



VIETNAM VETERANS PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

JULY 2016

We welcome home and remember.....

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SHIRLEY BOLTON
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ROSLYN HEATHER WOOD

LEST WE FORGET

*Vietnam War dead
& children of service
personnel
repatriated home
from Malaysia*

**The Vietnam Veterans Federation
versus
The Australian War Memorial
Fighting to the Finish**

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Soldiers & children repatriated home



On Thursday 2 June 2016, the sun shone warmly on the RAAF Base at Richmond. At 1020 hrs the first of two Globemasters touched down followed 10 minutes later by the second. They carried the bodies of 25 soldiers and 8 children (of dependents of military personnel stationed in Malaysia). A large working hangar had been emptied for the ceremony. The central area had been newly painted in 'Repatriation Green', a light shade of green. The hangar walls were covered in camouflage

netting and pots of small palm trees were used around the perimeter of the hangar to form 33 individual bays for the families and friends of those coming home.

Pallbearers from the three services carried each coffin from the first plane accompanied by the Australian Army Band and led by a piper and a drummer. The piper was playing the hauntingly beautiful New World Symphony by Dvorak. A guard of honour headed by the chief mourner, the Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove accompanied by Lady Cosgrove lined the path followed by the pall bearers into the hangar to the waiting families. I was honoured to be in that guard. The pall bearers had to make two journeys to bring all the coffins into the hangar and place them on the individual biers in front of each family bay. After the second trip by the pall bearers the GG led us through the hangar where we fell out.

The families were then left for a period of reflection and grieving.

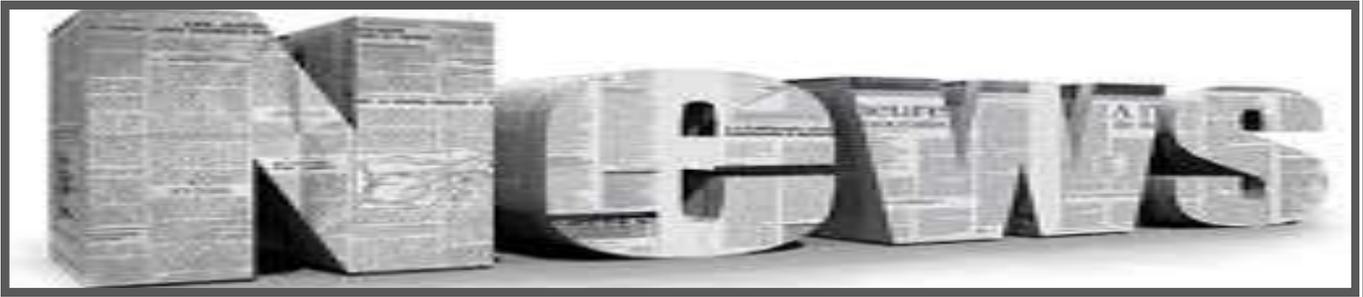
When we went back into the hangar the MC MajGen Paul Stevens conducted the ceremony. Mrs Meg Green - President of the War Widows' Guild of Australia read from the Bible. She was followed by the Principal Chaplain Catie Inches-Ogden. The GG then read the commemorative address whilst the Ode was read by the RSM Army WO1 Don Spinks. Then came the Last Post and Rouse after which the pallbearers returned and carried the coffins out to 33 waiting hearses.

NSW Police motorcycle escort lead the hearses out to the road and for most of them all the way to Rookwood cemetery. There were crowds paying their respects at all of the towns and cities along the way, with an estimated 300 gathering around St James Square in Parramatta, to pay their respects.

The Vietnam Veterans Federation acknowledges the decision by the former Minister for Veterans Affairs, Mr Michael Ronaldson, to direct that the repatriation occur. We thank him sincerely for that decision and his attendance on the day.

Jim Wain
President





Vietnam War dead and children of service personnel repatriated home from Malaysia.....

Thursday 2 June 2016 marked the day when Australians, killed in action during the Vietnam War were finally brought home.

See page 1



Popular Advocate passes away.....

Heather Graham Passed away suddenly on 2 May 2016. A senior Advocate who will be missed. *See page 7*



Fighting to the finish.....

How the Vietnam Veterans Federation took on The Australian War Memorial Who won and why. The story told by independent historian Dr Jacqui Bird. *See page 8*



Thousands of Part-Service Pensioners to lose their pensions or have them cut.....

Recently, the government introduced changes to the Service Pension's assets test thresholds which will take effect from 1 January 2017.



AND

The Six Year Freeze on Medicare rebates will apply to DVA White and Gold card holders....

