field Battery* and the supporting *American* battery of the *US 2/35th Artillery Battalion* fired 1,026 rounds in support of *A Company* during the fighting, while *American 8-inch* and *175 mm* heavy artillery fired another 156 rounds. A number of airstrikes had also supported the *Australians*. *Australian* casualties included 6 killed and 20 wounded, while estimates put the enemy losses with 7 confirmed dead, as many as 33 likely killed by artillery and possibly 100 to 200 wounded.

Captured enemy documents over the next days confirmed that *A Company 7 RAR* had uncovered a major base camp of *274 Regiment Main Force Viet Cong*, with the company they faced, *C12 Company 3rd Battalion*, probably sacrificed to allow the main force to withdraw and evade the *Americans* and *Australian* troops still patrolling over the next week or two. The action saw 8 *Australian* soldiers and 4 *9 Squadron RAAF* aircrew receive gallantry awards, the latter for their part in evacuating the wounded under heavy enemy ground fire, through exploding artillery shells in monsoonal rains.

THE TET OFFENSIVE '68

For the new year in 1968, and coinciding with the *Vietnamese 'TET' festivities*, *Ho Chi Minh* ordered a general uprising in the south by all his forces. Some will say *Minh* wanted to influence the talks about to get under way at the *Paris Peace Talks*, and *Geneva Convention*. Others argue that he wanted to fuel the growing protest against the war in the *US* and other allied countries..

Whatever reasoning, it brought about large scale, extended, aggressive attacks by his forces more accustomed to ambushing then melting away in the jungles or tunnels. The '*Tet Offensive*', as it became known lasted about 25 days in January and February of 1968, and cost *Ho Chi Minh* about 45,000 of his troops without producing the hoped for general uprising of the populace., The *South Vietnam Army* and its allies suffered about 6,000 losses.

With *Australia* holding sway in *Phouc Tuy Province*, through its campaign of counter insurgency, and large scale '*Search and Destroy*' operations. *1ATF* became available for deployment further afield during 1967 into 1968, and with more and more of *Phouc Tuy Province* coming under control, several operations took the *Australians* into other provinces.

2RAR and *7RAR*, along with supporting arms, were deployed to *Bien Hoa Province*, to cover the north-eastern approaches to the *Long Binh–Bien Hoa* air base complex. In the days leading up to the offensive, the *Australians* fought a series of patrol clashes with the enemy. Fighting intensified during February when an *Australian*-manned base, *Fire Support Base Andersen*, came under repeated ground assault. *3RAR* also took part in the operation as *Andersen* was successfully

defended.

In February 1968, *A Company 3RAR* with a troop of 3 APCs fought a savage 24 hour battle to clear the province capital of *Ba Ria* of *Viet Cong Main Force* soldiers. Later *3RAR* thwarted an attack on *Long Dien*, and after sweeping the village town of *Hoa Long* accounted for 50 dead and 25 wounded *Viet Cong*, losing 5 of its soldiers killed and a further 24 wounded.

Australian troops withdrew back to *Nui Dat* while battalions *1RAR* and *7RAR* exchanged tours with the latter heading back to Australia in April of 1968. Likewise forward parties of *2RAR/NZ* and *4RAR/NZ* were getting ready to exchange deployments for later in June 1968.



THE BATTLES OF FIRE SUPPORT BASES CORAL AND BALMORAL

Another attempt to disrupt the *South Vietnamese*, inflict as much damage as possible and to influence the *Paris Peace Talks*, was undertaken by the *North Vietnamese Army* in early May of 1968. This time all efforts seemed centered around *Saigon* and it took a savage pounding as the *South Vietnamese* and *Americans* fought pitched battles to force the *North Vietnamese* to withdraw.

To obstruct the withdrawal of the *North Vietnamese 141 Regiment*, Australia deployed two Battalions into *Binh Duong Province* near *Lai Khe*, to establish a Fire Support Base named *Coral*, - *FSB Coral*. However, the base was only partially completed by the evening of 12 May when it came under heavy bombardment in the early hours of the 13th May. Exploiting pre-dawn gloom and disorganised defences, the *North Vietnamese 141 Regiment*, attacking in battalion strength,

temporarily captured a forward gun position during savage close quarter fighting. Later that same morning, however, the assaults were repulsed, and the Australians reclaimed their forward gun position.

