



# THE VIETNAM VETERANS' NEWSLETTER

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

APRIL 2020

## *Operation Hammersley, February 1970*



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- AND MORE

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**Coroner's inquests**

**claims for Detriment Caused by Defective Administration - CDDA**

*See our article elsewhere in this issue*

# Operation Hammersley

## Success, disaster and a lost opportunity

ON 10 February 1970, 8RAR sent C Company to protect a squadron of Army engineers quarrying for road making material near the northern end of the Long Hai hills.

The Long Hai's rise out of the sea in the southern tip of Phuoc Tuy Province and sprawl northwards for some ten kilometres. They are a craggy, contorted range of hills strewn with huge boulders, their irregular folds concealing steep sided valleys and the mouths of many caves.

Within the radius of three or four kilometres from the hills lie some of the Province's largest and most important villages. The nature of the terrain and the proximity of the villages made the Long Hai hills a favourite place for guerilla groups to hide.

To augment the protection already offered by the nature of the landscape, the Viet Cong (properly known as the National Liberation Front for the Southern Region) planted hundreds, perhaps thousands, of mines (many lifted from the Australian minefield) around the approaches to the hills. Already, too many of these mines had been triggered by allied soldiers and vehicles and each new mine incident added to the threatening rash of red dots on the mine incident map.

Three nights into the protective task, 9 Platoon was waiting in ambush near the northern tip of the Long Hai's. An unexpectedly large enemy group heading towards the villages of Dat Do and Long Dien, presented themselves on the track and a fierce firefight ensued. After the arrival of armoured vehicles from the quarry, the enemy withdrew leaving 10 of their dead but dragging many dead and wounded with them.

At Battalion headquarters the Commanding Officer and the Intelligence Officer listened as the radio brought details of the fight. The enemy had not, it seemed, come from the hills near the quarry, but from further south. The Intelligence Officer examined air photos of the Long Hai's, following a track which hugged the eastern side of the range. He was looking for creeks, with suitable soil for bunker construction and with vegetation that would conceal the ground from aerial observation—areas where the enemy might build a camp. He found several of these areas, circled them in red chinagraph and passed them to the Commanding Officer.

That night D Company deployed to the area in Armoured Personnel Carriers.

At first light the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel O'Neil with his headquarters and B Company joined them.

He then deployed two rifle companies to search for the enemy camp and the third to set up ambushes to the east of the hills to catch enemy soldiers who might be flushed out by the searchers. To reduce the danger from mines, searching companies travelled in armoured personnel carriers, which, to reduce the risk even further, dogged the tracks of tanks.

Over the following few days, the companies had many small contacts, found many bunker systems, unearthed many caches of food and weapons and had many mine incidents.

*(Continued on page 2)*

On 18 February, C Company was a long way south of its starting point at the northern tip of the Long Hai's and was approaching one of the valleys circled in red by the Intelligence Officer. There the company engaged a party of three enemy soldiers capturing one of them. The captured soldier, under interrogation, pointed out a nearby bunker system he said was manned by 30 or 40 enemy. It all made sense. The already identified likely location and the usual number of enemy manning bunker systems.

Major Rankine had under his command 16 armoured personnel carriers packed with his infantry company and four tanks. He ordered them into line, then attacked.

The row of armoured vehicles crashed through the scrub and emerged on the far side into a hail of anti-tank RPG-7 rockets and heavy machine gun fire. The vehicles rolled past one line of bunkers to be confronted by another and yet more in the distance. One of the armoured personnel carriers took a direct hit and was lost behind a wall of smoke and flame. It was obvious that this was no small camp of 30 or 40 soldiers.

Counter revolutionary guerilla warfare does not ordinarily lend itself to acts of heroism; rather it calls for patience, persistence, endurance and skill. However the armoured personnel carrier was now engulfed in flames with men trapped inside. Lance Corporal Coe and Corporal Macey leaped from their respective vehicles and, in full view and under heavy fire, ran to the disabled vehicle and forced open the hefty rear doors. Mindless of the battle raging around them, they led and carried the five dazed C Company soldiers they found inside to safety.

Coe and Macey immediately returned to rescue the two crewmen but by this time an enemy soldier had placed an explosive charge on the side of the crippled vehicle and it was a raging inferno.

After withdrawing to regroup, evacuate the wounded and restock the tanks with ammunition, C Company again attacked. The big guns on the tanks and the medium and heavy machine guns sported by the other armoured vehicles were thumping and chattering. Major Rankine had called up artillery and it was already crashing at a safe distance round them. The tanks were homing



in on the bunkers and were trying to bust them open with twenty-pound high explosive shells. When a bunker was blown apart, the high explosive shell was quickly followed by a shotgun shell.

It was not, however, a one-way street. RPG-7 rockets were being fired from the bunkers and those that hit squarely punched holes through the tanks' armour. **All the tanks had been holed but none so far had been disabled or crew wounded.**

As Major Rankine's force fought its way deeper into the enemy camp the position became clear. C Company was in the mouth of a large and broken valley. The entire valley was heavily fortified by bunkers and being defended by determined well-armed soldiers. Rather than having engaged a small enemy camp, Major Rankine realised C Company had taken on a well-prepared battalion.

At the same time Lieutenant Colonel O'Neill was **planning to prevent the enemy from escaping.** Aerial reconnaissance had revealed that the valley was enclosed by steep cliffs, except for

*(Continued on page 3)*

its wide and broken mouth. He concluded that the most likely enemy escape route was out the mouth of the valley then east or north to the nearby jungle. Nevertheless artillery was directed to the cliffs enclosing the valley to cover any attempt to escape into the hills. In case the enemy decided to use the rear escape route, jeep mounted heavy machine guns were



positioned to cover the bare hills. The same bare hills became the cone of fire for a circling Spooky aircraft. And at night Spooky was to illuminate the target area by dropping flares.

The escape route most likely to be used the Commanding Officer entrusted to his two unengaged rifle companies. They moved close to the mouth of the valley and, after overcoming the fierce resistance of some enemy patrols, established strong ambushes of infantry supported by armoured vehicles. During this complex manoeuvre some troops from D Company were mistaken for enemy resulting in ten casualties (only one being serious).

Meanwhile the violence in the valley was becoming more intense. An American and an Australian warship lying offshore joined the artillery barrage which now included fire from every Australian, South Vietnamese and US artillery piece and mortar within range.

Not bowing to the pressure, the enemy were also becoming more aggressive. Major Rankine realised that the enemy were concentrating to counter-attack. He assessed that the fire from his armoured vehicles could defeat such an attack, but was alarmed that some of his four tanks could well be disabled in the process. He quickly dismissed the option of withdrawing and, instead, ordered that all hatches, doors and firing slits on the armoured vehicles be closed. Once this was done, he called in an airstrike almost on top of himself. The resultant chunks of shrapnel severely tested the thinner armour of the armoured personnel

carriers. The Australian soldiers remained safe, **however, and the enemy's counter-attack was devastated.**

Having sealed the escape routes as thoroughly as possible, the Commanding Officer turned his attention to the opponents in the valley. Documents taken from enemy dead three days before identified the battalion in the bunkers as D445. This was confirmed by the prisoner-of-war taken just prior to the launching of the attack.

D445 was a locally based Viet Cong (NLF) battalion, recruited mainly from the villages of Phuoc Tuy Province. It was well equipped and well trained and had proved itself to be a constantly aggressive, effective and elusive adversary.

Lieutenant Colonel O'Neill realised that the destruction of D445 would serve three important purposes: a major defeat would seriously weaken the military capability of the enemy in the Province, and deny them the use of the Long Hai hills sanctuary close to the villages. Perhaps more **importantly, D455's destruction would demoralise** its revolutionary supporters within those villages.

The afternoon was fading into evening as **Major Rankine's force withdrew to join the other two companies which were ambushing the mouth of the valley. In an hour and a half of fierce fighting Major Rankine's force had inflicted an estimated 100 casualties on the enemy and was**

*(Continued on page 4)*

now situated to inflict more should the enemy decide to make a night-time dash for the jungle. In the event of them staying, the whole of 8RAR with the armoured personnel carriers and tanks was now positioned to mount a coordinated attack on the valley next morning.

In the 8RAR command post, headquarters staff worked on the plan for the next mornings attack. This included an extra allocation of tanks, a most important addition. There was amongst them a **heightened sense of purpose**. The afternoon's action had already been a battle of special significance. But the fight which might erupt **amongst the ambushes at the valley's mouth**, or failing that, next morning in the valley itself, offered a good chance to completely destroy D445. That made the imminent conflict perhaps the most important Australian battle ever fought in Phuoc Tuy Province.

No one could believe what happened next. The order came through from the Task Force commander that all troops must withdraw to a safe distance of 3000 metres as there was to be a B52 strike on the target. The order to withdraw was to be effective immediately while there was still some late afternoon light.

The scene was more like one from a silent movie than from a military command post. Mouths moved without uttering sounds but gestures and faces reflected the unmistakable message: disbelief. The order was confirmed and **the staff's powers of speech returned**.

**'Perhaps we should leave the Salvos behind to make them cups of tea as they leave. After all they've had a hard day.'**

**Everyone understood the speaker's point.** As soon as night fell enemy patrols would head for the mouth of the valley to reconnoitre the escape routes. They would send back the astonishing news that the routes were clear. D445 would quickly take advantage, not knowing whether this opportunity would last. They would leave probably taking with them their wounded and as many of their dead as they could.

It was possible, of course, that the B52s would arrive before the exodus, but daylight was rapidly fading and a battalion attack following a bombing could not begin till first light. And by first light the enemy would be gone, bombing or no bombing. Anyway, B52 strikes usually took many hours to organize. There was no doubt in **staff's minds that the planned battalion attack with extra tanks was by far the better option.**

In the event the B52 strike did not arrive that night. Disappointingly (to say the least) the enemy were given two clear nights and a day to escape before the bombs arrived.

When the companies returned to the valley for bomb damage assessment, it was largely deserted, and almost none of the bunkers had been affected.

8RAR Vietnam veteran and historian Bob Hall in his book *Combat Battalion* reports some of **the troops' reactions**. **Company commanders he writes, were disgusted and 'despite the possibility they might have suffered more casualties had the assault gone ahead, the soldiers were equally angry that the showdown with D445 had been called off.'**

Vietnam veteran and historian, Greg Lockhart in his book *The Minefield*, states: **'Nor has anyone been able to offer a clear account of how 1ATF managed to pull such a timid failure from the jaws of an almost assured victory.'**

For the next ten days the companies patrolled the hills, inflicting casualties on the enemy, uncovering numerous caches, destroying over 200 bunkers and finding many new graves and abandoned enemy dead.

On 28 February, a platoon from A Company was sent up into the hills to ambush some tracks intelligence identified as being in use.

The platoon moved at a slow pace with an engineer splinter team clearing the track with mine detectors.

*(Continued on page 5)*

They reached a flat area. One of the engineers dropped his pack and began clearing the area with his mine detector. With the area cleared the platoon harboured, ready to fill water bottles at a nearby water source. Flack jackets and helmets were taken off to relieve the heat. The engineer walked over to his pack he had dropped before clearing the area to retrieve some explosive to destroy a booby trap discovered on the track. He trod on a jumping jack mine. It was immediately behind his pack.

The resulting carnage left nine killed and fifteen wounded, a toll that would have been greater but for the 'professional' and brave efforts of the survivors.

It was 1 ATF's worst mine incident.

Meanwhile, Task Force headquarters having allowed the escape of D445, ordered 6RAR to pursue them. The Task Force headquarters was moving the battle from a location at which our troops had a decisive advantage to the jungle where that advantage evaporated. Consequently the pursuit went badly. On the same day as the 8RAR mine tragedy, two 6RAR platoons, a long way to the north and east of the Long Hai's, bumped a bunker system occupied by a party of the fleeing D445. In the ensuing fight, the 6RAR troops suffered fourteen wounded.

However, no other contact with the elusive battalion was made and after four weeks the pursuit was called off.

A badly damaged and depleted D445 had melted deep into the jungle, perhaps even into another province, to lick its wounds.

Operation Hammersley had been a great success with the badly damaged D445 kept out of operation in Phuoc Tuy Province allowing more focus on pacification operations. But the heavy

cost in casualties with 11 KIA and 59 wounded and the lost opportunity to completely destroy D445 clouded that success.

For the excellence of its tour of duty in Vietnam including Operation Hamersley, 8RAR was awarded the South Vietnamese Government's Meritorious Unit Commendation, including Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation.

References:

Robert A Hall, *Combat Battalion, The Eighth Battalion in Vietnam*, Allen and Unwin, 2000.

Greg Lockhart, *The Minefield, An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam*, Allen and Unwin, 2007.

Graham Walker, 'Like a Cardhouse in the Wind' in Kenneth Maddock (ed), *Memories of Vietnam*, Random House, 1991.



Lt Col O'Neill, on behalf of 8RAR, accepts the South Vietnamese Government's Meritorious Unit Commendation, including Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation from Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri.



**VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION of AUSTRALIA Inc.**

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*Cover design*

*8RAR with 2 Tp A Sqn 1 Armd Regt and  
3 Tp B Sqn 3Cav Regt at the Long Hai's during  
Operation Hammersley.*

*The background colours are a representation of  
the units patches involved.*

*By R Freshfield.*

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

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### CONGRATULATIONS WINNERS

#### NSW 2020 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL GIFT VOUCHER DRAW

Congratulations to the following members whose names were randomly selected from all who had renewed their 2020 NSW Branch Memberships by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Each winner has now received a \$100.00 Bunnings Gift Voucher.

D Carstairs 1447  
 D Harris 607  
 A Burke 56

Special thanks to all our members who have renewed for your ongoing support of the Association in its work to assist our serving and ex service personnel and their families in need.

*Ron O'Connor JP—NSW Secretary*



### NSW MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

**The December issue advertised an incorrect date for the AGM.**

**The AGM for NSW Branch will be held at Merrylands RSL on Saturday 23 May 2020  
 See the AGM Notice on page 38 of this issue.**

# The Covenant

**The unique nature of military service is recognised in new government legislation  
It is full of wonderful sentiments**

## BUT

The government has passed the *Australian Veterans' Recognition (Putting Veterans and their Families First) Act 2019*. It is known as 'The Covenant'. Here's some of what it says:

The Commonwealth acknowledges the unique nature of military service and the sacrifice demanded of those who commit to defend our nation.

The Commonwealth acknowledges the demands placed on, and the sacrifices made by, the families of veterans.

The Commonwealth acknowledges that veterans may require support mechanisms to enjoy good health, to access employment and training opportunities, to access appropriate housing, to have access to justice, to enjoy social wellbeing or to participate in community engagement after their service. The Commonwealth is committed to supporting veterans and providing the care and support they require.

The Commonwealth acknowledges that support for veterans should be provided in a way that respects their dignity as individuals, enhances their self-esteem, is sensitive to any physical or mental injury or disease they may have suffered and respects their military service.

The Commonwealth acknowledges that

veterans should be supported to achieve greater economic wellbeing and sustainability and greater participation in civic affairs and should have opportunities to participate in employment and education.

So far so good. And it gets better.