The government is pausing the indexation of Gold and White card payments to doctors for six years. *See page 24*



NSW State Branch, Granville, announce Vietnam Veterans Day Commemoration.....

Thursday 18 August 2016 Bankstown Sports

See pages 26, 27

'The Early Days' article planned for this issue has been temporarily replaced by the article "The story of Gunner Philip Charles Norris". The early Days article will reappear in our December issue.

See page 32



What else is making news

More VAN Office Closures

The Veterans' Access Network (VAN) shopfront in Toowoomba will close on Friday 17 June, 2016.

As with the many other closures of VAN offices, veteran clients seeking face to face assistance must line up at Centrelink.

The government denies that this is the thin edge of the wedge of Centrelink taking over the Department of Veterans Affairs.

ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION

For new material, advertising and compliments, please Write, phone, or e-mail:

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For comments about the articles please write to:

'The National Secretary'.

Email: rcnatsec@vffa.org.au

MEMBERSHIP

**Belonging
Advocacy
Success**

Membership is due on 1 January each year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We thank you for your kind support.



VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION of AUSTRALIA Inc.

Incorporating

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Queensland Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans & Veterans Federation ACT Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Victorian Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation South Australian Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Federation of Australia (WA Branch) Inc.

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FREE PENSIONS & ADVOCACY SERVICE

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

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

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

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FROM THE EDITORS DESK

Sadly, one of our highly skilled Advocates at Granville, Heather Graham has passed away. See story next page.

This issue brings with it a couple of changes to try and enhance its appeal as a national newsletter for the Federation. Gone is the NSW Branch membership Form. Instead replaced by a very basic generic membership nomination request form. See page 25 and let me know your thoughts.

Also, we have reintroduced the State Presidents Reports after a 5 year hiatus, and even with just the two this issue, it is hoped others will follow in future issues. See pages 44 & 45.

Our Long Tan Anniversary products are flying out the door, and after copping a few on the chin I have decided to drop the prices, with apologies if you got in early and paid the higher amount. You can be assured that the money goes to a good cause—a fellow veteran in need— so please cop it sweet. (Previous column).

Wouldn't you think the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader would have rescheduled their respective election campaigns so as to attend the ceremonies of the repatriated Vietnam War dead, and the children of service personnel who died overseas. **Wouldn't you** think they should care?

Oh, and how do you reach me, see page 3.

Don't forget that the National Office now has its own website.

www.vvfa.org.au

POPULAR VETERAN'S ADVOCATE PASSES AWAY

One of our most popular veteran's
Advocates passed away suddenly on
2 May 2016.

Heather Graham was employed by the NSW Branch and operated out of our Granville NSW office. She had been with the Association for sixteen years processing pensions claims for war veterans, service and ex-service persons. She was also an Advocate before the Veterans' Review Board representing clients appealing against claims which had been rejected by the Department of Veteran Affairs.

Heather represented some 3,000 clients and had an extremely high success rate. Heather's work qualifications and extensive experience coupled with her credibility and friendly disposition made her an extremely popular and successful veterans Advocate.

Her years of work for this nation's ADF personnel, both past and present, should not be underestimated. Heather had also participated in the NSW Branch Outreach Program which is designed to provide advice and assistance to clients living in regional and remote areas in, or around, their home towns. Her Outreach trips included Darwin (NT), where our representatives were inundated with requests for assistance. Many DVA claims emanated from such visits and were professionally processed by Heather and her colleague.



Since Heather's sudden and unexpected passing the NSW Branch office worked closely with her family to ensure that all funeral details were finalised in an appropriate manner. Granville Welfare Officer Tom Jenkins (former funeral director) presided over the funeral service at the Andrew Drew Funeral chapel at Castle Hill on 10 May. NSW President Frank Cole delivered a eulogy and many war veterans provided an honour guard following the service. The family had accepted an offer by the Association for veterans to wear medals at the funeral as their way of saying 'thank you' on behalf of the numerous service and ex-service persons assisted through hard times by Heather.

We wish to express our most sincere sympathies to husband Ron and the family, during this difficult time from all of Heathers fellow employees, and the volunteers here at VVPPAA (NSW Branch). Heather was a highly valuable and respected Advocate and the effects of her passing are already being felt by her colleagues. Her bright personality will sincerely be missed by her work colleagues at the Granville office and elsewhere. We were humbled by her kindness and compassion toward everyone around her.

Heather was 67 years young and is survived by husband Ron, daughters Kylie and Danielle and son Ryan. Heather's brother Dale and wife Julia together with niece Brandi travelled from Canada to attend the funeral.