It must be included here that with *1RAR* mainly out on patrol during this first attack, it was the troops from *102 field battery*, *Royal Australian Artillery -RAA-*, with their machine gunners, and a *Mortar Platoon* from *1RAR*, who took the brunt of the first assault of about 250 to 300 enemy. A *New Zealand battery, 161 Bty RNZA*, also joined in from a kilometer away, and helicopter gunships arrived to blast the enemy away from the ground troops.

The following day, *1RAR* was deployed to defend *FSB Coral*, while *3RAR* established another Fire support Base - *FSB Coogee* - to the west of *Coral*, in order to ambush along intelligence reported enemy infiltration routes and staging areas. On 16th May *FSB Coral* was again besieged by heavy bombardment and another battalion sized assault by the *North Vietnamese*. Again the defensive perimeter was momentarily penetrated, but after a six hour battle, by *Artillery* and *1RAR* troops, *141 Regiment NVA* was forced to withdraw after suffering heavy losses. Expecting further attacks Australia reinforced the base with *Centurion Tanks* and additional artillery. On 22 May 1968 *FSB Coral* was again attacked with a short but accurate mortar barrage, terminated by Australian artillery and mortar counter-bombardment. On 25th May the Australians at *Coral* assaulted a number of bunkers that had been located just outside the



base, with *Centurion Tanks* supported by infantry destroying the bunkers and their occupants without loss.

3RAR was then redeployed to establish another Fire Support Base – *FSB Balmoral* – on 24th May, to disrupt the *NVA* forces along *route 16* about 3 miles, (4 km), north of *FSB Coral*. Supported by tanks which had just arrived from *FSB Coral*, 3RAR and Artillery troops were confronted with a two-battalion assault by the 165 Regiment of North Vietnam Army – 165R *NVA* -, on 26 May. Just as before, the base was bombarded with heavy mortar and rocket fire, *D Company* 3RAR took the main brunt of the assault, but superior firepower from the *Centurion Tanks* and the *Infantry* soldiers, repelled the *NVA*.

The *North Vietnamese* attacked *FSB Balmoral* on 28th May, again in regimental strength, but was called off after only 30 minutes, being soundly defeated by the supporting fire of the tanks, artillery and mortars. The Australians then continued the fight to the enemy with aggressive patrolling and ambushing, in the following days, until relieved by *American* and *South Vietnamese* forces on 6 June, when the Australians returned to *Nui Dat*

The battles at *FSBs Coral* and *Balmoral* saw the first time the Australians had clashed with regular *North Vietnamese Army* units operating in regimental strength in conventional warfare. During 26 days of fighting the *NVA* sustained heavy losses and were forced to postpone a further attack on *Saigon*. While 1 *ATF* also suffered significant casualties, in the largest unit-level action of the war, the battles are considered one of the most famous actions fought by the Australian Army during the Vietnam War.

For the record, over the course of the 26 days, Australian losses included 25 killed in action and 99 wounded. The *NVA* and *Viet Cong* losses, although much hidden by the enemy's practice of dragging their dead, and wounded, from the battlefield, have been estimated as 267 dead and 7 wounded.

THE BATTLE OF BINH BA

In early June 1969 an Australian force took part in one of the rarest actions seen by *Australians* in *Vietnam*; house to house close quarter fighting, to clear a village of *Viet Cong* and *NVA* regulars. In an attempt to influence ongoing peace talks, a combined force including a company from the 33 *NVA Regiment*, elements of the *Viet Cong D440 Provincial Mobile Battalion*, and squads from local guerrilla units, occupied *Binh Ba* on the evening of 5th June 1969.

In response, *South Vietnamese ARVN* forces were sent from *Duc Thanh* the following morning. Initial intelligence suggested that a group of about platoon strength had infiltrated the village. However the *South Vietnamese* soon discovered they were facing a larger force, and their district commander subsequently asked 1 *ATF* for assistance in clearing *Binh Ba*.

An understrength (65 men) unit of *D Company* 5RAR was deployed to the village with *Centurion Tanks* and *APCs*, to set about getting the civilians (about 3,000), safely out of harm's way. However, they came under a volley of fire and *RPG* rounds – *Rocket Propelled Grenades* – and soon realised that the enemy was a much larger force than at first reported. As well, *helicopter gunships* heading in to support the ground troops, reported another large force of about 60 *Viet Cong* heading for the village. In total, probably about a battalion strength force was either ensconced in the brick houses among the villagers, or heading toward the village to support those already there.