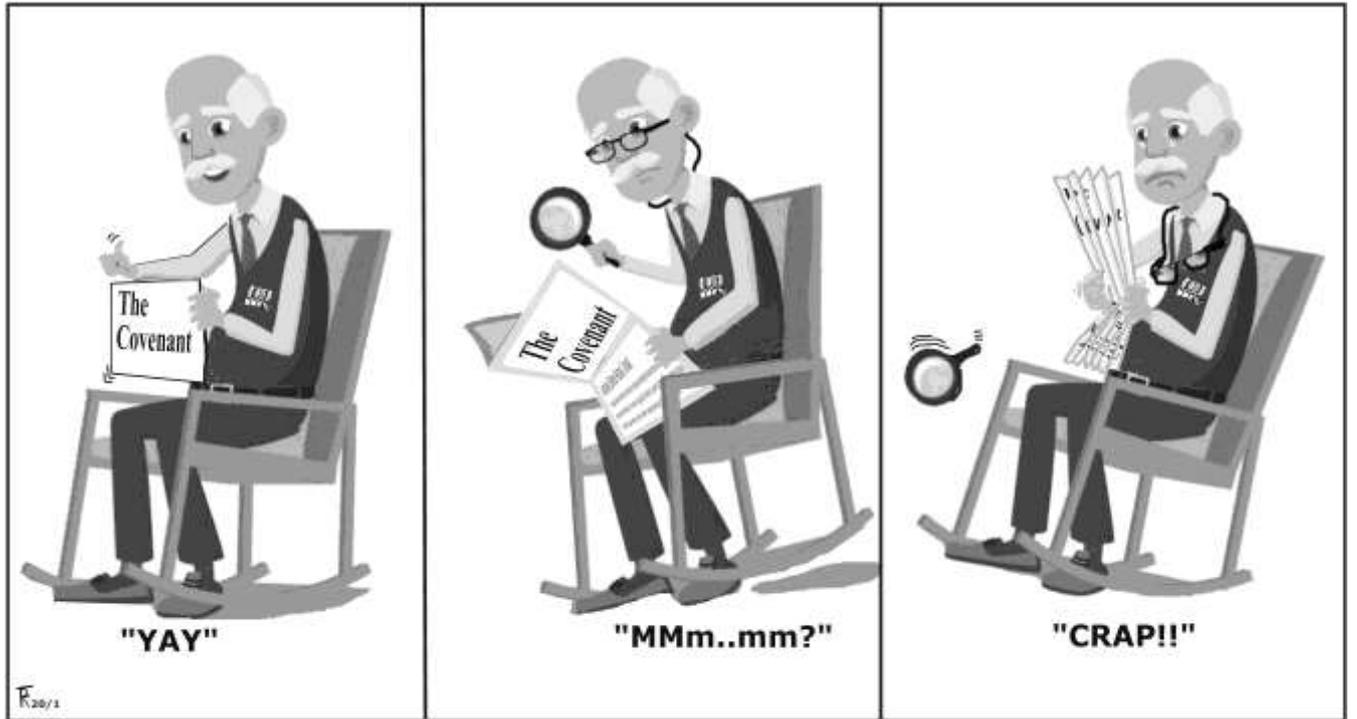
The Covenant seemingly guarantees 'beneficial' legislation.

'Beneficial legislation' for war veterans means that the link between war service and veterans' illnesses and injuries when seeking compensation is established at a lower standard of proof than is required in a civil court of law.

DVA has not always enthusiastically endorsed this lesser standard of proof even though it was passed without any parliamentarians objecting by the Federal Parliament in 1977. Indeed, subsequent to its passing, DVA did all it could to sabotage and undermine it.

So it is good to see the Covenant promising as follows:

The Commonwealth is committed to decision-makers deciding claims under that legislation: on the basis of only requiring evidence sufficient to meet the relevant standard of proof for the claims.



!

This is really good stuff

**BUT**

Having raised our hopes with these wonderful words, the legislation goes into the ‘fine print’.

Fine Print

*[The Covenant] does not, by its terms or operation, create or give rise to any rights (whether substantive or procedural), or obligations, that are legally enforceable in judicial or other proceedings.*

*A failure to comply with [the Covenant] does not affect the validity of any decision, and is not a ground for the review or challenge of any decision.*

*No action, suit or proceeding is to be instituted in reliance on the terms of [the Covenant] or the operation of [it].*

Yes, that’s what it says. Hard to believe isn’t it:

*A failure to comply with [the Covenant] does not affect the validity of any decision, and is not a ground for the review or challenge of any decision.*

So you can’t quote the Covenant at an appeal hearing even if the appeal is based on the system ignoring one or more of its promises.

Indeed, even though it is legislation passed by the Federal Parliament, it has no legal effect at all.

So DVA can just ignore the Covenant passed with such fanfare by the Federal Parliament. And if past actions are a guide, at some stage, it will.

Which leads us to suspect that the whole thing is a Marketing stunt and a con.

\*\*\*\*\*

A worrying aspect of this latest showpiece is it follows closely on a similar Marketing stunt reported in the last edition of this journal.

In that case a promising set of guidelines for DVA’s behavior under the Model Litigant principle was fatally undermined by the ‘fine print’. Have the Marketeers taken over DVA (or have they always been in charge)?

While this vaudeville is being performed, DVA is telling a very senior, experienced psychiatrist to downgrade his reports (see story page 40)■

## NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

# We are Proud of our Veterans Responding to the Bushfires



Our Granville office

IT is wonderful to see Team Rubicon, composed of ADF veteran volunteers and some first responders such as para-medics, moving into fire stricken areas to help in the recovery.

Team Rubicon Australia have been doing this work for some time now and it has made a difference both to those helped and to many of the Team Rubicon veterans themselves.

We have been told by Team Rubicon members that getting that 'old feeling' by working with other veterans and doing something worthwhile for the community, has enhanced their lives. And for those suffering war's traumas, the experience has been healing.

We are proud of you.

\*\*\*\*\*

We continue to worry about the government's response to the Productivity Commission's review of the Repatriation System, particularly its insistence on the need to civilianise its structure.

Then there is its attack on the Gold Card's coverage of all ailments rather than just those proven to be war related. Just imagine if we had to continually claim for every ailment as it presented itself. Apart from the personal stress, the system just couldn't cope.

\*\*\*\*\*

We have been imploring DVA and governments to take veteran suicide seriously.

Not long ago, DVA and the government were saying that, while every veteran suicide was a

tragedy, the rate was no more than the general population: the implication being that military service had nothing to do with it.

We countered by explaining, as we had in times past, that, because of the selection process for the armed forces, the suicide rate would be expected to be lower than that of their equivalent in the general population. We pointed out, there is a name in statistics for this phenomenon, The Healthy Soldier Effect.

But it was not till some time later, when studies showed that, in fact, the veteran rate was considerably higher than their equivalents in the general population that DVA and the government acknowledged the problem.

Valuable time (and possibly lives) had been lost.

Then there came the Jesse Bird suicide that caused us to lose confidence in DVA's ability to deal with the issue anyway.

Scrambling to catch up, the government is appointing a National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicides who will investigate all suicides and report annually to Parliament.

Looks good on paper.

But will the Commissioner become simply a mouthpiece for DVA or will he, as he should, become a genuine inquisitor of DVA's performance.

We can only wait and watch anxiously ■

# Bush Fires

## Veterans' response with Team Rubicon

You can join the Team at: <https://www.teamrubiconaus.org/>

Team Rubicon Australia unites the skills and experiences of Australian Defence Force veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams around the globe.

Our mission: To stand up the pre-eminent disaster response organisation in the Pacific Rim and, in doing so, change the narrative around the Australian Veteran.

On 25th November, Team Rubicon Australia deployed a 3 person reconnaissance team to Willawarrin, NSW. Since then large Rubicon teams have been deploying to other bush-fire effected areas

Most recently a team deployed to the destroyed township of Cobargo where they are helping clean up the devastation.

The Team Rubicon movement is growing as more and more veterans see its work as both helping communities get back on their feet and helping veterans themselves get back on *their* feet.

If you join up you will be properly trained and briefed before being let loose.

As you would know, there is plenty of opportunity to give a hand to bush-fire devastated communities and now not a few devastated by floods.



After 30+ years in the Australian Army I found a very easy camaraderie within Team Rubicon. We have done some really good work down here. And it was driven home to me today when I **ran into a mate of mine whom I haven't seen in awhile. He said I looked really well... which is** thanks to Team Rubicon Australia.

Adrian Hopkins  
Army Veteran



Dear Editor, here is my letter to the Minister,  
 Why is there no recognition upon the Australian War Memorial's 'roll' of Honours and Awards for the former Private David William COX, a former member of the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment? David was recognised a decade ago in the Australia Day 2010 Honours List, he being awarded the Medal for Gallantry for his actions in hazardous circumstances while a rifleman and combat first aider in Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force 1 at Kakarak, Afghanistan on 16 march 2009. David's citation reads:

*Private Cox operated as a combat first aider in action against enemy forces. While under heavy fire and with total disregard to his personal safety, he moved across open ground to render first aid to a wounded soldier and evacuate the casualty to an area of relative safety where he provided further emergency treatment.*

When approached for the explanation as to why David was not included on the AWM's 'Roll' in the same manner as 46,038 others; Dr Brendan Nelson provided the following explanations:

*The answer is quite straight forward, the memorial does not hold the records or citations in question and therefore cannot digitise them for the roll. The roll contains only those citations and recommendations for which the records have been passed to the Memorial by the Department of Defence to become part of the National Collection.*

And:

*The Memorial will add the original records to the online Roll of Honours and Awards once they have been released by Defence, until that time the awarding of these medals has*

*been appropriately recognised by the gazetting of them in the Commonwealth Gazette.*

And:

*Historically the Memorial has referred people to the 'It's an honour' website and Commonwealth Gazette for post-Vietnam or retrospective awards and will continue to do so in the immediate future.*

Why do you, Minister Reynolds, continue to support the 28 year old policy of the Chiefs of the Defence Forces who refuse to transfer the relevant records to the AWM, therefore denying David William Cox MG, the right to be include on the Roll?

Yours sincerely,

Ian Reid ■

\*\*\*\*\*

To Mr Richard Barry OAM (from the editor).

Hi Richard,

Congrats on the awarding of the OAM for services to the veteran community.

Particularly for the rights of National Servicemen in Vietnam.

And your fine work with the Bush Fire Brigade.

Well done that man.

Bob Freshfield.

Editor, Vietnam Veterans Newsletter.

Richard's reply:

Much appreciated Bob. I feel both humbled and honoured by this award.

It is a bit ironic that for 25 years I have been lobbying the government to officially recognise some 3,000 National Servicemen who completed their lawful service in South Vietnam with a medal and low and behold "out of the blue" I receive another medal.

Once again I am very grateful for the acknowledgment and thank you for your good wishes

Best regards  
 Richard Barry.

## Letters to the Editor continued

The Editor says:

*I received the following letter in the mail. Unfortunately I lost Johns return address so could not respond to him personally. I reprint John's letter with my response to enlighten other connoisseurs of our veterans' historical record and to explain my use of it to make a point about veterans' welfare.....ED.*

“To VV newsletter....

Gentlemen,

In the December 2019 issue of the GREAT MAGAZINE on page 13 there are two photos.

The lower picture is one used often. I believe it is a pic taken of a MEDIVAC taking place from the scrub in a position south of the PEANUT geographical location in which we were operating.

The patient I believe to be one PRIVATE GREEN (aboriginal) on the litter, the attendant (center) is the medic (name now escapes me) over the left hand litter bearers left shoulder I believe is 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant PETER WINTER the coy 2IC at that time. The digger without hat behind is CPL PETER LUTTLEY. If memory serves me correctly Pte GREEN was MEDIVACED with an almost ruptured appendix. He later rejoined the group.

The group I refer to was B COY 7 RAR but not sure as to which platoon or section. At that time I was a SIG attached from Sig pl SUPP COY. Sgt FRANK CURPHY was our esteemed leader at the time.

I am I/cpl JOHN BRADFORD (2791499) a conscript. We toured in 1970 (2<sup>nd</sup> tour). I think also that this photo appears in the book 7 IN SEVENTY, which was published upon our return. (PP125)

Congrats on a great magazine and a fine job of representing US.

L/CPL JOHN BRADFORD (2791499)”

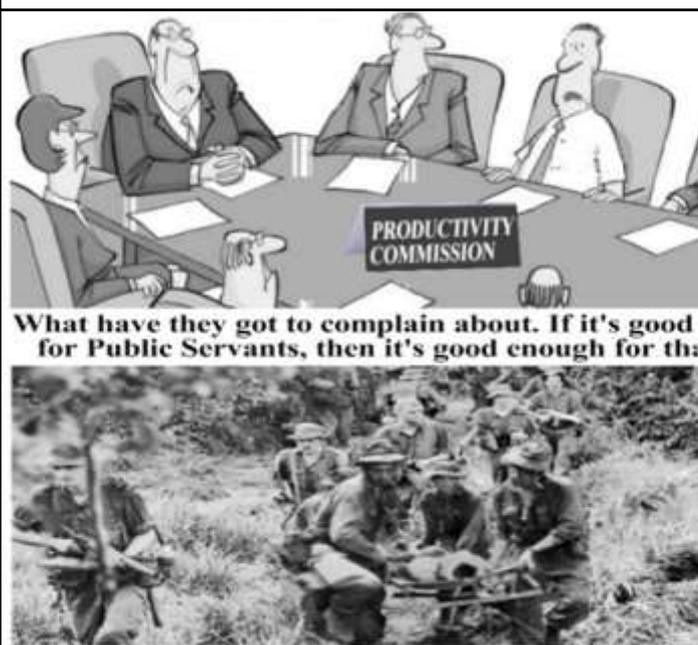
*The ‘two photos’ John refers to is in fact one image of two halves, and reprinted below for clarity:*

The purpose was to highlight the stupidity of the Productivity Commissions’ recommendation that Veterans should be subjected to a new compensation system based on a civilian model.

The cartoon does this by showing disinterested civilian commissions assuming that veterans

deserve no more generous compensation for war caused disabilities than public servants who trip over their shoe laces.

This picture is contrasted with the reality that escapes them as depicted in the image from the battlefield -- troops wounded and traumatised, hyper-alert to the possibility of the hidden enemy determined to hunt and kill them.



*And yes, John is correct. It is the picture he refers to. However, I used my artistic license to give the picture more context. I have embellished it with several overlays to include extra personnel and jungle-like background. The central part shows a wounded digger with head bandaged and is a photo from operation 'Petrie' July 1970. I added additional scenery and 5 patrolling diggers from my own slides taken in 1971...ED. ■*



FROM THE  
EDITORS  
DESK

IF you have a story about your service that you think others may find interesting, please send it to me.

We've had some beauties so far and the readers have really appreciated them.

We had some great Letters-to-the Editor too. Please don't be hesitant if you want to put in your tuppence worth.

Isn't it a shame when we are governed more by style than substance as demonstrated by the Covenant legislation reported in this edition.

Makes you wonder.

But what a great contribution veterans are making to clearing up after bush fires. Makes ya proud.

And what a contribution Jacqui Lambie continues to make in calling out DVA's bad behavior (page 40).

Seems like we are in for yet another round of enquiry, consultation, and rolling Commissions on soldier suicide. The answer is blowin' in the wind my friend, all hot air and shameless grandstanding. We have seen it all, in every decade since the 70's. Time to put the money at the coalface. Educate the trainers and invest in on base mentors. But do it now!

To all who have lost loved ones recently we offer our sincerest condolences and hope you accept our sympathy and prayers to your families and friends.

Ed.

## MEMBERSHIP

**Belonging  
Advocacy  
Success**

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

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

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

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

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

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

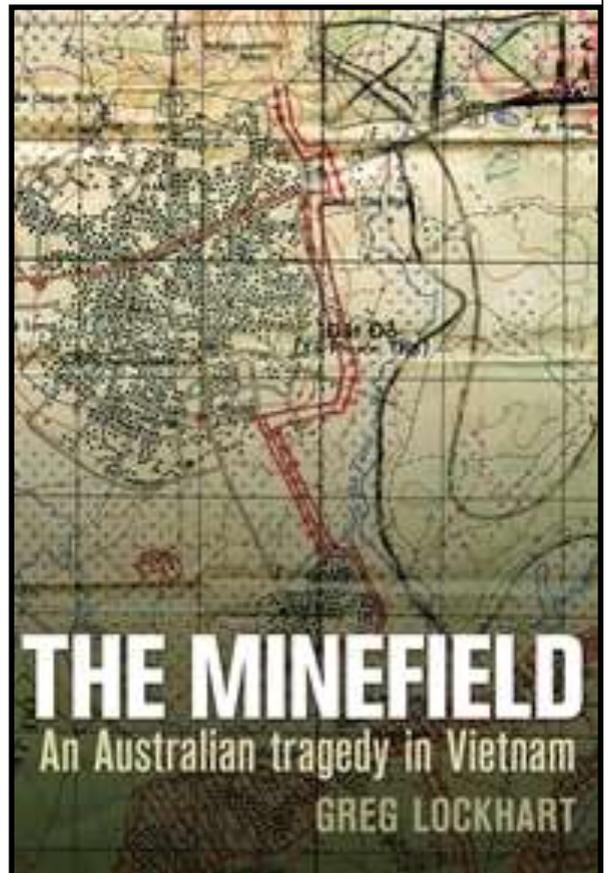
Should you be able to help with a donation, or leave a bequest in your Will, it would be extremely beneficial and greatly appreciated.