Heather Graham.... RIP

Fighting to the Finish

How the Vietnam Veterans Federation took on The Australian War Memorial

Who won and why

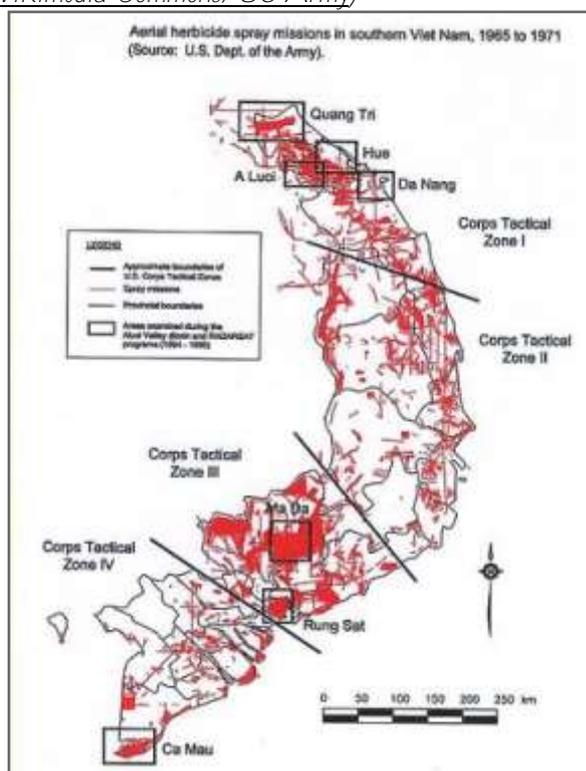
The story told by independent historian Dr Jacqui Bird

(first published on the web-site *Honest History*, 15 March 2016)
(A version including footnotes at: www.vvfa.org.au)

In the matter of Agent Orange: Vietnam veterans versus the Australian War Memorial

By Dr Jacqui Bird

US aerial herbicide spray missions 1965-71
Wikimedia Commons/US Army



For many of Australia's Vietnam veterans, the term 'Agent Orange' prompts an emotional response, as they recall their lengthy battle to determine the true impact of their wartime exposure, both on their own health and that of their children. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that any historical account of the Agent Orange controversy would provide some insight into this hard-fought campaign. Curiously, this has not been the approach of the Australian War Memorial, whose official histories have tended not to underscore the veterans' experience so much as to isolate and even malign those seeking the truth. As is to be expected, this negative portrayal has been a source of consternation for the veterans, drawing some veterans into a war of words with the historians in a bid to have their story rewritten. What follows is an overview of this long-running dispute thus far, intended both to shed light on the veterans' case and to assess the validity of their call for a new history.

Opening comments

The dispute began in 1994 with the release of *Medicine at War* by Brendan O'Keefe, the third

in the War Memorial's nine-part series on Australia's role in South-East Asian conflicts. In contention was a section of the book entitled 'Agent Orange: the Australian aftermath,' written by medical history expert, Professor FB Smith. While touching on the origins of the affair from the late 1970s, Smith's essay dealt mainly with the 1983 Royal Commission, set up by the Hawke Government and led by Justice Phillip Evatt. The Royal Commission's task was to establish whether the veterans' exposure to the herbicide could be linked to an array of serious ailments, including cancer, birth defects and toxic brain dysfunction. Following two strained years of enquiry, Evatt made public his main finding: Agent Orange was 'not guilty' on all three counts.

Initial reaction to FB Smith's work

Now, while it is normal for official histories to adopt a conservative approach, Smith's work seemed unashamedly one-sided, weaving an almost Manichean tale of 'good versus bad'; cast in the former role were Evatt and those who endorsed his main finding, and in the latter were those who opposed the finding, including scientists and, more notably, the veterans who had called for the Royal Commission (the men whose story Smith was thought to be telling).

Condemnation was predictably swift, with the *Bulletin* reporting on the 'bitter feud' erupting over Smith's work. According to a number of scientists, some of whom had testified before Evatt, Smith's essay was 'selective' and 'frozen in time', having failed to discuss research conducted after Evatt's inquiry, research linking herbicide exposure to cancer. Echoing this view was Tim McCombe, vice president of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA), the group which had formed in 1979 to deal with the veterans' concerns about Agent Orange and which led their push for a government inquiry. But, while McCombe argued that 'plenty of evidence' existed to confirm the damaging impact of the herbicide, Smith retained his faith in Evatt's report, now bolstering his case by citing 'the world's leading epidemiologist', Sir Richard Doll, who had offered the report a glowing endorsement. What Smith neglected to say, however, was that Doll had made this assessment in 1985, *prior to* the research to

which Smith's critics alluded to but which he had seemingly ignored.