D Company was joined by *B Company* in the early afternoon, along with more tanks and *APCs*, 105 *Field Battery Artillery*, and *RAAF Gunships* in support. They began their house to house searches, clearing civilians to the rear of the action, and carefully searching the small air-raid bunkers attached to nearly all the houses. Each time the *Infantry* came under fire from a house, it was blasted with a tank round then the *Infantry* moved in to clear the enemy from the rubble, if anyone had survived the initial bombardment.

Harbouring up in defensive positions overnight, the clearance of *Binh Ba* continued throughout the next day, with most of the enemy forces fleeing toward another village, *Duc Trung*, where *ARVN* forces again required the assistance of the Australians to clear that hamlet. By the end of the fourth day most of *Binh Ba* lay in ruin, but

the enemy had withdrawn, leaving behind 107 dead, 8 captured and 6 wounded, for the death of 1 Australian and 10 wounded.



THE BATTLE OF LONG KHAN

The Australian government began reducing troops at the end of 1970 leaving 2 battalions at 1 ATF Nui Dat, along with substantial support of armour, artillery and RAAF air support. By the end of 1970 Phuoc Tuy province was almost free of NVA and Viet Cong large scale movements, and a lot of the security of the provincial towns was left to the South Vietnamese ARVN troops to administer.

With 8RAR going home and not replaced, 3RAR arrived for its second tour to join 7RAR who were also in the process of returning to Australia, and 4RAR/NZ, with a contingent of a Company from New Zealand, arrived in March 1971 as the last elements of 7RAR left. Thus Phuoc Tuy province became the responsibility of just 2 battalions for the remainder of the war.

Patrolling by Australian Special Air Service, (SAS), in the north of Phuoc Tuy province, near the border with Long Khan province, began to show signs of the presence of large numbers the Viet Cong D445 Regiment in the vicinity of the Courtenay rubber plantation. Indeed, when given permission to extend patrolling 4 kilometres into Long Khan province, intelligence gathering found D445 and the 33 NVA regiment were attempting to disrupt local security, using the area to refit and retrain.

Operation Overlord was put into effect with some trepidation among the lower ranks realising the name, landing zones, and date of commencement, being the same as those used during the WW2 Normandy D-day landings, might telegraph

Australia's intentions. However, the operation was launched on 6 June 1971 with 3 RAR and C Squadron Centurion Tanks given the task of driving the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese into a blocking combination of 4 RAR/NZ, A Squadron 3 Cav Regiment, and 8th Battalion 3rd US Cavalry Regiment.

The A battery and 104 Field Battery Artillery had deployed to Fire Support Bases prior to 3 RARs insertion by air of A, B and C Companies, and D company in reserve. No sooner had they landed in the APC secured Landing Zone - LZ - A Company came under direct intense fire. B Company landed about 1,000 metres into their designated landing zone and also took firing from nearly in front of A Company's position. The firing eased after a short while allowing the remainder of the 3 RAR force to land.

Aggressive patrolling and company sized sweep of the area led to the discovery that 3 RAR had been dropped to within 500 metres of a major enemy bunker system. It became apparent that there was a strong presence of a large Viet Cong and NVA troops moving away from 3 RAR, and a few contacts had been reported by the blocking forces. The enemy appeared to be avoiding open combat with the Australians.

The main enemy position had been identified by nightfall on the 6 June, and at dawn on the 7th a heavy Artillery bombardment began for almost an hour. 5 Platoon, B Company (3 RAR), began to advance but had only gone 100 metres when it was pinned down by volleys of firing from its front and both flanks. They had stumbled onto the edge of well concealed and strongly defended bunkers, and called in helicopter gunships rather than run the risk of receiving more casualties by withdrawing.

With the rest of B Company trying to link up with its beleaguered 5 Platoon, D Company with Tanks and APCs began an assault to what was thought to be the rear and flank of the bunker system. However, they began to realise that the system was much larger than anyone expected, and the tanks were forced to halt while the infantry troops were brought up to begin an assault.

By mid-afternoon B Company had stabilised its position with 5 Platoon survivors, and D Company had been repositioned to commence another assault. Pushing through the dense jungle from the north-east with Centurion Tanks in close



support, it was slow going with each bunker at first located by the troops then crushed by the tanks, along with any occupants. *D Company* painstakingly searched each bunker systematically, and it was later found that the area of bunkers covered almost a square kilometer. During this final assault, *C Company*, which had been deployed to the south located and captured a second bunker system that had been hastily abandoned with weapons and ammunition left behind by the fleeing *Viet Cong*.