*We thank you for your kind support.*

## The Minefield

Another extract from the book

The picture Hall's account forces us to confront is of a weak headquarters with no coherent concept of operations, ineffective procedures and little control over military—let alone political—affairs in Phuoc Tuy Province. What else could one expect when the headquarters had never been given a role that related to strategic reality in the province? Or when task force and higher command, pressured by II FFV on the one hand and/or politically restrained by the Australian government on the other? Add to this malaise the guilt and confusion associated with permitting D445's breathtaking escape and we have the backdrop for how further 1ATF setbacks, both of which occurred on Saturday, 28 February 1970 and both of which resulted in high Australian casualties, the first on M16 mines. ■



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

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

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

He is the VVFA's honorary historian. ■

It is the best book so far written about Australia's participation in the Vietnam war. Written ten years ago and still selling well. To get your copy simply ring the NSW Branch Granville Office on 02 9682 1788. Or order online at: [www.vvfagranville.org](http://www.vvfagranville.org)

# Achievements

## What has the Vietnam veteran movement achieved?

### What is the Vietnam movement

The Vietnam veterans movement became a national organisation in 1980 with a National Office and State and Territory branches and sub-branches forming the Vietnam Veterans Association.

In 1981 the National Office and NSW Branch headquarters were established in makeshift premises in Granville, Sydney when the justly renowned Phil Thompson was elected both National President and President of the NSW Branch.

It was from this Granville makeshift office that the successful campaigns were conducted for a counselling service and a Royal Commission into exposure to herbicides and insecticides .

In 1986 Phil Thompson died.

After a short interregnum Tim McCombe was elected to follow Phil Thompson in both jobs.

Tim McCombe stayed as National President till 1991 when he was deposed; the National Office moving to Melbourne.

Discontent with the Melbourne based National leadership grew in the NSW Branch. The NSW Granville office, it believed, continued to produce all the important submissions and reports while Melbourne was contributing very little.

Granville also complained that the standard of the magazine, *Debrief*, now being produced by the Melbourne office, had dropped to an embarrassing low level.



Phil Thompson OAM

The NSW Branch pointed out that it had half the Association's membership so its payments to the National Office were carrying it financially with little benefit to veterans.

There was no point, the NSW Branch argued, in continuing to belong to the VVAA.

In 1996, the NSW Branch withdrew from the Association and formed the Vietnam Veteran Federation. Equally disillusioned groups in the States and Territories joined the NSW withdrawal and became State Branches and sub-branches of the new Federation.

The Granville office became the VVFA National headquarters joining the NSW Branch headquarters. Tim McCombe was elected as President of both.

## Achievements

When asked what achievements have most contributed to their welfare, many current VVFA members nominate gaining fair indexation for **the TPI and other veterans' disability pensions.**

This resulted from a ten year VVFA campaign (from 1997 to 2007) in partnership with Blue Ryan, the then National President, TPI Federation.

Because of that successful campaign, TPI pensioners are now some \$6,000 a year better off.

That is a lot of money for a TPI pensioner.

And what of earlier times? We asked members who were round when the NSW Branch withdrew and formed the VVFA. They remembered the start of our campaign against veterans having to financially contribute to the treatment of their war wounds.

It took some years of campaigning but now the cost of pharmaceuticals that exceeds the pharmaceutical allowance is refunded.

Back then too the VVFA began a campaign to have the wives of TPIs granted the Gold Card. **We've not won that one yet, but our campaign shone a light on the plight of veterans' families so that they are now given much more recognition.**

It was from the Granville office back then that the campaign for live-in PTSD courses resulted in the St John of God PTSD courses that have become standard treatment.

Meanwhile, VVFA Granville office was developing Advocate Training Courses of its own delivered Australia wide by the unforgettable Ray Fulton.

It was back then too that the VVFA took on the Repatriation system over its rejection of the link between prostate cancer and smoking including a Federal Court hearing.

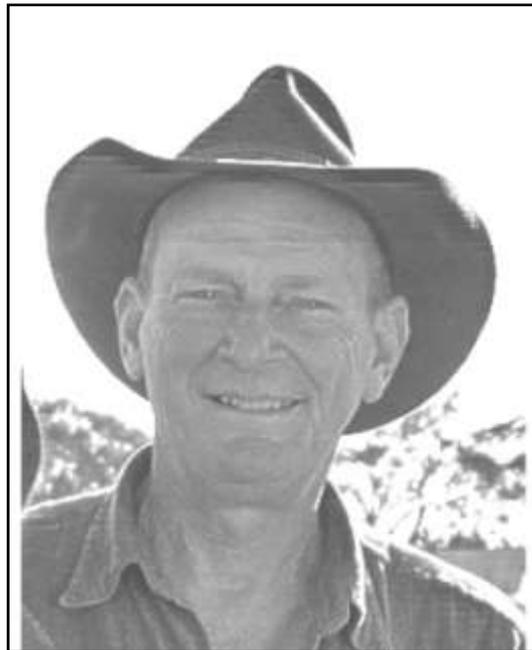
Central to the faults in the system was the Repatriation Medical Authority and the Specialist Medical Review Council employing too high a standard of proof in deciding whether a condition was linked with war service. This was an ongoing battle.

In 1997, the VVFA was involved in the Vietnam Voices exhibition at the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney. At the accompanying Seminar, the VVFA rep presented a paper on the continuing Agent

Orange saga.

The VVFA campaign on the chemical issue and on how it was reported in the official history **continued till 2015 when, because of the VVFA's campaign, a new official history was commissioned.**

It was this year too that we began an important campaign against a proposed change to the Repatriation appeals system that would have seriously disadvantaged veterans wanting to appeal against their compensation claims being rejected by DVA.



Ray Fulton

*(Continued on page 20)*

Our campaign was partly responsible for the proposals being scrapped the following year.

1997 brought one of the most serious threats to fairness in the Repatriation claims system. Good old DVA decided that too many veterans were being granted pensions for PTSD and other psychiatric illnesses. DVA assumed there must be some rorting of the system. Obviously, they thought, the treating psychiatrists were writing false reports or were, through incompetence, misdiagnosing.

DVAs proposed remedy was to establish diagnostic panels of psychiatrists selected by them to judge all PTSD and other psychological illnesses, from which there would be no appeal.

What DVA should have realised was that Vietnam veterans were reaching an age when their youthful energy was running out. They could no longer suppress the psychological damage that the trauma of war had inflicted regardless of how hard they tried.

Initially other ex-service organisations including the RSL fell into line with DVA, but the VVFA's advocacy eventually won out. At a meeting of ex-service organisations with the DVA Secretary, unanimous opposition killed-off the misconceived scheme.

Meanwhile the VVFA was fighting against cuts to Legal Aid for veterans. This plagued the fairness of the appeals system off and on for years.

It was 1997, too that the US recognised the link between exposure to Agent Orange and spina bifida in veterans' children. The VVFA began a campaign to have the link recognised in Australia.

Whilst the link has never been acknowledged here, a study showing a higher rate of spina bifida in Australian children of Vietnam veterans resulted in some compensation.

Meanwhile the VVCS was refusing counselling to the children of Vietnam veterans without an accepted disability. The VVFA objected with eventual success.

The VVFA took exception to the excluding Vietnam veterans in the initial granting of the Gold Card to the over-70. The exclusion was eventually removed.

Perhaps one of the VVFA's most important fights was against DVA's application of the 'alone test' when judging TPI pension claims.

The 'alone test' stipulated that the claimant must be unemployable because of his accepted disability alone.

If an unaccepted disability was contributing to that unemployment, no matter how serious the accepted disability, the TPI pension would be refused.

But good old DVA went for the jugular. Even

unaccepted such as medically controlled diabetes with which the veteran had been working for years, would disqualify him .

It was just ridiculous.

This battle was hard fought including many raised voices. But it was a battle the VVFA eventually won.

It was 1999 that the VVFA took the Specialist Medical Review Council through court hearings in the Supreme Court of NSW, the NSW Court of



Tim McCombe OAM

Appeal and Federal Court. DVA behavior during this process was deplorable. Eventually the courts found that the SMRC was not employing the correct standard of proof and sent back the decision in question for reassessment.

This was a vital win for veterans in the compensation claims process.

There were other dodgy goings on round this time.

Unqualified DVA officers were changing the degree of disability judged by the treating psychiatrist. This was unconscionable conduct.

We objected.

(And we note they are at it again.)

1999 saw an unprecedented packed meeting at the Sydney Town Hall of disgruntled veterans unhappy with the erosion of repatriation benefits.. Tim McCombe was on the organizing committee.

In the year 2000 we saw a widow turning up at the Federal Court in Brisbane with her legal aid lawyers, only to be met by the Department's two barristers and four solicitors, some flown in from Canberra and Melbourne.

Then in Sydney, at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, a veteran and his solicitor found themselves opposed by a barrister and three other lawyers, two flown in from Canberra.

This began a long and frustrating campaign to have DVA abide by the Model Litigant rule which requires Commonwealth departments not to use their superior legal resources to take unfair advantage in judicial hearings.

We continue to fight this one with some very limited success.

The VVFA continued to fund or administer

a number of education scholarships for the children of war effected Vietnam veterans. A most worthwhile and rewarding enterprise.

It was hard yakka in 2002 arguing against the Department of Finance's submission to an enquiry claiming that disabled war veterans should not be treated any differently from firemen and police. War veterans, the department argued, should come under civilian compensation schemes.

We eventually won that one but were dismayed that such a suggestion should be made.

In recent times we have had to argue that one again with a report from the Productivity Commission making similar repugnant suggestions.

It was in this year that the Minefield project really got underway. Initially, collecting information on the Minefield was to inform us in helping veterans with

compensation claims. The information that came in, however, motivated our Vietnam veteran honorary historian Greg Lockhart to write a much praised book on the subject.

Then there was the ASIST project..

We financed one of our members, Bob Tyrrell, who toured around organizing the suicide prevention seminars known as ASIST.

VVFA then lobbied with others successfully for the scheme to be taken over and financed by DVA.

In 2003, DVA was looking for savings. It called a conference of stakeholders to announce that amputees were to get only one prosthetic. The second prosthetic presently provided as a spare for

**These are only the most important issues the VVFA addressed. Meanwhile many other representations were being made and battles fought**

*(Continued on page 22)*

use during the maintenance of the first, would not be provided. .

Tim McCombe heard about the meeting and requested he attend.

Next day a newspaper broke the story. The Minister responded that two prosthetics would continue to be issued.

In 2006, the VVFA helped a rap band called *The Herd* make a music video of a rap version of *I Was Only 19*. It became a 'hit' staying at Number 1 for a long time. It was played at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance to visiting school groups as an introduction to their tour.

In the same year we began a campaign for fair indexation for military superannuation pensions. With ADSO taking up the fight, we eventually won.

Meanwhile, the VVFA offices round Australia were helping an unprecedented number of veterans (of all wars) with their compensation claims. Something like 2,000 claims and hundreds of appeals were being compiled and submitted each year.

The VVFA identified the suicide of Afghanistan veteran, Geoffrey Grey as being contributed to by Repatriation system dysfunction. **Geoffrey's suicide was, sadly, not to be the last.**

Leading up to the 2007 Federal Election, the VVFA lobbied all political parties. The Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs, Alan Griffin, was particularly receptive to our briefings and promised, along with a long list of benefits, the fair indexation of all veterans' disability pensions including the TPI.

On winning the election, his party implemented all of his promises.

Alan Griffin acknowledged the VVFA's role.

2008 saw the start of VVFA's involvement in the RAAF 'deseal-reseal' scandal. Airmen had, over some years, been fixing leaking F111 fuel tanks from the inside causing them to inhale poisonous fumes. Now the chickens had come

home to roost but government had been niggardly in its response.

The VVFA's Malcolm Wheat became closely involved in the campaign for adequate compensation and medical help which was eventually successful.

Meanwhile the VVFA was at war with the War Memorial over the misleading wording of the Text Panel in the Vietnam War section about Agent Orange.

After negotiations, the Text Panel wording was improved but remains less than satisfactory.

Round this time, DVA senior bureaucrats were pushing the line that 'compensation causes illness'. The idea was that veterans would feign or remain sick so as to get a pension.

Our experience was, on the other hand, that veterans coming to us for help should have come years before, but resisted because they wanted to keep working and because they felt uncomfortable seeking help.

The VVFA's arguments won the day and the DVA bureaucrats were silenced.

Privacy of veterans visiting Counselling Centres became an issue with DVA developing common entrances to DVA offices and the Centres.

The VVFA, after a protracted and sometimes bitter battle won the day and separate entrances were established.

That takes us up to 2012.

In our next edition we look at achievements from 2012 to the present day as well as the achievements out of Granville before the NSW Branch of the **VVAA withdrew to form the VVFA.** ■

## NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S REPORT



### The Bushfires

Resilience, mateship and volunteering are built into the Australian psyche. These qualities were most evident during the 2019/20 massive and devastating bushfires which have affected thousands of Australians. Loss of life, property and animals has been extensive and impacts on all Australians. It is incumbent on all of us to reach out to all those affected and do what we can to assist make the recovery process just that little bit easier. Spare a thought for those living in the devastated areas and, at the appropriate time, spend a little time in those country towns and villages in an attempt to assist boost their local economies.

Our fire-fighters who were working long hours day and night over a period of many months are our current national heroes, some of them fighting fires in one location as their own homes burn in another location. Their dedication is unswerving and we must reward these persons in some way now the emergency has ended. Assistance is available from many sources and DVA clients who have been directly affected by the bushfires are reminded that DVA assistance is available. Details are listed later on in this Newsletter.

Dr Rod Bain MB.BS, FFARACS, FFARCS,  
FRCA, FANZA, JP

We are proud to inform you that Dr Rod Bain has commenced volunteer work at our Granville Veterans Support Centre as a highly qualified and experienced well-being adviser. Dr Bain served in the RAN from 1966 to 1973 mainly at sea. In 1969 he served ashore with the RAAMC at the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Hospital in Vung Tau, South Vietnam. In 1970 he served with the USN 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet on HMAS Hobart and in 1972 he became the Principal Medical Officer on HMAS Sydney returning our troops from Vietnam. His medical career since Vietnam has been outstanding and he retired

from his fulltime private practice in 1999. Since that time Dr Bain has continued to be extremely active within the NSWVSL providing services to veterans. He has served on many National Committees including the Operation Life Committee for suicide prevention in conjunction with Open Arms, Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT), Men's Health Peer Education committee to name only a few. He is a member of our Central Coast Sub-Branch. We welcome Dr Bain as a major asset to our team.

### Workload

The NSW Branch workload continues to be high yet it being handled in a most professional and timely manner by our dedicated staff. The number of veterans assisted with DVA claims alone in the calendar year to 31 December 2019 was 1581, more than double than that of the next ESO.

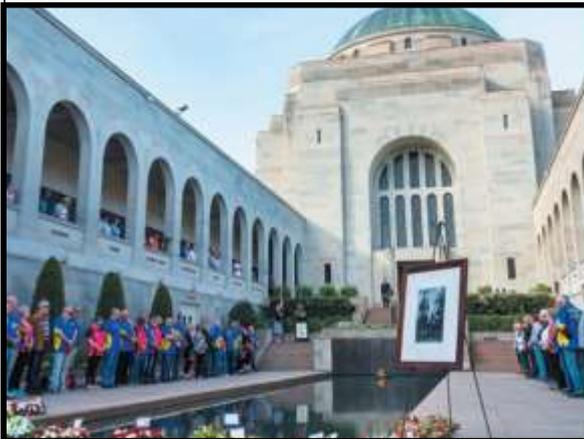
### NSW Regional Seniors Travel Card

The NSW Government has honoured a 2019 election promise to assist seniors in regional, rural and remote areas in NSW with travel costs due to these seniors having to travel longer distances to access essential services. The Visa card is pre-loaded with \$250 to offset travel costs. Applications can be made online at [service.nsw.gov.au](http://service.nsw.gov.au) or at an NSW Service Centre location. The initial advice was that the applicant must be on an Age Pension. I have written to the Premier pointing out that those on a DVA Service Pension should also be included in the scheme. The current situation is that the card will be extended to those on a Service Pension, **Disability Pension under the Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986** and those on a War Widow (er) Pension in the coming months.

Frank Cole  
NSW President

# Dr Brendan Nelson moves on.

We will miss him



LAST POST  
CEREMONY 

Watch it live daily 4:55pm

[www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)

An initiative of Brendan Nelson

**28 January 2020**

The Hon Brendan Nelson AO BMBS FRACP  
(Hon) FAMA FRSN  
Director  
Australian War Memorial

Dear Brendan,

We are very sorry to see you go.

Our members appreciate your work and your passion which have enhanced the Australian War Memorial and will no doubt encourage others, who follow you, to continue your vision in ensuring that the Australian War Memorial in Canberra is seen as one of the best in the world that truthfully and faithfully reflects the commitment, services and sacrifices of all those who served in the various wars, conflicts and peace keeping, peace making missions and those who are still serving. The increasing number of those attending the Memorial is a true

reflection of your commitment, passion, vision and leadership.

We would especially thank you for engaging with Tim McCombe OAM and Graham Walker AM on the official history's account of the Agent Orange controversy which led to the new history to the health and medical legacies of the Vietnam War being commissioned.

We specially thank you too for the Australian War Memorial's generosity in enabling John Schumann and Hugh McDonald to perform at Tim McCombe's funeral.

We wish you all the best in your post-War Memorial life.

Yours respectfully,  
William (Bill) Roberts OAM, JP  
National President

## WANTED KNOWN BY DVA (HADYN WHITE)

Hadyn White, Executive Officer to the Deputy Commissioner NSW, ACT, wrote to NSW President as follows:

Frank Cole,

You may have already received the following information sent Wednesday from the acting Secretary. Two issues to highlight: *[Issue 1 has expired and obscured by the Editor]*

1. A new grant round of the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program opened for applications yesterday, earlier than previous years. The application period has been extended, with **applications closing 11:00 pm (AEDT) on 17 February 2020**. If your organisation has been impacted by these bushfires, and you think it may affect you in lodging your application for a BEST grant, please contact the Community Grants Hub as soon as possible on 1800020283 or [support@communitygrants.gov.au](mailto:support@communitygrants.gov.au) for help with your application.
2. Please advise of any DVA clients you know of that have been directly affected by the bushfires. DVA is reaching out to ensure these people are linked to any required services.

Health and Financial support - the DVA website ([dva.gov.au](http://dva.gov.au)) provides information on the disaster assistance services offered. The Open Arms counselling service is also available 24/7 to veterans and their families (contact 1800011 046).

DVA services and support - if extra support is needed in accessing services, Veterans and their families can access DVA's Veterans' Access Network (VAN) for assistance on 1800555254.

Veterans' Home Care - clients affected by fires should contact their service providers or assessment agency to re-establish disrupted services. Eligible, affected veterans who need new services or services in a new location should contact their assessment agency. VHC Assessment Agencies may be contacted on 1300 550 450.

Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme (DSHI) - to make a claim due to bushfire damage, contact 1300 552 662.

National Bushfire Recovery Agency - the Prime Minister has announced the establishment of a new agency with an initial \$2 billion for a national bushfire recovery fund to coordinate a national response to rebuild communities and livelihoods after the devastating fire-front has passed.

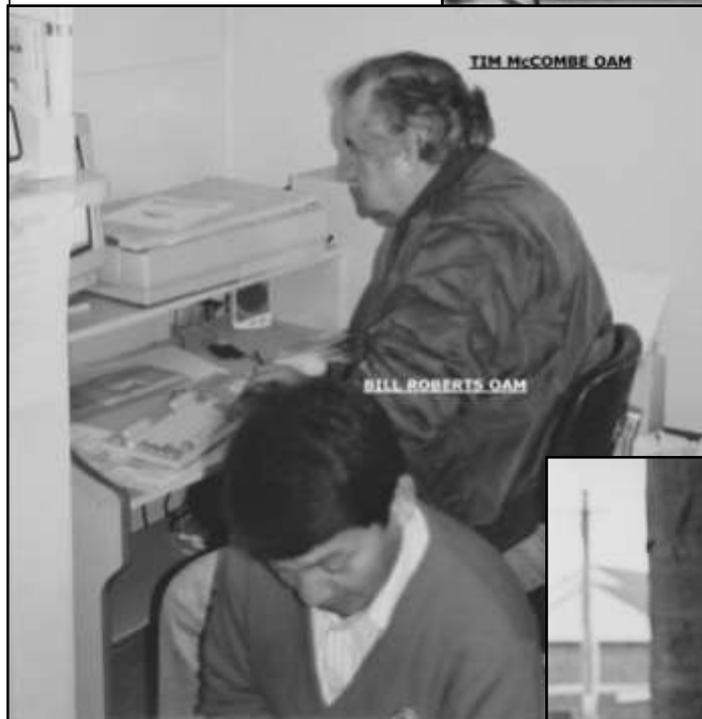
More information can be found at: [www.pm.gov.au/media/national-bushfire-recovery-agency](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/national-bushfire-recovery-agency).

Hadyn White  
Executive Officer to the Deputy  
Commissioner NSW/ACT  
GPO Box 999B SYDNEY NSW 2001  
Phone: (02) 9213-7773

# The New VVFA Granville Office Circa 1996? Can you fill the gaps?

**Number 17**

The new Granville office  
Opened 1996



**Number 16**

National and NSW President Tim McCombe OAM

Bill Roberts OAM

**Number 15**

Frank Ashton, Granville RSL Secretary  
Who supported us from the beginning



The new Granville Office, headquarters of the Vietnam Veterans Federation was opened in 1996. It was also the headquarters of the NSW Branch.

The national headquarters was always busy with national campaigns and policy development while the NSW Branch added round 1,000 compensation claims per **year to the VVFA's national total.**

There is the same activity in the Granville office today though the faces now look a little older.

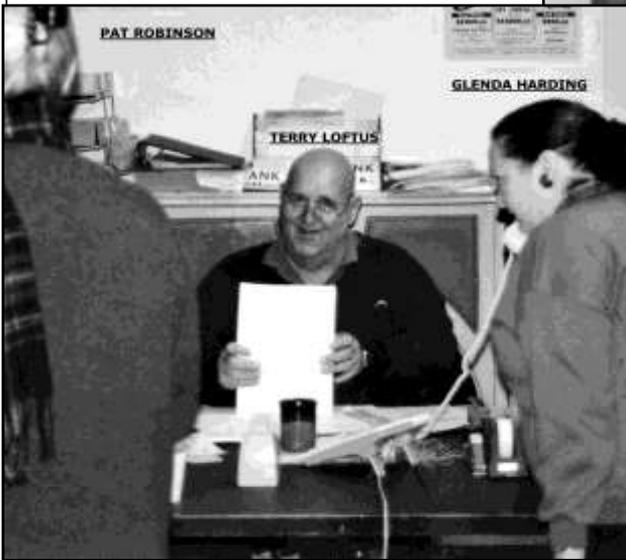
**Number 1**

Front: Frank Ashton and Ray Fulton

Rear: Sub-branch representatives:

Do you know? (L-R)

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E



**Number 14 (Left)**

Pat Robinson, Terry Loftus and Glenda Harding  
But, do you know who is with Bev Studden  
(below)?

F



**Number 9**

Mick O'Shea, Bev Studden, unknown  
speaker and Frank Grady

Standing? G

Can you tell us anything about the occasion?  
Do you have any stories about these times?



**Number 13**

Bob (Bluey) Gagan and  
Bill Roberts

**Number 8 (right)**

Pat Robinson, John Phillips  
Lorraine Davidson and Glenda Harding



**Number 3 (left)**

John Phillips, Glenda Harding and Bev Studden



**Number 2**

Ken Tanswell (standing),  
Doorway: H  
Seated Front: I  
Seated back: J  
Seated back: K  
Far right: Jack Harding.





**Number 11**  
Lorraine Davidson,  
NSW Branch Treasurer

**Number 4 (right)**  
Who Are these guys?  
L  
M



**Number 7**  
(Know anyone here ??)  
N  
O  
P  
Q  
R

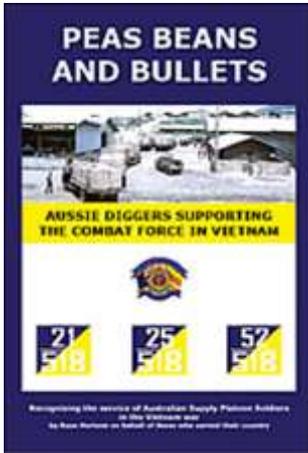
**Number 5**  
Vic Watts and ??  
S



## BOOKS FOR SALE AT GRANVILLE

Peas, Beans and Bullets – Aussie soldiers supporting the combat force in Vietnam

By Russ Morison, 118 pp, \$30 plus \$5 PH



Peas, Beans and Bullets tells the story through reminiscences and photos of the dedicated men of the three supply units that kept Australian soldiers fed and replenished in South Vietnam.

The author, Russ Morison, served with 25 Sup PI in Vietnam from May 1969 to April 1970. He is co-founder of the RAASC Vietnam Supply Platoons Association, and until recently was its secretary. He spent two thirds of his career in the Army, and the remainder as a public servant with the RAAF and Navy.

Peas, Beans and Bullets presents photos and stories about how they overcame quite adverse conditions to get the job done – the climate, very basic facilities and the vagaries of the supply system were often the least of the challenges – from the early days until their departure in 1971. It tells

about the American to Australian supply chain, feast or famine; the ‘Cowless Dairy’ and others. This Vietnam logistic cameo provides an accurate insight into life in their war zone.

Members can purchase a copy from the Granville Office and your support will guarantee a \$5.00 retainer that will go toward assisting other veterans. To order your copy email or phone Admin at Granville: [accounts@vfvagranville.org](mailto:accounts@vfvagranville.org) or (02) 9682 1788. (Not available through our online shop).

Special offer from our own Admin Manager/Author, Romina Betvardeh. Members ordering a copy through the Granville Office will guarantee a sales based retainer go towards veterans assistance. To order your copy email or phone Admin at Granville: [accounts@vfvagranville.org](mailto:accounts@vfvagranville.org) or (02) 9682 1788. (Not available through our online shop).

I Was Chosen by a Gift

August 19, 2019 by William

When helping a random man on the street Sandy never thought her life will change for ever. But months later the man found her and gave her an ancient old looking gift.

An un-normal gift found its way to Sandy. Worried and concerned she returned the gift to the man but mysteriously the gift found its way back to Sandy.

A story full of challenges and magic, where the powerful bully the weak and the rich press down on those less fortunate without being aware that the cycle of life is vicious and it will turn its wheels against them.

Editor: Inspiring Publishers

Romina Betvardeh takes you on a journey to a fantasy world, but is it any different to ours? Why not find out in her exciting book, ***I Was Chosen by a Gift?***



Member only price \$25.00 + \$5.00 PH.

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# War Memorial compiling roll of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Vietnam Veterans.

## They are wanting names.

## Can you help?



There were a lot of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who fought in the Vietnam War. But the question was not asked on enlistment so there is no official record of who and how many.

Michael Bell is the Indigenous Liaison Officer in the Military History Section of the Australian War Memorial.. He is collecting information on aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Vietnam veterans.

Can you help him out with any names and contact details? Or just names and units would be a help.

If you can help please contact Michael Bell at:

[Michael.Bell@awm.gov.au](mailto:Michael.Bell@awm.gov.au) | t 02 6243 4406  
Australian War Memorial | GPO Box 345  
Canberra ACT 2601 | [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)

## Defence Asbestos and Hazardous Chemicals Exposure Scheme

In recognition of the recommendations of "The Enfield Report", undertaken in 1991, the Department of Defence introduced, firstly, the DAEES for Asbestos exposure, then the DEES, for general exposures. The new scheme DAHCES combines both and is open to current and former employees of the Department of Defence and Australian Defence Force members (including Cadets) who suspect that they have been exposed to asbestos or hazardous chemicals as a result of their employment, and/or service with Defence.

Persons wishing to participate in the DAHCES should call 1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 362) to register their details and access further information. You can check out the full details on line and download relative fact sheets before applying or registering. Go to:

<https://www.defence.gov.au/whs/programs/asbestos-exposure-evaluation-scheme.asp>



**An article by lawyer Greg Isolani who has long experience fighting for veterans in Repatriation tribunals and courts including representing the parents of Jesse Bird.**

**A Coronial inquest was being held into the suicide of Afghanistan war veteran, Jesse Bird.**

**The Bird family asked the Coroner to recommend the establishment of a Royal Commission into veterans' suicide and the establishment of a new, independent and ongoing investigative body.**

**Government lawyers, with the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs in court, argued strongly that neither was necessary.**

**The next day, the Prime Minister, in an astonishing about-turn, announced the establishment of a National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention.**

**The Coroner asked both the Bird family and the government to provide details of how the organisation would or should operate, so as to assist her in making recommendations. The Bird family complied, the government refused the request.**

**Later at a Senate Estimates Committee hearing, Opposition members seeking these details were also unsuccessful.**

**It seemed neither DVA or the Minister for Veterans Affairs knew what was going on.**

**Suspicion grew that the Prime Minister's announcement was made 'off the cuff' simply to head off any recommendation by the Coroner for a Royal Commission.**

**Read on for the full story.**

***\*Vets We Forget  
National Commissioner or National Con***

\* This article discusses the difficult and disturbing topic of Veteran suicides. The reader should consider if this subject may cause them harm and distress.

In the event you need help or support you can contact *Open Arms Veterans and Families Counselling: 1800 011 046, ADF All Hours Support Line 1800 628 036 and LifeLine 13 11 14.*

*The Issues: The Very Public Debate Into Veterans' Suicide*

The tragedy of Veterans taking their own lives, in particular those with operational service, is no longer "a closed topic of conversation" amongst ESO's, advocates and the families who suffer this devastation.

The tireless campaign undertaken by Julie-Ann

Finney on behalf of her late son, David Finney, and Newscorp through a very public "Save Our Sons" campaign together with Karen Bird who lost her son, Jesse Bird, and the other Mums who share this deep grief, have made this a national public issue.

For those within the ESO community who still believe that Veterans' suicide is not of



concern because it is occurring at the same rate in the general community are wrong on two counts. Firstly for younger veterans, it is in fact happening at a higher rate than in the general community. And secondly, it should, in any case, be happening at a lower rate than the general community because of the military selection process excluding many psychologically fragile applicants.

### *The Figures*

The *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)* study (Commissioned by DVA) dated 29 November 2019 investigating the incident of **Veterans' suicide between 2001- 2017** confirmed:

A. 419 ex serving members with post 2001 service committed suicide.

B. Ex serving members have a higher suicide rate compared to Australian population being 14% higher for men between 2009-2011 and 36% higher in 2013-2015. (Age adjusted)

C. Ex serving women have a 115% higher rate than for women in the same age based category in the wider community.

The danger with statistics is, 'they can conceal more than they reveal'. For example, the AIHW figures masks attempted suicide and 'accidental' suicide like those from "prescription" medication or illicit substances and single vehicle accidents and so forth.

They also do not include thinking about or

planning suicide.

Additionally, the figures may well be an underestimation because records do not allow a precise count. Only after the next Census which will identify 'veterans' will an accurate count be possible.

To be clear, what the statistics reveal is that younger ex serving members are at a higher risk of suicide and have a higher rate of suicide than their age group in the general population. Most alarming is the statistics showing the rate of ex-service suicide is growing, not reducing with time.

That is why a careful examination into the incidence of this growing epidemic for these vulnerable ex serving members needs careful examination of:

1: Defence department when the member is transitioning into civilian life, and

2: DVA's role in assisting them through this process.

Obviously the depth of investigation into Defence and DVA must involve substantial issues including but not limited to better screening of prospective ADF members for suitability and vulnerability, psychological screening during service, post-operational psychological screening (PoPs), DVA's role and competence, medical care and social factors that may play a role.

*(Continued on page 34)*

*The Jesse Bird Inquest beginning May 2019*

The Victorian Coroner has been investigating the suicide of Jesse Bird, an Infantry soldier and Afghanistan Veteran who, after protracted dealings with DVA took his life in June 2017.