Australia lost 3 killed and six wounded. Although official records show that only 5 bodies of *Viet Cong* and *NVA* regulars were recovered, it is believed that many more lay in the crushed bunkers. *American Pioneers* and *Australian Engineers* later demolished both bunker sites, depriving the *Viet Cong* of a major resource.



THE BATTLE OF NUI LE

Australia's commitment in Vietnam had been winding down since *8 RAR* headed home and no replacement was made, in November 1970. *7 RAR* completed their second tour in March 1971, and *3 RAR* had arrived in February 1971 to secure the withdrawal of *2 RAR/NZ* after its second tour ended in May 1971, and the arrival of *4 RAR/NZ* in April/May 1971.

3 RAR left for *Australia* in September 1971, leaving *4 RAR/NZ* one of the last combatant troop units to administer a hand over to *ARVN* forces by the end of 1971, in *Phuoc Tuy* province. Ready and waiting, the *Viet Cong* and *NVA* forces began to make their presence felt trying to goad the weakened *Australians* into ambushes for one last attempt to gain a decisive victory over their foe.

On 19 September 1971 a *South Vietnamese Regional Force* at *Cam My* village, in the north of *Phuoc Tuy* province near *Route 2*, came under a rocket and mortar attack. When *Australian APCs* went to investigate and relieve the *South Vietnamese*, they came under small arms fire and *RPG* rounds from a suspected *NVA* force.

The next day *11 Platoon D Company 4 RAR/NZ* made contact with an *NVA* platoon and after a short firefight they discovered 4 dead *NVA* soldiers, and tracks found nearby indicated a large force of some 200 soldiers had passed through

the area. They were recognised as *33rd Regiment NVA*, and suspecting ambushes the *Australian* relief forces skirted around likely ambush points and evaded further contact that day.

Patrols on 21 September led to the discovery of recently sawn logs in the vicinity of the *Courtenay Rubber* plantation suggesting that there may be bunkers nearby. *B and D Companys* moved toward the *Nui Le* area to seek out and destroy the bunkers.

12 Platoon, D Company 4 RAR/NZ made first contact with a bunker system, suffering one dead from a rocket-propelled grenade and four wounded. An estimated platoon strength assault attacked *11 Platoon*, and after a 15-minute firefight the *North Vietnamese* forces withdrew to their bunkers after removing their dead and wounded from the battlefield. The *Australian* and *New Zealand* platoons were ordered to withdraw to an area to the south so airstrikes and artillery could be called in to soften up the bunker systems.

USAF bombers bombed the area with napalm and air to surface missiles. *Bell 'Huey'* and *Cobra* helicopter gunships strafed the area with rockets and machine guns, and *Australian Artillery* also pounded the area. *D Company 4 RAR/NZ* was again ordered forward to search and destroy the bunker system. However, without the support of *Centurion Tanks*, which had been returned to Australia, all soldiers knew this was going to be fought the hard way, hand to hand.

They had gone some 50 metres when the *North Vietnamese* opened up with everything they had, and *11 Platoon* found themselves well inside the bunker complex with 3 killed and pinned down. Many of the grenades thrown by the *NVA* did not explode fortunately for the *Australians*. *12 Platoon* also soon found itself pinned down by machine gun and small arms fire, as it tried to support and join with *11 Platoon*.

The order was given to withdraw under supporting fire, but this could not be done safely until the sun was almost setting. Then just as it was getting dark the *Australians* encountered another *NVA* force. This time close in *Artillery* was called for just as more *NVA* forces could be seen joining the battle. After some 5 hours of close in fighting and *Artillery* bombardment the *North Vietnamese* withdrew almost as the *Australians* were running low on ammunition.

Later, the bunker system was found to be the

NVA 33rd Regimental headquarters. *Australia* had lost 5 killed and 30 wounded. 14 enemy dead bodies were recovered. This proved to be the last major battle of the *Vietnam War* for *Australia*, and with the withdrawal of *4 RAR/NZ* in November 1971, only the *AATTV* was active until December 1972.