This is not the first investigation by a Coroner into a Veteran's suicide looking at the possible links between damaged mental health from service and self harm.

However, in this case, the Coroner has taken an active interest in the inter-relationship between Jesse himself, Defence post-operational psychological screening (PoPs), the DVA compensation claims administration (and mal-administration), and the role of Advocates. The Coroner is examining how all of these aspects collided and to what extent the resulting system failed Jesse.

DVA have freely admitted to the Coroner that they failed Jesse through 'defective claims administration' including months of inactivity, indifference and refusing financial support and that this failure was a major contributor to Jesse's suicide. Yet this occurred whilst Jesse was directed to and had undertaken inpatient psychiatric treatment after discharge and was assisted by Advocates to navigate the DVA compensation scheme.

One important aspect of this system was that, while Jesse's diagnosis of PTSD had been accepted, DVA denied him support until his condition was deemed stable and permanent, a process that was to take round a year. But Jesse couldn't work and his condition was made worse by DVAs compulsory rehab courses. It was clear too that he was broke. Yet DVA would not give him any financial support. That lack of financial support from DVA was critical. This refusal by DVA was despite Jesse having completed a Needs Assessment at least 8 months earlier. (But that's another story...).

The Coroner looked at, in broad terms, the

complex issues of Jesse's mental health whilst "navigating" the DVA system especially the level of medical care available to him. She was also interested in the role of advocates.

The Bird family's submission asked the Coroner to look at the specific failings of the system including DVA delays, the state of Jesse's mental health while serving with the ADF and the post operational psychological - PoP's- review 'system'.

**The Bird family provided the material as directed by the Coroner but the Commonwealth could not or would not provide any details**

*The Bird Inquest and Call For Royal Commission and an Independent Investigative Body*

The Bird family made a submission that included a request for the Coroner to recommend firstly a Royal Commission to peel away and examine the recurring themes of Veteran's mental health and self harm. It was necessary, they said, because the situation had not improved despite some 17 government sponsored reviews..

In a further submission they requested the establishment of a

new and independent investigative body (not the Commonwealth ombudsman who's reporting goes largely unnoticed). They asked for a truly independent statutory body which would examine veteran suicides and what role, if any ,the DVA claims administration delays and denials play in them. The investigative body, the Birds argued, should also monitor DVA's recent so called 'reforms' and judge their effectiveness.

DVA's assessments of themselves have proved unhelpful.

In summary, the Bird family submitted the body should :

- (a) be completely independent from DVA, ideally an independent statutory authority;
- (b) investigate and report on all veteran suicides, including investigating the veteran's experience with DVA;
- (c) undertake regular reviews of the DVA processes and undertake 'spot checks'.

(d) actively (on receipt of complaints) review and investigate DVA cases, rather than requiring veterans to proceed through ‘internal’ complaints processes; and

(e) have statutory powers to access all relevant records held by DVA.

The Commonwealth, on behalf of DVA strongly opposed, in writing, the Bird family’s submissions.

*Resumed Inquest 4  
February 2020*

At the resumed Inquest the Bird family resubmitted:

1 its call for a Royal Commission into Veterans Suicides; and

2 its call for the Independent investigative Body.

The Commonwealth continued to argue against the Bird family’s requests. Indeed the government lawyers argued strongly against these requests with the DVA Secretary, Liz Cosson CSC AM, present in court.

The Coroner reserved her findings and the inquest formally concluded on 4 February 2020.

*5 February 2020- The Prime Minister’s Announcement*

The next day, the Prime Minister announced an intention to “*establish a permanent National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention*” that “*will have the enduring power, scope and resources to investigate suicides and related issues as they arise*”.

Additionally, the Commissioner would undertake “an immediate, independent review of Veterans’ Suicides”.

This was very confusing for all concerned given the Commonwealth’s submissions before the Coroner denying such a need less than 24 hours before.

*Coroner’s Response to the PM’s Announcement*

Given the timing of the PM’s announcement and what was said before the Coroner the day before, the Coroner wanted specifics from the lawyers within a few weeks to assist with any recommendations she might make.

Once these specifics were provided by both parties, the Bird Family and Commonwealth would have another two weeks to reply to the other’s material.

The Bird family provided the material as directed by the Coroner but the Commonwealth could not or would not provide any details of how the National Commissioner (or the proposed Veterans’ family advocate) would operate.

Days passed, but still no details to support the government’s BIG

ANNOUNCEMENT were submitted.

How could there be an ‘immediate investigation’ into Veteran suicides as announced by the PM with no detail as to who and how this National Commissioner would operate.

It is puzzling, even astounding, that the Commonwealth made no submissions as requested by the Coroner.

The question this refusal provoked was this.: Was the government announcement made in haste with no prior thought or planning simply to reduce the possibility of the Coroner recommending the establishment of a Royal Commission?

*Further attempts to get the detail*

On 4 March, at a Senate Estimate Committee hearing, the Opposition members attempted to probe and get further information on and insight into the proposed national commission. Essentially there were no specifics provided and the questions



asked were largely taken as ‘questions on notice’. The suspicion that the PM’s announcement was made ‘off the cuff;’ to cut off the possibility of a Royal Commission recommendation by the Coroner, was re-enforced. A Royal Commission, it seemed, was something DVA and the government were keen to avoid.

Without assurance that any National Commissioner would carry out the duties requested by the Bird family, especially deeply **investigating DVA’s continuing performance**, the Royal Commission was seen as absolutely necessary.

*27 February 2020 - Senator Lambie - Senate Motion No 510*

Senator Jacqui Lambie took up the issue.

Senator Lambie, (also on behalf of Senators Hanson, Siewert, Steele-John, Marielle Smith and Patrick), moved that the Senate:

(a) is not of the view that the Morrison Government’s announcement of the National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention is “better than a Royal Commission”;

(b) calls on the Morrison Government to establish a Royal Commission into Veteran Suicide, with a clear start and end date; and

(c) invites the Royal Commissioner to recommend that a standing, permanent capability be established to oversee reform, should the Commissioner see fit to do so.

This question was ‘put’ and passed by the Senate (only the government member voting against it).

It seems that without the detail behind the PM’s announcement, the National Commissioner has an odour of being a marketing stunt to ‘drown out the white noise’ and evade a recommendation for a Royal Commission. It seems that it is not a genuine attempt to thoroughly, deeply and continuously examine Veteran suicides and the Defence and DVA’s role in them.

*What Is Needed and WHY*

An independent Royal Commissioner is needed first and foremost to consider the issue of **Veterans’ suicides and why the previous reviews and recommendations has failed to stem the flow.**

A Royal Commissioner can make appropriate recommendations and then set up this Independent body (just as the Bird family requested at the Inquest).

First peel away the issues, addressing them with vigorous and independent cross examination like that of the Banking Royal Commission. Then create an informed and independent system to safe guard the reformed system — the Royal Commission to establish a system for DVA accountability and a commission to keep them accountable.

There are many more reasons why a Royal Commission is needed. An important one is that it takes it out of the political playing field and gives the issue of **Veterans’ suicide** the serious and independent response it deserves.

Yes it may cost money, but what value do we put on the future of Veterans’ lives to avoid and reduce the incident of self harm. That is the least we, as a society, owe them and their families.

Then the lasting reforms can be implemented, lives can hopefully be saved and those who have passed will not be forgotten.■



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 8 Mary Street  
 Granville Sydney 2142

**FROM THE 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. Whilst all donations are gratefully received, and combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are too numerous to list. However, periodically, we will publish a list of individual NSW Branch members who have donated amounts of \$200 or more.

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

- \$3,000 Ray Hopkins
- \$1,000 Kevin Faust, Warren Axford
- \$500 Geoffrey Jones, Wayne Adler,  
John McNeil, Anonymous
- \$400 Kenneth Jago
- \$370 Anonymous
- \$320 Neville Lemon

- \$300 Anonymous, Henry Walker,  
Howard Clark
- \$270 Francis Scicluna,  
Wesley Hindmarsh
- \$250 Robert Allan, Thomas Grills,  
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- \$220 Anthony Gibbs, Kenneth Hull
- \$200 Garry Chenhall, Kevin Stewart,  
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Peter Miller, Colin Kelson,  
Anthony Shephard,  
Barry Elphick, Albert Brown  
Robert Doolan,  
Patrick Gallagher

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

**Ron O'Connor JP**  
National and NSW Secretary

\*\*\*\*\*

PS: Please note that the AGM notice in our December 2019 issue included the incorrect date for the NSW Branch AGM. The correct date for the AGM, to be held at Merrylands RSL is:

SATURDAY 23 MAY 2020  
10:30 am

**As posted on the flyer overleaf.....>**



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

*Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.*

VVPPAA NSW Inc.

**AGM**

**SATURDAY 23 May 2020**

**MERRYLANDS RSL 10:30 AM**

2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - AGENDA

The 2020 Annual General Meeting of the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc, will be held at the Merrylands RSL Club 10.30am Saturday, 23rd May 2020.

AGENDA

Opening of Meeting by the Chairman

Apologies

Confirm the Minutes of the AGM 2019

Business Arising from the Minutes of the AGM 2019

President's Report

Treasurer's Report

Secretary's Report

Membership Report

Appointment of Association Auditors

Life Membership proposals

Other Business by leave of the Chairman

Close of Meeting

NB: The NSW Branch Constitution requires elections to be held biennially. The next election will be held in 2021.

Any items for General Business must be in the hands of the Secretary by close of business on Tuesday, 5th May 2020.

Next AGM to be held on a date to be confirmed during May 2021.

**Ron O'Connor JP**  
Hon. Secretary  
NSW Branch



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

*Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.*

2020 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

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# Is this fair?

Does a departmental officer 3 months in the job really know better than a highly experienced psychiatrist?

Jacqui Lambie accuses DVA of bullying an experienced psychiatrist to downgrade his reports

Senator LAMBIE,  
Speech to the Senate



THIS has been a long time coming for the Veterans' Affairs, I'll be honest with you. And this is only going to be the start of it tonight. I started up here naming and shaming, and I'm going to start from the

very top tonight. And it's not going to finish tonight; it's going to be ongoing until we get that royal commission. So let's play!

The Principal Medical Adviser (Compensation) at the Department of Veterans' Affairs has personally called a psychiatrist to threaten his business unless he cuts what he recommends DVA pay wounded veterans in compensation. This doesn't happen in a vacuum. Five and a half thousand ADF members transition out of the ADF each year. Half of all transitioned ADF members have experienced a mental health

condition in the last 12 months, 20 per cent of transitioned ADF members have considered suicide in the last year, eight per cent have made a suicide plan in the last year, two per cent have attempted suicide in the last year and about one a week will ultimately take their life. And those are DVA's statistics. I'd go more 2½ to three.

In the middle of all that suffering, I have heard from that practicing psychiatrist, 35 years in the job, that the DVA has pressured him to underestimate the mental health needs of his veteran clients in his reports to the department. These reports are an important part of the veterans' compensation claims. A veteran with a needs assessment that is marked high will receive more financial support from the DVA than a veteran with lower scores. If a vet doesn't reach a certain needs threshold, they might not get paid at all. This matters in determining not just the financial compensation and support a veteran is entitled to receive but also the support their children receive.

This is the story Dr John Gavilan told me.

*(Continued on page 41)*



**We have superpowers. We know better than highly experienced psychiatrists, without even seeing the veteran!**

R 20/02

Dr John Gavilan is a psychiatrist. He received a phone call from Mr Fletcher Davies on Wednesday 5 February at 4 pm. Mr Davies wanted to know why Dr Gavilan had been marking reports highly. Mr Davies questioned why veterans who had been referred to Dr Gavilan for psychiatric assessment were being given higher grades of need than other psychiatrists were grading it. Dr Gavilan told Mr Davies that he stands by the accuracy and truthfulness of all his reporting and that every veteran he had interviewed had been in an especially emotional state. Dr Gavilan said veterans presenting to him were suffering from extreme anxiety and depression, and some were clearly suicidal. Mr Davies told Dr Gavilan that if he continued to mark up his clients highly, DVA would refer the veterans' reports to another psychiatrist—nothing new there. I'll say it again: Mr Davies told Dr Gavilan to compromise his professional judgement as to the needs of vulnerable veterans. He threatened Dr Gavilan financially, using the buying power of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Fletcher Davies is the principal medical adviser for compensation, all of three months in the job, at the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The principal medical adviser for compensation for the DVA called a psychiatrist and threatened him financially because he was supporting claims that DVA didn't want to pay out. Dr Gavilan said to Mr Davies: 'Are you going to be the one who approaches the families of these veterans who are committing suicide and tell them that you are responsible for their suffering?' Fletcher Davies, the principal medical adviser for the Department of Veterans' Affairs, said to Dr Gavilan: 'We are not responsible for all of them.' Guess what, mate? Here's a wake-up call for you, Fletcher. I don't know what department you're working for or what planet you're on, mate. You are responsible for every single one of them—every single one of them!

DVA is supposed to be there to support our veterans. It's not there to strongarm psychiatrists and other doctors into doing a cheaper deal for our veterans. Senior officials in DVA are not

*(Continued on page 42)*

supposed to be bullying psychiatrists into lowering compensation payments for suicidal veterans. And it is bullying; there's no doubt about it. It's threatening and it's financial intimidation. I'll tell you what, Fletcher: if you wanted financial intimidation and bullying, you just took on the wrong girlfriend, mate. You took on the wrong girl.

The standard process is that a GP refers the veteran to a psychiatrist; the psychiatrist does an initial report and sends a letter to the GP and their advocate, giving an overview; the advocate then sends a claim to the DVA; and the DVA then sends a report back to the doctor for assessment of liability and claim. To be told that you are not going to be sent claims from the DVA is disastrous. That would mean that a veteran's treating psychiatrist, who has been referred to by a GP, who has an existing relationship with that veteran, isn't able to accept that veteran's claim, let alone write a report for it. The vet needs to go and tell their story to the new psychiatrist, picked—get this—by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. They are told that they will show up. If you don't show up then, no doubt, they'll stop your payments because you didn't comply with an order.

That's how it works in the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The vet needs to rehash everything. They have been through it over and over and over again. They are sick of telling their stories because you want to rotate them from one psychiatrist to another until you get the percentage that you want so you don't have to pay them out as much. This is just a shocker at its best. For a person who has experienced trauma, that is

deliberately cruel, insensitive and bloody heartless. You are deliberately inflicting harm on a veteran. Eighty to 90 per cent of the patients that Dr Gavilan sees on a weekly basis are veterans. To no longer be able to see them represents a huge financial impact.

Medical advisers like the one who called Dr Gavilan provide advice to delegates about how much compensation a vet should receive. They're essentially desk jockeys—and that's all you are, Fletcher, a desk jockey. They might be doctors,

but there's almost no information about whether they're qualified to make determinations, let alone whether, Fletcher, you can determine what a psychiatrist should be making. I'll tell you that now: it's not your department. The decision-making is inherently compromised. They are working for the same department that will have to pay the veterans' claim. They are supposed to be providing an objective assessment about how much compensation a veteran needs, yet the decisions they make can be incredibly consequential. They can overrule the findings of treating medical professionals. Isn't that disgusting? They get to determine how much veterans receive and whether or not they will get paid in lump sums or instalments, or at all.

Somehow the DVA thinks that a person sitting at a desk, looking through medical papers, can make a better assessment of someone's needs than their own bloody doctor. They're saying that a person at a desk is better qualified than a doctor who knows the veteran and has been treating them year in, year out. Now we find out that those

**"The vet needs to go and tell their story to the new psychiatrist, picked—get this—by the Department of Veterans' Affairs"**

*(Continued on page 43)*

medical advisers, sitting at the desks, those medical desk-jockeys, are trying to keep costs down for the department. This is a brand new level for you guys. People who have served this country are killing themselves while the department shifts paper around, and they know it. They know it. They are cutting costs, and it is costing us lives. It's costing families. It's costing people who gave everything they had, everything they could, for this bloody country. These bureaucrats might be removed from the effects of the decision-making, but the impact is very real, I can assure you.

They are pushing vulnerable veterans to the edge. It isn't just the trauma and horrors of combat that leads these veterans to take their own lives. It's having to cope with all the trauma while they're forced to fight tooth and nail against a department that, let's be honest, doesn't give a crap about them. We ask them to fight for us, and then they come back broken. They're broken in service. They ask for help, and we go, 'Bugger you, whatever costs us less.' Don't take it from me; take it from the families who have lost their loved ones. Jesse Bird's mum and dad, writing to an inquiry into veteran suicide in 2017, said:

*He has been endeavoring to seek assistance from DVA for the last eighteen months without success - it seems to him and us that the level of bureaucracy is intentionally obstructionist and unedifying. The jungle of paperwork, the lack of follow-up and the non-existent support has contributed to his deteriorating mental health—*

*just one of thousands—*

*Jesse has not received any money what-so-ever from DVA or Centre-link to help him survive and without our financial and emotional help he would be on the street or*

*worse.*

Not long after they made that submission their son Jesse took his own life, alone in his own room. Guess what was next to him? His uniform, his service medals and his paperwork, the letter from the Department of Veterans' Affairs rejecting his claim for assistance. He wanted that to be found. The letters rejected Jesse's claim for assistance because the Department of Veterans' Affairs accepted conditions—PTSD, major depressive illness and alcohol abuse—were not deemed permanent and stable at the time. He had \$5.20 in his bank account.

Now we find out that the department believes that it is not responsible for veterans' suicides, not responsible at all. Are you responsible for anything? I don't think so. Do you know what? I get really, really angry about this stuff. I called them out, but stories like this really, really break my heart—absolutely. Here's a thought. It's not the psychiatrists who are treating these veterans who are the problem; it's the Department of Veterans' Affairs. You are killing them. In the inquest into Jesse Bird's death, Julie-Ann Finney said the DVA claimed 'an independent review into suicide was not necessary'. In 2019 the review found that the way DVA handles the claims of veterans is potentially harmful to clients' mental health. I have just one question for those DVA bureaucrats sitting up there pushing their goddamn paper, making decisions about our lives, making huge decisions about people's lives. How do you sleep at night? You deal with this in the morning. You deal with it. ■

**"We ask them to fight for us, and then they come back broken. They're broken in service. They ask for help, and we go, 'Bugger you, whatever costs us less.' "**

# There was a lot of confusion, so what really happened?

Australia's Vietnam War Web-site  
<https://vietnam.unsw.adfa.edu.au/>

DO you want to see where your contact occurred?

Would you like to read the official report on that contact?

Would you like to read what others involved have to say about it?

Would you like to add your views of the contact?

Or would you like to check up on other contacts and battles, their location, time and official description.

Or you might like to see all the contacts in a particular operation.

Or all the contacts on a particular day.

Or all the contacts at a particular place.

If any of these possibilities interest you then go to: [vietnam.unsw.adfa.edu.au](https://vietnam.unsw.adfa.edu.au).

All this information is available with the click of your mouse.

Once at this amazing web-site you will learn about a myriad of other possibilities.

## **The Australia's Vietnam War website needs your photos and recollections**

From Bob Hall, 8RAR Vietnam

I lead a research team at the University of New South Wales where we work on creating a digital visualisation of Australia's Vietnam War. We want you to upload your recollection of events in Vietnam, and your photographs, to the 'Australia's Vietnam War' website (<https://vietnam.unsw.adfa.edu.au>). We're attempting to make this the best site for information about the Australian and New Zealand contribution to the campaign. We've done a lot of work to add data from the official records to the site. However, the official records can be dry, and sometimes get things wrong, or miss important details. We'd like you to help us by adding your recollections, and your photographs, to further enrich the site with

your input. We're all getting old, and we want to capture recollections and photographs before veterans drop off the twig. Otherwise, our kids will probably throw it all in the skip after we've gone.

To upload your recollections

To upload your recollections of combat incidents, go to the battle map on the website. The battle map shows over 6500 combat incidents as a series of red dots on a map of South Vietnam. To find incidents you were involved in, go to the 'filter' symbol (the funnel) on the right hand edge of the map, and click on it. You can now select filters to show the contacts, mine incidents, etc., that your unit was involved in. Click on 'Units Involved'. Select your unit (you can do this in most cases, down to platoon level) in the list provided. Scroll

*(Continued on page 45)*



The black dots (red when in colour) are contacts, mine incidents and other hostile events in just part of Phuoc Tuy Province.

You just have to click on a black dot to reveal details of the incident and, if you want to add to the information, send it to Bob Hall.

Note the concentration of black dots round the Long Hai hills.

down to the bottom of the page and click 'Apply Filter'. The map will now show only those combat incidents for the unit or sub-unit you have selected. Click on one of the red dots shown on the map. You will see details relating to that particular incident. Go to 'Community Notes' and click on 'Add a Note'. You can then type your recollections about the incident in the space provided.

All contributions go through a moderating process to ensure that contributions are not defamatory or unacceptable in other ways.

To upload your photographs

Have your photographs scanned and ready to upload. On the battle map, go to the top left of the screen. Click on the 'plus' sign at the top of the column of photographs. Drag and drop a photograph into the space provided, then click 'next'. You can link your photograph to a specific place on the battle map, such as the site of a contact, or part of the Nui Dat base (eg, your unit lines), by dragging one of the two 'pointers' to the place. Click on 'next'. The photo upload system then asks you for some information about the photograph. Answer the questions as best you can. The main thing is to add a caption that describes what the photograph shows and any other details

such as names of people and approximate dates (eg, '5 Platoon, 7RAR lines in Nui Dat. Bill and Jim in front of Macca's tent about a month before we RTA'd').

Again, your photographs will go through a moderating process to ensure that they're suitable for public display. We'll also check to make sure you've linked it to the right place.

Diaries and other documents

We'd also like to receive photocopies or scans of the diaries you may have kept when you were in Vietnam. If you send them to us, we'll publish excerpts (after moderation) so that they will also add to, and enrich, the database.

Our contact details

Dr Bob Hall |

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# Operation Wandering Souls

## Final call for 'liberated' artefacts

**8RAR Vietnam veteran and academic Bob Hall is going again to Vietnam to return captured artefacts**  
**Do you have any you would like him to deliver?**

**The 'Operation Wandering Souls'** team works at the University of New South Wales, Canberra

This is a call to Australian and New Zealand Vietnam Veterans, their families, friends and supporters.

Over recent years the Operation Wandering Souls team, on behalf of Australian and New Zealand veterans, returned about 300 documents and artefacts captured on the battlefields in Vietnam (see examples in the photographs below). We have also provided to Vietnam the locations of every recorded battle or firefight between the 1RAR battalion group and 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force, and the enemy, that resulted in one or more enemy soldiers being killed.

The aim of this work has been to assist Vietnam with its massive MIA problem. According to the Vietnam People's Army, Vietnam still has over 200,000 of its soldiers listed as missing in action since the war. Vietnam helped us find and repatriate our six MIAs. The Operation Wandering Souls team wants to reciprocate by helping them find their MIAs.

Returning documents or artefacts that were 'liberated' from the battlefield by Australian or New Zealand soldiers can help find the burial sites – or, the scene of the battle or contact in which a Vietnamese soldier lost his life. This is important in Vietnamese culture because rituals have to be performed at the burial site to liberate the 'wandering souls' of the dead and allow them to

find peace in the afterlife.

If you have such items such as commendation certificates, diaries, letters, photographs, etc, please consider returning them to Vietnam to help a family resolve the fate of their loved ones. You can do this yourself, or you can return them to Vietnam via the 'Operation Wandering Souls' team at the UNSW Canberra (at the Australian Defence Force Academy campus). If you have 'liberated' items, and you'd like the Operation Wandering Souls team to take them back to Vietnam, please contact us using the contact details below.

The Operation Wandering Souls research team

Dr Bob Hall – Team leader and Vietnam veteran (8RAR)

Dr Andrew Ross – Database and analysis guru

Dr Amy Griffin – Geographic Information Systems expert

Derrill de Heer – Field researcher and Vietnam veteran (8RAR, Psyops and 4RAR/NZ)

You can check out Bob Hall and Derrill de Heer at the following URLs:

<https://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/school-of-humanities-and-social-sciences/dr-bob-hall#quickset-people2>

<https://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/school-of-humanities-and-social-sciences/mr-derrill-de-heer>

To contact the team:

Contact Bob Hall

Mobile: 0439 887 580

Email: [b.hall@adfa.edu.au](mailto:b.hall@adfa.edu.au)

or

Derrill de Heer

0414 574 605

Email: [d.deheer@adfa.edu.au](mailto:d.deheer@adfa.edu.au)

Snail mail:

Bob Hall or Derrill de Heer

Operation Wandering Souls project

HASS

UNSW Canberra

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ACT 2610

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Photos: Operation Wandering Souls returning documents to Vietnam 2013

Below are some photographs showing the return of documents/artefacts to Vietnamese families in 2013. The photos show some of the work of the Operation Wandering Souls team in Vietnam.

Le Hang and his son, admiring the portrait of his mother, Phan Thi Vu, rescued from a burning building by an Australian adviser. Le Hang was overjoyed to receive the portrait.



**Derrill presenting their father's** commendation certificate to Ha Thi Tam and Ha Van Loi.



(Continued on page 48)

**After returning their father's commendation certificate to the family, Derrill comforts the man's two daughters. For years the family, originally from a province near Hanoi, had searched for their father's remains.** Thinking that he had died in Cambodia, they settled in Tay Ninh province near the Cambodian border. The return of his commendation certificate confirmed that he had been killed in Phuoc Tuy Province in a firefight with 1ATF.



Bob Hall uses a topographical map to show a Hanoi family where their brother died in battle in an ambush set by New Zealand infantrymen in the Nui Dinh. A photograph of their brother, held by his sister, was captured after the ambush. In this case, the captured photograph and details of the contact in which it was captured, have allowed the family to **attempt to recover their brother's remains** from the ambush site. A six-figure grid reference in the contact report records the best available information about the **location of their brother's remains.**



Artefacts handover ceremony at Quy Nhon, Binh Dinh province. About 90 letters had been collected from Binh Dinh province by an Australian adviser. We were able to return many to family members. From the left, Ms Ngo Thi Thuy Hang, CEO of the MARIN centre, an NGO specialising in helping Vietnamese families find their MIA soldiers; Le Huu Loc, Province Chief, Binh Dinh Province; Bob Hall and Huyen Siccama, **Bob's interpreter. The handover ceremony attracted a lot of Vietnamese media coverage.** ■





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

in conjunction with  
BANKSTOWN DISTRICT SPORTS CLUB

Invite you to attend  
**VIETNAM VETERANS DAY TUESDAY, 18 AUGUST 2020**  
**COMMEMORATING THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF**  
**OPERATION HAMMERSLEY – 8RAR IN THE LONG HAIS'**

THE VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) Inc., in conjunction with BANKSTOWN SPORTS CLUB, will once again host this years' VIETNAM VETERANS DAY COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE & LUNCHEON.

The club is located at 8 Greenfield Parade Bankstown. If arriving by rail use this entry. If arriving by vehicle, free car parking is available via the Mona St., car park entry. There are also bus services from Parramatta, Liverpool and Hurstville. Doors open at 0900hrs. Make your way to the Grand Ballroom entry hall.

FULL DETAILS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN OUR JULY ISSUE  
HOWEVER YOU MAY WISH TO PRE-BOOK A TABLE OR TWO IN  
ADVANCE BY CONTACTING THE GRANVILLE OFFICE.

This is a ticketed event and entry will only be granted to those holding tickets. Pre-purchasing tickets is the preferred method to ascertain attendance figures for catering arrangements and seating by the club.

Tickets on sale soon. Prices TBA. Check with the Granville office

*Contact the Granville office for further information: Ph 02 9682 1788 Fax 02 9682 6134 or*

SEND US YOUR INTENDED TABLE/TICKET ENQUIRY

<b>YOUR NAME:</b>	<b>CONTACT PHONE:</b>
<b>GROUP NAME:</b>	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
<b>NUMBER OF TABLES (@ 10 PER TABLE)      OR</b>	<b>NUMBER OF TICKETS</b>
<b>INDICATE SERVICE ONLY / SERVICE &amp; SHOW</b>	
<b>PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD</b>	<b>Cash / Card / Cheque / Direct Debit / MO</b>

# Vietnam Veterans' Stories

From letters diaries and memories

## 4RAR and our appointment with destiny

by Al Wood

### Part 2

*“Somewhere between Manus Is. and the Philippines.”- 26 May '68*

I'm now a “shellback”. It is not even an hour ago at the writing of this letter that we sailed into the Northern Hemisphere, on a course which will take us just south of Mindanao, the largest island in the southern Philippines group. We are doing a rate of approx. 520 miles per day and once clear of the Philippines and Borneo region we will be crossing the South China Sea on the last leg of our cruise to Vung Tau. We are due to anchor out to sea off the Cape at about 7am next Saturday morning.(1<sup>st</sup> June).

Yesterday morning (Sat.), I awoke at about 6.20 to find we were only about 4 miles off Manus Island which I was surprised to find was very large indeed. I was expecting some small coral island, but instead saw an island with mountain ranges stretching off into the distance, harbours and a fringe of small coral islands about a mile off the coast with several large rusting wrecks adorning the reefs. We tied up about 7.30 am in a cove several hundred yards off the naval installation there, complete with about half a dozen patrol boats like they're building in the Brisbane River. It looked like something out of “McHale's Navy.”

As soon as we stopped engines, out came the natives in outrigger canoes selling shell necklaces, bananas, mangoes, coconuts and carved goods, but all I bought was one little old coconut. It was just the shot though, what with the sun blazing down. The carvings were of a poor quality and they wanted anything upward of \$4 for them. Some of the blokes were gullible enough of course to buy them, but what in hell would a fella do with a 4ft. wooden crocodile in Nui Dat?

Contrary to what I had heard, we were not allowed ashore. The island looked so inviting that I doubt whether they would have got everybody back aboard anyway. This was the point at which our mail was taken ashore, so this letter and any more I write over this next week shall not be taken off until we arrive in Vietnam. At 4pm on Saturday, we pulled out again from the beautiful green of the waters in the cove, and once clear of the fringe islands around Manus we rendezvous with the fleet oiler HMAS Supply to take on more fuel. I don't know what kind of oil she carried, but hanging out of a rear porthole was a 30ft. long tiger's tail. (“put a tiger in your tank”, and all that.). After watching this episode and having a turkey dinner down in the mess, I watched the film “The



Docking in Vung Tau

Ba Ria



Sins of Rachael Cade” before turning-in for the night.

Today has been perfect with just a little cloud around this morning. The breeze remained refreshingly cool despite the hot sun. I already have a bit of a tan up. The sea today for our crossing of the Equator has been fantastically smooth, almost mirror smooth. I didn't think the sea could look so calm. The surface was broken yesterday afternoon by a school of at least a dozen

porpoises, but today nothing has broken the surface. All in all it was a perfect setting for the Crossing of the Equator Ceremony. At about 2pm we were called and presently King Neptune and his Court appeared (They were senior officers of the Battalion of course), and proceeded to “try” various members of the battalion for various “crimes” which I won't discuss here. They were all found guilty of course, and one by one and after being covered in various concoctions like eggs,

glue, flour, whitewash and kitchen leftovers they were given the "order of the bath" in seawater. When the trials were completed a high-pressure hose was turned on us and 'hey-presto', we were declared genuine "shellbacks".-----

***"500 Miles closer to Vietnam than Yesterday's Letter".- 27 May '68***

We'll probably be doing a little training aboard this week, but we're still left with many hours to kill. What seems to be lowering our moral just a little I think is the absence of any mail for nearly 2 weeks. Regular mail aboard ship would do us the world of good. We're all looking forward to getting off this tub and getting ashore next Saturday morning, knowing that mail for most of us will be waiting there.

Today has been pretty hot all day and the sea is still very calm. All we did today was fire over the side with our weapons at balloons and beer cans, but in being on deck nearly all day we have all become a little burnt. In fact some are already wearing long trousers, shirts and hats to protect their burnt skin, instead of just shorts. I started wearing a shirt myself this afternoon when I found my shoulders becoming a little tender to the touch.