Although the preceding paragraphs reflect on seven of the major battles *Australia* fought during the *Vietnam War*, it must be remembered that other battles and skirmishes of all units who went to *Vietnam* during this period fought with distinction, never losing a battle. In *Phuoc Tuy Province* the general populace, despite the occasional atrocity against smaller villages and their elders, could go about tending their farms and rice-paddies, almost oblivious to the war around them. Markets went ahead in larger towns, and major cities like *Vung Tau* saw civilians carrying on in normal business affairs.

NEXT ISSUE

JULY 2017

THE SAGA CONTINUES WITH PART 3

OF OUR SERIES

THE VIETNAM WAR

AN AUSTRALIAN

PERSPECTIVE

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ACCOUNTS OF SOME OF
THE RAN AND RAAF OPS
DURING THE TEN YEARS
OF THE WAR.**

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DO THE ELIGIBILITY TEST
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 YES Go to Question 2. NO You are NOT eligible!

Are you an Australian permanent resident?
 YES Go to Question 3. NO You are NOT eligible!

Are you enrolled or planning to enrol in tertiary studies for a minimum of one year?
 YES Go to Question 4. NO You are NOT eligible!

Will you be studying full-time next year?
 YES Go to Question 5. NO You are NOT eligible!

Are you or will you be eligible for Centrelink's Youth Allowance?
 YES Go to Question 6. NO See Note 1 below.

Are you under 25 yrs. of age? NO See Note 2 below.
 YES

Please contact AVCAT for more information.

NOTES:

1. Scholarships are awarded to those students in disadvantaged circumstances as determined by the means test eligibility for Youth Allowance. You need to be *eligible* for Youth Allowance even if not receiving it.
2. If you are older than 25 years you will need to explain the reasons for your delay in tertiary studies.

 To find out more please feel free to contact AVCAT:



P: 02 9213 7999 or
 E: avcat@dva.gov.au
 or go our website:
www.avcat.org.au

*OUTREACH PROGRAM
 PENSION TOURS*

Our Outreach Program continues to be extremely successful in reaching out to Veterans, service and ex-service community living in regional and/or remote areas.

Any Veteran, widow of a Veteran, and/or relative of a Veteran in rural NSW, seeking assistance of the Outreach Team in matters of Service Pensions, Disability Pension Claims, War Widow Pensions, and/or MCRS Claims, etc., should contact the *OUTREACH COORDINATOR* (below) , who will organise assistance.

In the event that members have friends who need assistance they are urged to contact Dennis Hanmer OAM who will coordinate the visit program. Of course, the more people wishing assistance in any one town or rural area, the more fulfilling the trip will be for the team.

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 Email: secretary@vfvagranville.org
 Mail: VVPPAA (NSW Branch) Inc.,
 PO Box 170, Granville. 2142

REUNIONS & NOTICES

YEAR OF WONDERS

Words and music by Lachlan Irvine

Nineteen hundred and sixty-eight began in a foreign land;
 I carried a radio on my back and a rifle in my hand.
It seemed like only yesterday, the "summer of love" had been,
 And I was groovin' to Sergeant Pepper in the twilight of my teens.
 It was a year of many wonders, the history books tell it true,
 It took a wide-eyed country boy a long way from Dunedoo.

The enemy came out to fight on the holy day of Tet,
 But that was just an early sign that I ain't seen nothin' yet.
 We took some fire and spilled some blood in a battle near Trang Bom,
 While the big man in the White House told the world he couldn't go on.
 It was a year of many wonders, the history books tell it true,
 It took a wide-eyed country boy a long way from Dunedoo.

A King of peace climbed a mountain top, his words and deeds inspire;
 A coward's bullet cut him down and cities caught on fire.
 We had our own mountain to climb, Long Hai was its name;
 With minefields, tunnels and endless ways to kill, to wound, to maim.
 It was a year of many wonders, the history books tell it true,
 It took a wide-eyed country boy a long way from Dunedoo.

A season in Hell for seven weeks of blood and sand and fire;
 The whole wide world was comin' apart while the body count grew higher.
 There was one more lesson still to learn, before the pain would end;
 I would find out how it feels to lose a real good friend.
 It was a year of many wonders, the history books tell it true,
 It took a wide-eyed country boy a long way from Dunedoo.

Barricades in gay Paree, the spirit of Soixant-Huit;
 There was revolution in the air and carnage in the street.
 In a patch of scrub called Coral we went looking for a fight,
 But nothing could prepare us for what hit us that first night.
 It was a year of many wonders, the history books tell it true,
 It took a wide-eyed country boy a long way from Dunedoo.