Tomorrow (Tues. 28<sup>th</sup>), I cop my one and only duty on board. I'll be working as a "galley slave", working down in the kitchen, assisting the cooks. It's terribly hot down there, and I'll probably lose a little weight in sweat, but up in these latitudes we're drinking heaps more fluids and downing 3 or 4 salt tablets per day. One advantage of working here though is we are not found wanting for eats. We eat all we want. The only trouble with the food being served up is that much of it consists of "fatty" foods, such as chips, fried meats, etc. Thank goodness they also serve up salads, - they're easier to digest in this climate.---

***"Philippines."- 29 May '68***

As from yesterday pm until we reach Vung Tau, our watches and clocks aboard have been put back 1 hour. Once we have arrived there, our watches will be set back yet another hour, and will then be on a par with West Aussie time. What else? Oh yes. Yesterday afternoon we saw a school of

whales cruising by the ship at a distance of about 200 yds. They were diving and surfacing continuously and blowing jets of water into the air. Also yesterday we saw our first ship since leaving "Brissie", apart from our oiler and our escort. It was a large tanker and crossed our path at right-angles about ½ mile ahead of us. Taking no risks with 478 troops aboard, our choppers from the carrier flew over to and looked it over, in the off-chance it had ulterior motives.

Working in the galley wasn't quite the hardship I thought it was going to be after all. Sure it was hot alright, but not as bad as I was expecting. At any rate, the day's work was made worthwhile by the tea I had that evening. I really had all I could eat, not a wise thing to do in this climate. As a result of this over-indulgence I am now laying-off eating for a day. Besides, I'm getting a little too much weight on this cruise, what with eating plenty and doing little training.----

***"Philippine Sea."- 30 May '68***

This morning we passed through the southern extremity of the Philippines, passing several large islands, one of which was Mindanao, 2<sup>nd</sup> largest island in the group. From the ship we could see a town on the North. Coast of the island, with a few rather large buildings, oil storage tanks and several ships at anchor in the small harbour. The mountain range which rose from the coast was rather high, the tops hidden in cloud. On our port side was another large island complete with volcano, which I am told was in eruption 3 or 4 weeks ago. It all looks quite peaceful today however. All over this island this morning there were wisps of white smoke rising, probably from villages scattered around the hills, and in the straits between these islands we passed many outrigger canoes, some quite close and probably belonging to the local 'indians'.

To look outside now I would hazard a guess and say we are now sailing into the influence of the monsoon region. After days of beautiful weather, we woke this morning to an overcast sky, with grey cloud scurrying across the sky. It has steadily deteriorated as the day has progressed, and

Road through Ba Ria



SAS Hill (in the distance)

is now steadily raining. The sea has risen some and the whole picture is once again grey. At least it will give everyone's sunburn the chance to lose it's soreness. They tell us we're going to have to condition ourselves to the rain, because about the time we reach our destination the monsoon season will be getting underway and will last for most of my tour in South Vietnam, but I'll know more about that from first-hand experience very soon.---

***"South China Sea."- 31 May '68***

Well tomorrow's the big day for us. The day when we go ashore on the beach at Vung Tau from our

barges, kit-bag in one hand and universal travelling bag in the other. If we're lucky we just might be able to find room to squeeze in our rifles also. Believe me, things will be hot in Nui Dat, in more ways than one, but I'll be glad to get off the old tub they call a "fast troop carrier". Although life aboard has been quite a holiday with so little work to do, it'll be a change to be occupying ourselves with a little of the old toil again. At least time will pass quicker with work to do, (filling sandbags, digging gunpits, etc.) At the moment, time just drags by here at sea..

The latest word is that we arrive off Cape St. Jacques (Vung Tau) in the early hours of Saturday morning and begin disembarking at approx. 7am. Precautionary measures have been taken aboard ship for our arrival by night in Vietnam Waters. Yesterday, all lightbulbs visible away from the ship were exchanged for blue bulbs, with shades covering them to seaward. At the moment though I don't think it has really dawned on us as yet that as from tomorrow there will be people around us who will be firing fair-dinkum live rounds at us. It all seems as though it's still completely unreal, and that the fighting is still on the other side of the world instead of on our doorstep. Oh well, tomorrow will probably be the rude awakening for us all.-----

***"Nui Dat."- 2 June '68***

Oh, the smells of Asian villages, (whew!) sweat, dust and rotting vegetation pervading the camp. Believe me, when I say sweat, I mean Sweat with a capital S. Even just standing still we just drip, even though all we wear in camp is a hat, shorts, socks and boots. The days here have temperatures in the 80's, but oh, the humidity. The nights fortunately are cooler, and last night at about 4am I even had to pull a sheet over myself.- I've still much to talk about, like the camp and the trip up from Vung Tau etc. but since it's 10.45 pm, I'd better 'hit the hay' and write again tomorrow. If this letter is not posted by 8am each day it lies around until the next day, so,-----

***"Nui Dat."- 3 June '68***

We left the carrier at about 9am Saturday morning and went ashore at Vung Tau port down nets and into LST's which the SYDNEY had slung over the sides. Once ashore we were issued with front-line ammo of 120 rounds/SLR per man, or for whatever weapon we carried. Then off we went in a convoy of over 30 trucks, APC's and 3 choppers overhead looking out ahead for possible enemy on the road. We'd been forewarned that the VC wore black pyjamas, but that's what everyone we saw on our way inland wore..

We passed through about 4 hamlets and villages on the 25 mile trip to Nui Dat, and they

look just like the Asian villages in the movies, with the addition of smells. The squalor some of these people live in is unbelievable and depressing, but these people are probably used to it. In between these hamlets are rice paddies and clumps of bamboo and bush. The paddies are dry as the monsoon season is not properly with us yet, but for most of Saturday it was drizzling rain. Then about 5am Sunday morning it really came down in buckets,- and the mud. Every step I took Sunday morning I think I grew about an inch, what with the clayey mud clinging to my boots. The weather was again wet last night, (it helps to cool the place off at night anyway). Today the temperature got into the mid 90's but oh!, this humidity.

There is no such thing as weekends or any other day-off here. We work 7 days a week, and believe me, there is plenty of work to do in the hoochies in which we are quartered. They were really left in a mess by 2RAR who we've relieved at Nui Dat. We passed most of 2 Battalion on their way into Vung Tau. They were on their way out to the SYDNEY. Many of us will be envying them on the 13<sup>th</sup> June at approx. 8am when they arrive back in Brisbane.-----

***"Nui Dat."- 4 June '68***

After working from 8am 'til about 4.30pm each day with only about an hour or so off for lunch, you just can't imagine what a booster it is to receive mail each day. At the moment we're having a bit of a bludge just working around the camp on our 3 week acclimatization period.

After this settling-in period we get down to the hard work ahead. On our first payday here, (June 6), I'll be buying myself a camera, probably an Instamatic, and from then on clicking away, even when "beyond the wire."

I forgot to tell you in previous mail that we received some 'shocking' news on the ship last Friday morning. We heard over 'Radio Hanoi' that on the previous day we had been sunk with the loss of nearly 5,000 lives. There was a report of only 2 survivors being picked-up. This was terrible news to hear that we had all been killed the previous day. Then, several hours later they

reported that we would be arriving in South Vietnam on the Sunday morning. (so work that one out).

When we arrived last Saturday morning we were besieged by small kids every time the trucks stopped. They were after anything we would throw them, and some of these kids were only 2 and 3 years old. I would say that about half of them were smoking, but they reckon that the people here do everything at an earlier age than back home. They even get married at the ripe old age of 13 or 14 years.

Last Sunday morning we went down to Luscombe airfield, about 500 yds from our lines, and watched an ASCO (Australian Services Canteens Organisation) entertainment team of 3 girls and 5 fellas. The girls singing was the most appreciated in their 2 hour show. I think they could have just stood there doing nothing and still would have taken out the honours. On the whole though, the show was most appreciated.

As I write this I am listening to the US Armed Services Radio (AFVN) program from Saigon (a 24hr program). It is a request program for servicemen in Vietnam. From men in various units in-country and from their loved-ones back home, dedicated to them. Also tonight there is the usual noise of crunching mortar and artillery fire, which they send out of the camp every night to harass the enemy. After each gun has fired, we hear the shell passing through the air above our heads, only to crash way off in the distance. This is continued all night and every night, but we soon get used to it.

When we moved in last Saturday morning it looked as though 2RAR (the unit we relieved) had been given only 5 mins. to pack and shift out. The hoochies, (which house 3 men, big tents surrounded by sandbags) were in a simply shocking state. The stuff lying around was phenomenal.- ammunition, grenades, plastic-explosive, claymore mines, (firing about 800 ball-bearings about 500 yards when detonated.), money, watches and clocks, souvenirs, army equipment, writing material, hundreds of books,



Herman

personal gear, clothing, a radio, a thermometer, and even a very old skull we named *Herman*, (its origin unknown). You name it, we found it there. It was quite a job cleaning up, and even now **there's still a mountain of work to do, making** furniture, and tidying and brightening up the tents.

Before long, I had scrounged up a parachute -flare canopy, which looked just great when suspended from our hoochie ceiling, especially **after we'd decorated it with a "Playboy of the Month" centrefold pinned into each section of the chute**, in an overall circular pattern. About a dozen in all, and VERY *interesting*, I must say ! But our CSM , and after a 'close' inspection, unfortunately disagreed when he finally saw it while making a **lines' inspection one morning. A great pity. We considered it was very artistic !**

THE END

## PSK FINANCIAL SERVICES ARTICLE

### CAN I GO BACK TO WORK IF I'VE ACCESSED MY SUPER?

When you access your super at retirement your super fund may ask you to sign a declaration stating that you intend to never be employed again. But there may be compelling reasons why someone would subsequently return to work.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) the most common reasons retirees return to full or part-time employment are financial necessity and boredom. Regardless of your reason for returning to work, there are certain rules you should be aware of.

What are the superannuation retirement rules?

You generally will only be able to access your super if you've reached your preservation age and retired, ceased an employment arrangement after age 60, or turned 65. If you're thinking about returning to work after retirement there are rules about super you may need to be aware of depending on your circumstances.

We look at some of the common situations below.

I have reached my preservation age but am less than age 60

If you've reached your preservation age and wish to access your super, you would usually be required to declare that you're no longer in paid employment and have permanently retired.

If your personal circumstances have since changed, it is possible for you to return to the workforce, however your intention to retire must have been genuine at the time, which is why your super fund may have asked you to sign a declaration previously stating your intent.

I ceased an employment arrangement after age 60

From age 60, you can cease an employment arrangement and don't have to make any declaration about your future employment intentions.

If you happen to be working more than one job, ceasing just one will meet the requirement and you can continue working in the other. You can choose to access your super as a lump sum or in periodic

payments (which you may receive via an account-based pension).

If you're in this situation, you can return to work whenever you like as you wouldn't have needed to declare permanent retirement before accessing your super.

#### I'm 65 or older

When you turn 65, you don't have to be retired or satisfy any special conditions to get full access to your super savings. This means you can continue working or return to work if you have previously retired.

What happens to your super if you return to work?

Regardless of which of the groups above you fall into, if you have begun drawing a regular income stream from your super savings, you can continue to access your income stream payments whether you return to full or part-time employment.

If you haven't actually accessed your super but have met one of the retirement conditions of release (and advised your fund of this) then your super will generally remain accessible if you return to work.

Meanwhile, it's important to note that any subsequent super contributions made after you return to work will generally be 'preserved' until you meet another condition of release (unless you are aged 65 or over).

Can I access my super at 55 and still work?

In the past, Australians could access their super from as young as 55, but the preservation age is gradually increasing to age 60 and only people born before 1 July 1960 reached their preservation age at 55.

Regardless of your preservation age, you must meet certain criteria before you can access your super, as outlined above. However, if you're aged 60 or over, these criteria simply mean you need to end an arrangement under which you're gainfully employed.

Rules around future super contributions

Your employer is broadly required to make super contributions to a fund on your behalf at the rate of

9.5% of your earnings, once you earn more than \$450 in a calendar month.

This means you can continue to build your retirement savings via compulsory contributions paid by your employer and/or voluntary contributions you make yourself.

However, if you're aged 65 or over, and intend on making voluntary contributions, you must first satisfy a work test requirement showing that you have worked for at least 40 hours within a 30-day period before you are eligible to make voluntary contributions in a financial year. Voluntary contributions can't be made once you turn 75 and the last opportunity is 28 days after the end of the month where you turn age 75.

Effects of withdrawing super on your age pension

If you're receiving a full or part DVA/Centrelink pension, you'd know that DVA/Centrelink applies an income test and an assets test to determine what you get paid. Your super or pension account will be included as part of your age pension eligibility assessment.

Any employment income will also be taken into account as part of this assessment, so make sure you're aware of whether your earnings could impact your DVA/Centrelink pension entitlements.

As always and for decisions of this nature you should sit down with a suitably qualified financial adviser to work through your individual circumstances and consider the most appropriate solution for your needs.

To discuss further or to arrange a time to review your current financial position please contact Paul Messerschmidt at PSK on 0414 811 777, 02 9895 8800 or [paulm@psk.com.au](mailto:paulm@psk.com.au)

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- Investment
- Estate planning

For any questions regarding your financial situation please contact

Paul Messerschmidt  
MFinPlan, GradDipFinPlan  
Partner and Senior Financial Adviser

PSK Financial Services  
Level 4, 3 Horwood Place,  
Parramatta NSW 2150  
M 0414 811 777 | P (02) 9895 8800  
E [paulm@psk.com.au](mailto:paulm@psk.com.au)





# AVCAT REPORT

## SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THE CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN OF AUSTRALIAN VETERANS

This Association, which is affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, has for many years sponsored Scholarships for children or grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans, and also Peacekeepers and Peacemakers.

Presently the Association sponsors three (3) Scholarships – “Tim McCombe OAM” and “Phil Thompson OAM” and also the “Graham Walker AM” Scholarships, — awarded to those facing hardships and would otherwise be deprived of further education.

The scholarships are administered on our behalf by the “Australian Veterans’ Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT)” who also administer other sponsored scholarships. Applications for all scholarships administered by AVCAT will open from 18 August each year and close on 31 October of that year, and will be advertised by AVCAT through the Federation’s Newsletter and other media outlets, prior to August.

Those wishing to make general enquiries about our, and other AVCAT administered scholarships, may do so at any time by writing to the Scholarship Manager, AVCAT at P.O. Box K978, Haymarket NSW 1240, or contact them on: Telephone (02) 9213-7999, Fax (02) 9213-7307, or Email: [avcat@dva.gov.au](mailto:avcat@dva.gov.au)

The Scholarships are mainly funded from the proceeds of the “Association’s Annual Raffle”. So please continue to support this Raffle to allow us to assist these children with Scholarships. Your support in the past is very much appreciated.

We are proud of the fact that nearly all those we have sponsored over the years have done very well in their chosen vocation and gone on to successful careers. The following are progress reports of our Scholarship recipients’ for 2019:

Ryan Balkin - 2017 Bachelor of Laws/  
Bachelor of Science;  
Western Sydney University  
Scholarship Period: March 2017 – December 2020

Course Completion: December 2022  
2019 Annual Review: 1 Distinction; 2 Credits

Ryan had another very successful semester and continued his excellent results. He is very appreciative of another year of scholarship support.

Ryan writes: (in part)

Dear Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia,  
I hope this letter finds you all in good health and you have had a great 2019 that is met with a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Firstly, I should thank you for your continued support and assistance in permitting me to continue my academics pursuits. I wanted to, again, extend my profound gratitude in choosing and assisting me through this time.

This year was definitely more challenging than I thought, somewhat of an emotional rollercoaster. Some of the lows included health issues, both familial and personal, but there were highs that somewhat made up for it. Those challenges would have affected me more if it was not for your continual support, so for that I say thank you.

I am now a legal assistant at a barristers chambers in the city. Honestly, it is probably the best thing that has happened this year. Although it is not much to most, it is a start and a chance to advance my legal career Hopefully the next time I write to you it is something I was able to successfully do.

On a final note, I would just like to say thank you again for your support.  
Sincerely yours, Ryan Balkin

Kirsti Young – 2018 Bachelor of Education Primary; Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne  
Scholarship Period: March 2018 – December 2020  
Course Completion: December 2020  
2019 Annual Review: 1 High Distinction; 1 Distinction; 2 Ungraded Passes

Kirsti has continued to achieve excellent results. The scholarship payments are crucial to Kirsti being able to afford appropriate child care.

Kirsti writes:

Dear Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia,  
Thank you for your continued support, without it I would not be able to continue my studies.

I just wanted to provide a quick update on my progress. I am currently in my last teaching period for 2019, finishing in February 2020.

In my last letter I mentioned I needed to start placements, and this was going to be a significant financial burden. However, I can report that I successfully completed my 1st placement with flying colours despite the massive financial cost. I was unable to access any funded care and had to pay privately.

I was extremely grateful to have this scholarship as it helped with the costs. Unfortunately, I still have two more placements to go and still no access to affordable childcare, but on the upside, I only have 2 more placements to go to finish my degree (and 2 theory units).

Thank you again for your ongoing support, many thanks,  
Kirsti Young.

Emily Hespe – 2019 Bachelor of Performance (Dean's Scholar); University of Wollongong  
Scholarship Period: March 2019 – December 2021  
Course Completion: December 2021  
2019 Annual Review: 3 Distinctions; 1 Credit

Emily had a very successful semester. Her results are excellent, and she is looking forward to the challenges and opportunities this year.

Emily writes:

Dear VVPPAA,

Happy New Year! I am writing to thank again for the continuation of my generous scholarship in the new decade!

This year I am finding myself to locate my very first home, with this has come A LOT of housing inspections. Thankfully I am not worried for the initial financial payments such as bonds as your scholarship is able to assist this. Living with the scholarship will be extremely beneficial this year for my Bachelor of Performance course, due to this year being a more intense set of classes and workshops I had attended last year.

With an extra 10 contact hours added on to my **schedule it's going to be hectic!**

With all that I will be unable to work as much and will be relying on this scholarship more than ever. I greatly appreciate your generosity for my growth as a hard-working performance student living away from home in order to further their craft. I would be more than happy to keep you updated throughout the year of any shows or notable accomplishments your hard-earned money is going towards.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart,  
Emily Hespe

*We say well done to the 3 scholarship beneficiaries, and acknowledge their hard work completed in 2019. We hope their dreams and aspirations reach fulfilment, and we are proud of their accomplishments to date.*

William (Bill) Roberts OAM JP  
National President—VVFA  
Senior Vice President—VVPPAA NSW  
Director—AVCAT



**AVCAT**

# SCHOLARSHIPS

FOR THE CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN  
OF AUSTRALIAN VETERANS

**The Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust** is a national independent charity helping the children and grandchildren of ex-service men and women to a better future through tertiary education. Through the generous support of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs, ex-service organisations, corporate sponsors and private donors, we provide scholarships which assist recipients to obtain the tertiary qualification they need for their chosen career.

One of the scholarships administered by AVCAT is the VVPPAA Scholarship, specifically available for the children and grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans. Our proud association has seen many successful recipients achieve tertiary qualifications and reach their goals, that erstwhile may not have been available to them. We hope to continue this proud heritage long into the future with your help. It is through your generous support of this organization, and valued donations, that we keep the hopes of children alive.



*Some of our recent recipients and successful achievers in their chosen fields*

**“It means the world to me that someone I don’t know cares about my education and believes I have potential.”**

2014 Recipient

2019 scholarships open in August 2018 and close at the end of October 2018. See below for more.

**“Without the scholarship, achieving my goals would be almost impossible. The financial support has provided me the opportunity to study and without your support I would simply not be in the position I am in today, and for that I will be forever grateful”.** Recent recipient.

You are eligible to apply for a scholarship with AVCAT if you answer yes to the following questions:

- Are you a child or a grandchild of an Australian veteran? A veteran is a person who has rendered service as a member of the Australian Defence Force.
- Are you an Australian citizen or permanent resident?
- Are you enrolled, or planning to enroll, in tertiary studies for a minimum of one year?
- Will you be studying full-time next year?
- Are you or will you be eligible for Centrelink’s Youth Allowance?
- Are you under 25 years of age?

To apply you should contact AVCAT and request to be added to the expressions of interest register.  
Phone: 02 9213 7999      Web: [avcat@dva.gov.au](mailto:avcat@dva.gov.au)      PO Box K978 Haymarket, NSW 1240



## HEADQUARTERS

### 1st AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE

### NUI DAT SOUTH VIETNAM 1966-1972



Headquarters Staff	Det 198 Works Section (RAE)
1 ARU	1st Australian Light Aid Det (RAEME)
Headquarters Company	1st Australian Provost Det (Raprov)
Headquarters Platoon	Det 1 Div Int Sect (Int Corp)
Transport Platoon	Det 1st Topo Survey Troop (Rasvy)
D & E Infantry Platoon, Royal Australian Regiment.	

# REUNIONS & NOTICES

# REUNIONS & NOTICES

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



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

**JUST CALL 1800 011 046**

**If overseas call +61 8 8241 4546**

Veterans and Veterans Families  
Counselling Service

**FORMERLY KNOWN AS**



Call  
24/7

**A service founded by Vietnam veterans**



1300 924 522

Our programs

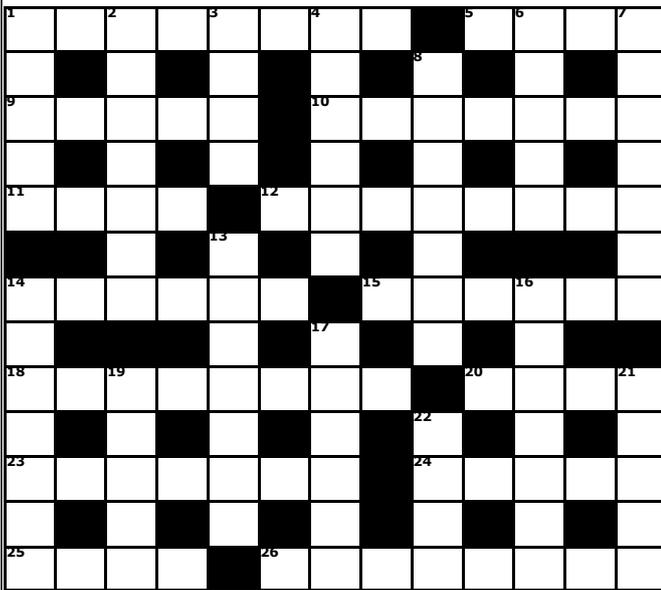
Alcohol    Drugs    Eating disorders  
Anxiety    Depression    Bipolar disorder  
Borderline personality disorder  
Schizophrenia and psychosis  
  
Veterans services

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

# CROSSWORD CORNER



**ACROSS**

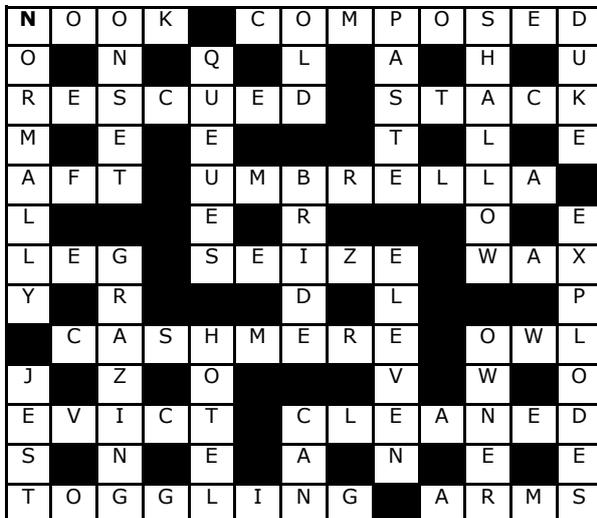
- 1. Sultans wives
- 5. Chief, Headman
- 9. Relative
- 10. Thin frame
- 11. Toy soarer
- 12. Guidelines
- 14. Range tops
- 15. Battled
- 18. Station path
- 20. Head coverings
- 23. Try
- 24. Shortwave sender
- 25. Team
- 26. Tall hill

**DOWN**

- 1. Smelly animal
- 2. Found
- 3. Cancelled show
- 4. Affirm
- 6. Command
- 7. Paid carer
- 8. Damage
- 13. Scent
- 14. Says again
- 16. Female relative
- 17. Small cavern
- 19. Performed
- 21. Exhibited
- 22. Breakfast grain

[Solution next issue]

**DECEMBER 2019 SOLUTION**



# THE UNKNOWN COMIC

A man tells his doctor that he's incapable of doing all the things around the house that he used to do. When the examination is over, he says, "Okay, Doctor. In plain English—what's wrong with me?"  
 "Well, in plain English," says the doctor, "you're just lazy."  
 The man nods. "Now give me the medical term so I can tell my wife."

A 92 year old man is walking through a park and sees a talking frog. He picks up the frog and the frogs says, "If you kiss me, I will turn into a beautiful princess and be yours for a week." The old man puts the frog in his pocket. The frog screams, "Hey if you kiss me, I will turn into a beautiful princess and make love to you for a whole month." The old man looks at the frog and says, "At my age I'd rather have a talking frog."

A man dropped his scrabble set and everything was scattered around. So I asked him what was the word on the street.

I was driving alone on a long trip, so was pleased when I spotted a hitchhiker and picked him up.

Pleasantries were exchanged and I found out where he was headed, then we settled into a lull in conversation, until he suddenly asks if I wasn't afraid of picking up potential serial killers.

When I said the odds of two serial killers being in the same car at the one time was very unlikely, he jumped out so quick I didn't have time to slow down, let alone stop.

Little Johnny was approached by the lifeguard at the public swimming pool. "You're not allowed to pee in the pool," said the lifeguard. "I'm going to report you."  
 "But everyone pees in the pool," insisted Little Johnny.  
 "That may be," said the lifeguard, "but not from the diving board!"

When the dentist said I needed a crown I told him he was the first person to understand me.

# CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

SURNAME

FIRST NAME

SECOND NAME

--	--	--

OLD DETAILS *[PRINT CLEARLY]*

OLD ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

NEW DETAILS *[PRINT CLEARLY]*

NEW ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

EMAIL ADDRESS *[PRINT CLEARLY]*

--

YOUR SIGNATURE

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

*Complete all sections and post to:*

The Secretary  
 VVPPAA NSW  
 PO Box 170  
 Granville  
 NSW 2142

<p><b>OFFICE USE ONLY</b></p> <p><b>MEMBERSHIP REGISTRY</b></p> <p><b>DETAILS CHANGED</b></p> <p><b>DATE:</b>    ___ / ___ / ___</p> <p><b>INITIALS:</b>    _____</p>
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# VETERANS MORTALITY REPORT

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

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc has for many years maintained records of the deaths of Vietnam Veterans and the cause of death if known. This has proved invaluable regarding the health standards of Vietnam Veterans when compared to the general public.

We seek your assistance in reporting the death of Vietnam Veterans, past or recent, to allow the Federation to expand and preserve it's record base.

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

*Please print clearly*

*VETERANS DETAILS*

SURNAME	FIRST NAME	SERVICE NUMBER
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SVN UNIT/S	TOUR DATES
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

CAUSE OF DEATH (If known)

SR Service Related      UNK Unknown      S Suicide      O Other )

DATE OF DEATH (If known)	LOCATION AT TIME OF DEATH
<input type="text"/>	(TOWN) <input type="text"/> (STATE) <input type="text"/>

YOUR NAME

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

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

RETURN FORM TO: The Welfare Officer  
 VVPPAA NSW Branch  
 PO Box 170  
 Granville NSW 2142

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

## BRANCH LISTINGS NSW SUB-BRANCHES

## BRANCH LISTINGS OTHER STATES





## Please consider leaving a bequest in your will

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Operation Life



### Register Now!!

CALL 1800 011 046



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

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

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

FORMERLY

Veterans and Veterans Families  
Counselling Service





# Last Post



## VALE 'LOFTY' WENDT OAM BEM

16663 Kevin Stanley (Lofty) Wendt OAM BEM passed away after a long battle with cancer on 21 January 2020. He served in both Malaysia and Vietnam with 8 RAR and was wounded in action on 10 July 1970 in Vietnam. He went on to continue serving in the Army totaling 28 years service with various units until he retired in 1990. He was WO1 RSM of the Army from January 1987 until December 1990, a position which saw him oversee the training of raw recruits and Officer cadets, excelling so well that it earned him the highest respect among his peers.



He was looking forward to marching at the 50<sup>th</sup> Long Hai Day commemorative Service during February of this year, 2020, but sadly it was not to be. Instead he was laid to rest at Biggenden, a small rural town near Mount Walsh in Queensland, on 7 February 2020. The normally quiet village was swollen by the hundreds who came to mourn and pay respect, including troops from his old unit, 8 RAR.





# Last Post





## Last Post



*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

### PLEASE NOTE

***We make every endeavour to ensure the accuracy of all names published in “The Last Post”. If any omission or error has been made we apologise unreservedly...please contact the editor if you feel an error has been made.***

# MEMBER DISCOUNTS

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

MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICES	SMASH REPAIRS	BATTERIES	FLOOR COVERINGS
<p><b>CARNEEDS Pty Ltd</b> 152 Parramatta Rd STANMORE Prptr: Robert Stenta Ph: 9519 1441 <b>10% discount</b> <b>On mechanical repairs &amp; competitive prices on tyres and batteries.</b> To all Vietnam Veterans Federation Members.</p> <p><b>MALCOLM MOTORS</b> Automotive Service Specialist. All mechanical repairs &amp; servicing. <b>15% Discount for members on services and repairs.</b> <b>JOE CARE</b> 603-605 Parramatta Rd Leichhardt NSW MTA Lic. # 42198</p>	<p><b>Wreck-A-Mended Smash Repairs</b> Unit 1, 20 Bosci Rd Ingleburn NSW 02 9605 9008 <b>Ask for Alan</b> Tell them you are a member and they will send us a donation</p>	<p><b>POWER PRODUCTS</b> For all your power needs</p> <p><b>BATTERIES SOLAR POWER INVERTERS GENERATORS</b></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 &amp; Chargers 10%</p> <p>3/3 Sovereign Pl Sth Windsor Ph: (02) 4577 7761 Fax: (02) 4577 7768</p> <p><b>Ashfield Battery Centre</b> 110 FREDERICK STREET ASHFIELD, NSW, 2131 02 9798-6166 GEORGE KAWAUCHI (owner) <b>We sell:</b> 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. <b>10% Discount to veterans</b></p>	<p><b>Waratah Floor Coverings</b> 473 Burwood Rd BELMORE Ph: (02) 9759 6511 <b>Ask for Special Rate</b></p>
	MOTOR CYCLE ACCESSORIES		MOTELS
	<p><b>Motor Cycle Accessories Supermarket</b> Head Office. 321 Parramatta Rd Auburn NSW (02) 9648 1400 www.mcas.com.au</p> <p><b>CITY:</b> 9261 5182. <b>LIVERPOOL:</b> 9601 8276. <b>CARINGBAH</b> 9574 5100 <b>PENRITH</b> 4737 6100</p> <p><b>10% Discount except helmets and tyres</b></p>		<p><b>Golden Chain Motor Inn Ltd</b>  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 <b>10% discount</b> on room rates <b>Australia wide</b></p>
TRAILERS TOWBARS BULLBARS			
<p><b>Fastfit Bullbars &amp; Towbars</b> Trailer sales and spares-side steps Bike beacons-Custom work 65 St Hilliers Road AUBURN Ph: (02) 9749 1209 <b>10% Discount on products</b></p>			
EXHAUST SYSTEMS	TYRES		
<p><b>Menai Mufflers</b> Unit 4/788 Old Illawarra Rd MENAI Ph: (02) 9541 4720 <b>20% Discount</b></p> <p><b>Balmain Radiator Centre</b> <b>Mark Borghonzian</b> 22d Crystal St ROZELLE Ph: (02) 9818 4920 Mbl: 0419 417 206 <b>10% Discount</b></p>	<p></p> <p><b>BRIDGESTONE</b> Tyres &amp; 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>		
		TRAVEL TRANSFERS	
		<p><b>GROUP TRANSFER</b> Airport or Cruise Terminals All Tours, All Services <b>15% DISCOUNT FOR VETERANS</b> For Bookings call: Michael Viet (02) 9723 2262 0404 754 899</p>	
		<p><b>PLEASE REPORT ALL INSTANCES OF BREACHES TO OFFERED DISCOUNTS</b></p>	