For days and weeks the battle raged, and raged and raged some more;
 As we dug in at Balmoral and let slip the dogs of war.
 I couldn't believe I heard it right, when the man on the radio said
 The news from California was another Kennedy dead.
 It was a year of many wonders, the history books tell it true,
 It took a wide-eyed country boy a long way from Dunedoo.

Prague was a place for poets, you could hear the people sing;
 Till tank tracks rumbled through the streets to crush the hopes of Spring.
 We faced the worst and did our best till every test was passed,
 And our weary band of brothers made it back to base at last.
 It was a year of many wonders, the history books tell it true,
 It took a wide-eyed country boy a long way from Dunedoo.

Black Power at the Olympic Games; fists raised to the sky;
 So many troubles round the world and young people asking why.
 The only thing that mattered, that I could do or say,
 Was try my best to be alive at the end of every day.
 It was a year of many wonders, the history books tell it true,
 It took a wide-eyed country boy a long way from Dunedoo.

Reprinted here with the kind permission of Lachlan Irvine, we thought it appropriate with the 50th Anniversary of the battles of Coral and Balmoral just over 12 months away, in May 2018. The verse and song tells of Lachlans tour with 3 RAR in 1968 through historical events and his own trauma serving in Vietnam. You can catch Lachlan at <http://lachlanirvine.tripod.com>Ed

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!!

Phone Veterans and Veterans Counselling Service
on 1800 011 046 or 9761 5000

Operation *Life* workshops' emphasis is on suicide prevention - they aim to help members of the veteran community to recognise someone who might be having thoughts of suicide and to link them in with appropriate help. There are three types of workshops:

- Suicide alertness for everyone: (Safetalk) - half day presentation.
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training: (ASIST) - Two-day skills training
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Tune-up: (ASIST Tune Up) - half day refresher workshop

Workshops are open to people who are concerned about veterans, their family, friends or mates in the veteran community. Welfare, pension officers and other helpers from ex-service organisations and the veteran community are encouraged to attend



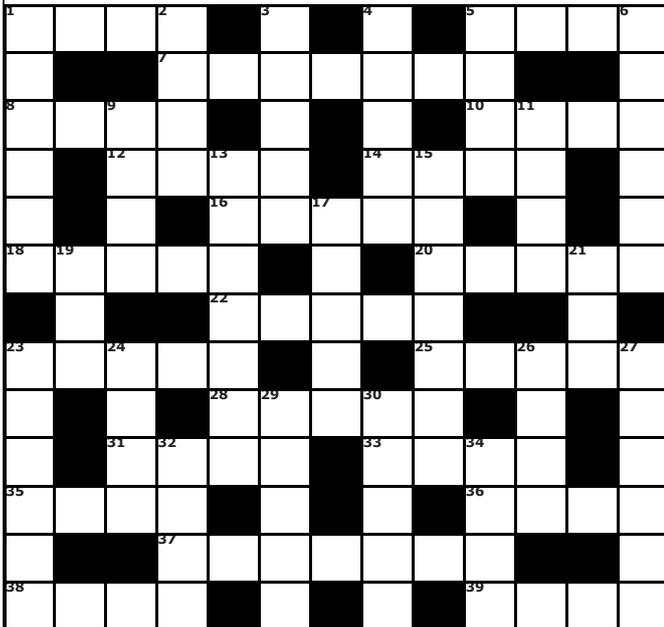
Veterans & Veterans Families Counselling Service
A service founded by Vietnam Veterans

BRANCH LISTINGS NSW SUB-BRANCHES

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BRANCH LISTINGS OTHER STATES

CROSSWORD CORNER



ACROSS

DOWN

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Submissive | 1. Islam church |
| 5. Crypt | 2. Weight (abbrev) |
| 7. Perfectly | 3. Striped equine |
| 8. Yacht sheet | 4. In the air |
| 10. Express relief | 5. Sort |
| 12. Entranceway | 6. Sent down ball |
| 14. Liberate | 9. Not working |
| 16. Glue | 11. Brave man |
| 18. Expel | 13. Supreme |
| 20. People cluster | 15. Get better |
| 22. Ice house | 17. Side dish |
| 23. Teem | 19. Lower chin |
| 25. Imitation leather | 21. How, when, what, ? |
| 28. Unjustified | 23. Feel level |
| 31. Tibetan priest | 24. Shaft |
| 33. Streetcar | 26. Title |
| 35. Above | 27. Sheen, gloss |
| 36. Warm up (food) | 29. Grandma |
| 37. Give in, yield | 30. Speak, say |
| 38. Tall, of hill | 32. Curved entrance |
| 39. Pack animal | 34. Cough sound |

Solution next issue.

THE UNKNOWN COMIC

This guy in a restaurant suddenly realised he had a desperate need to pass wind. The music was really, really loud, so he tuned into the beat of the music and let rip with each crescendo. After just a few songs he felt better with himself, finished his coffee, and looked around. Only to notice that everybody was staring at him... That was when he remembered he was listening to his iPod.

Just because no one complains doesn't mean all parachutes are perfect.

Their barn burned down so his wife called the insurance company and spoke to the insurance agent and said, "We had that barn insured for fifty thousand, and I want my money."

The agent replied, "Whoa there, hang on a minute. Insurance doesn't work quite like that. An independent assessor will value what was insured, and then we'll provide you with a new barn of similar worth." There was a pause, and then the wife replied, "If that's how it works, then I want to cancel the life insurance policy on my husband."

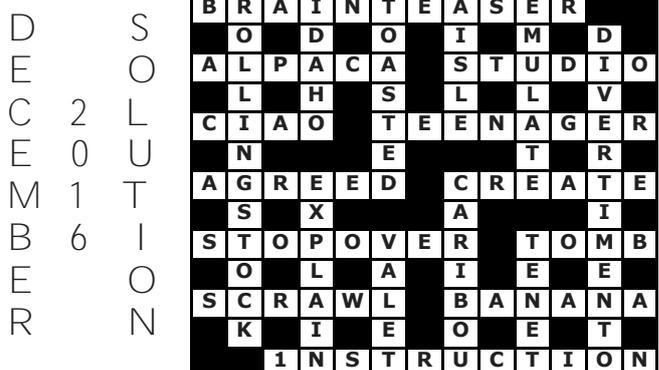
A man and his wife were having some problems and were giving each other the silent treatment. The next week, the man realised that he'd need his wife to wake him at 5 a.m. for an early flight.

Not wanting to be the first to break the silence, he finally wrote on a piece of paper: "Please wake me at 5 a.m."

The next morning the man woke up, only to discover it was 9 a.m. and he'd missed his flight.

Furious, he was about to go and scream at his wife when he noticed a piece of paper by the bed that said: "It's 5 a.m. Wake up."

It worries me that doctors practice medicine.





VVCS - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service

A service founded by Vietnam veterans

The VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service provides counselling and group programs to Australian veterans, peacekeepers and their families. It is a specialised, free and confidential Australia-wide service.

VVCS staff are qualified psychologists or social workers with experience in working with veterans, peacekeepers and their families. They can provide a wide range of treatments and programs for war and service-related mental health conditions including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Veterans Line can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and counselling.

Phone 1800 011 046.*

* Free local call. Calls from mobile or pay phones may incur charges.



1300 924 522

Our programs

Alcohol Drugs Eating disorders
Anxiety Depression Bipolar
disorder
Borderline personality disorder
Schizophrenia and psychosis
Veterans services

Wesley Hospital Ashfield and Wesley Hospital Kogarah provide compassionate care for those in need of psychiatric help. The goal of the hospitals is to provide positive outcomes, not only for our patients with a mental illness but also for their family and carers. As centres of excellence within Wesley Mission our Wesley Hospitals have been providing professional and compassionate care for over 60 years.

Wesley Hospital Ashfield and Wesley Hospital Kogarah are private psychiatric hospitals which offer both in-patient and day patient services. Our treatment programs combine medication, therapy and include life skills and support networks to ensure recovery is effective, ongoing and enriching.

91 Milton Street,
Ashfield NSW 2131

&

7 Blake Street,
Kogarah NSW 2217

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

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SECOND NAME

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YOUR SIGNATURE

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

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 PO Box 170
 Granville
 NSW 2142**

OFFICE USE ONLY

**MEMBERSHIP REGISTRY
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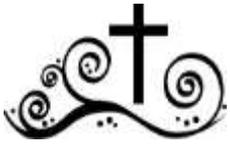
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But each one, man by man, has won imperishable praise!

Each has won a glorious grave - not that sepulchre of earth wherein they lie, but the living tomb of everlasting remembrance wherein their glory is enshrined. Remembrance that will live on the lips, that will blossom in the deeds of their countrymen the world over. For the whole earth is the sepulchre of heroes. Monuments may rise and tablets be set up to them in their own land, but on far-off shores there is an abiding memorial that no pen or chisel has traced; it is graven, not on stone or brass, but on the living heart of humanity. Take these men for your example. Like them, remember that prosperity can be only for the free, that *freedom* is the sure possession of those alone who have courage to defend it. Pericles

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.

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

The following businesses are offering discounts to members of The Vietnam Veterans Federation.

MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICES	SMASH REPAIRS	BATTERIES	FLOOR COVERINGS
<p>CARNEEDS Pty Ltd 152 Parramatta Rd STANMORE Prptr: Robert Stenta Ph: 9519 1441 10% discount On mechanical repairs & competitive prices on tyres and batteries. To all Vietnam Veterans Federation Members.</p> <p>MALCOLM MOTORS Automotive Service Specialist. All mechanical repairs & servicing. 15% Discount for members on services and repairs. JOE CARE 603-605 Parramatta Rd Leichhardt NSW MTA Lic. # 42198</p>	<p>Wreck-A-Mended Smash Repairs Unit 1, 20 Bosci Rd Ingleburn NSW 02 9605 9008 Ask for Alan Tell them you are a member and they will send us a donation</p>	<p>POWER PRODUCTS For all your power needs</p> <p>BATTERIES SOLAR POWER INVERTERS GENERATORS</p> <p><i>Motor Cycle battery specialists</i></p> <p>Russell is offering 15% discount to VVF Members on Batteries . 5% on Solar products, Inverters & Chargers 10%</p> <p>3/3 Sovereign Pl Sth Windsor Ph: (02) 4577 7761 Fax: (02) 4577 7768</p>	<p>Waratah Floor Coverings 473 Burwood Rd BELMORE Ph: (02) 9759 6511 Ask for Special Rate</p>
	MOTOR CYCLE ACCESSORIES		MOTELS
	<p>Motor Cycle Accessories Supermarket Head Office. 321 Parramatta Rd Auburn NSW (02) 9648 1400 www.mcas.com.au</p> <p>CITY: 9261 5182. LIVERPOOL: 9601 8276. CARINGBAH 9574 5100 PENRITH 4737 6100</p> <p>10% Discount except helmets and tyres</p>	<p>Ashfield Battery Centre 110 FREDERICK STREET ASHFIELD, NSW, 2131 02 9798-6166 GEORGE KAWAUCHI (owner) We sell: CAR, TRUCK, MARINE, DEEP CYCLE, GOLF CART, MOBILITY, MOTOR CYCLE BATTERIES. CHARGERS, SOLAR PANELS, BOOSTER CABLES, FUSES, GLOBES, INVERTERS, TERMINALS, BATTERY BOXES. OPEN FROM: 9am - 5- 30pm Mon-Fri OPEN SAT FROM: 9.30am- 3.30pm Closed Sundays and public holidays. 10% Discount to veterans</p>	<p>Golden Chain Motor Inn Ltd Ph: 1800 023 966</p> <p>Must have Golden Chain Card. Its Free When You Call The Number Above And Ask Present your Federation membership card and ask for a "Golden Link" card to be issued.</p> <p>There is a 10% discount on room rates Australia wide</p>
TRAILERS TOWBARS BULLBARS			TRAVEL TRANSFERS
<p>Fastfit Bullbars & Towbars Trailer sales and spares-side steps Bike beacons-Custom work 65 St Hilliers Road AUBURN Ph: (02) 9749 1209 10% Discount on products</p>	TYRES		<p>GROUP TRANSFER Airport or Cruise Terminals All Tours, All Services 15% DISCOUNT FOR VETERANS For Bookings call: Michael Viet (02) 9723 2262 0404 754 899</p>
EXHAUST SYSTEMS			
<p>Menai Mufflers Unit 4/788 Old Illawarra Rd MENAI Ph: (02) 9541 4720 20% Discount</p> <p>Balmian Radiator Centre Mark Borghonzian 22d Crystal St ROZELLE Ph: (02) 9818 4920 Mbl: 0419 417 206 10% Discount</p>	<p> BRIDGESTONE Tyres & Complete Auto Servicing. 10% discount to members (not current specials) 223 Woodville Rd Merrylands NSW 02 9897 1002 Mon-Fri 8—5 Sat 8:30-12:30</p>		