Along with this apparent omission of evidence, critics were upset by Smith's 'contentious and unsympathetic' approach towards the campaigning veterans. According to Graham Walker, an early member of the VVAA, the group had been 'looking forward' to what they believed would be an official account of their struggle. But not only had the historian tasked with writing that account failed to tell *their* story or even to speak with any of the campaign's leaders; he had actually used his public platform to 'attack' them.

For his part, Smith seemed unconcerned by the claim that he had not explored the 'veterans' side of the story' since, to his mind, their case against Agent Orange was 'indefensible'. By contrast, he explained that *his* essay was based on 'unfettered access' to official records, and his conclusions were thus presumably sound. In short, Smith refused to concede any ground, either on his treatment of the veterans or his handling of the medical evidence, instead depicting the conflict his essay had ignited as a time-honoured Australian tradition. Musing that our official historians, including the great CEW Bean, had written things which did not 'please anybody', Smith expressed confidence that this was 'always a good sign'. But this cavalier approach drew a sharp rebuke from academic, Peter McCullagh, who suggested that Bean 'would turn in his grave' at Smith's work, which he labelled 'interpretive history' and not befitting an official account.

US helicopter spraying Agent Orange, Vietnam

(Wikimedia Commons/US Army)



The 2008 trigger at the War Memorial

Clearly, many veterans agreed with McCullagh's view, with some continuing passionately to voice their discontent, though, much to the veterans' chagrin, the historians remained unmoved and Smith's contentious account remained the official record. Then, in 2008, events at the War Memorial reopened old wounds for some of the veterans, precipitating a concerted campaign to have their story retold. Leading this campaign were Tim McCombe and Graham Walker, now former VVAA members but, since 1995, the president and research officer of the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia (VVFA).

The trigger for this revived campaign was the opening of a new Vietnam War gallery at the Memorial. The offending item was a text panel pertaining to Agent Orange. In part, the panel read: 'The Evatt Royal Commission reported in 1985 that Agent Orange was not guilty; but veterans remained unconvinced, and continue to argue for just recognition and compensation'.

Writing to Memorial director, Major General Steve Gower, McCombe complained that the Memorial's panel was 'grossly misleading' since, like Smith's essay, it inferred that Evatt's ruling had been final, when it had actually been 'discredited' by later evidence; McCombe called for a prompt correction of this 'egregious error'. However, like Smith, Gower was initially 'dismissive' of McCombe's concerns, informing veteran Gary Conyers, who had lodged a separate complaint, that the text was 'factually correct'. Even so, Gower advised Conyers that the Memorial had 'amicably agreed' to add 'some concluding words' to the text so as to 'capture [the] veterans' attitudes'. He seemed hopeful that the matter would be easily resolved.

But for McCombe, who was reputedly something of a 'bulldog', these minor changes were unlikely to suffice. First, as he informed Conyers, it was not the veterans' attitudes which were important but rather that of the scientific community, which supported a link between Agent Orange and cancer. Similarly, while the text may have been 'factually correct', it was also '23

years out of date' and clearly misleading in its intent. Indeed, in further correspondence with Gower, McCombe lamented the fact that 'thousands of visitors' to the Memorial had been 'led to believe the opposite of the truth'. He again called for the panel's prompt revision.

To this end, a meeting was scheduled between Walker and Ashley Ekins, the Memorial's staff historian though, according to Walker, a dispute quickly arose over what to include in the text. Reportedly, Gower insisted that Evatt's 'not guilty' ruling had to remain, whereas Walker argued that 'the complexities' of Evatt's findings could not be explained in 120 words, to which the panel was limited. Walker thus proposed excluding the findings and stating simply that 'the issue was now settled', with numerous cancers being attributed to Agent Orange exposure. Eventually, a compromise was 'grudgingly' reached, with the text now reading:

The Evatt Royal Commission reported in 1985, absolving chemical agents from responsibility for veterans' health problems. Veterans strongly disagreed and continued to pursue the issue. Subsequent studies found links between exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam and some cancers and other diseases.

But with the wording agreed upon, another problem arose over Gower's reluctance to effect a prompt change to the text, though, as Walker explained, this issue was soon resolved with a 'deluge of e-mails' from irate veterans.

Seizing the momentum, the veterans decided to broach the issue of Smith's essay, with another meeting scheduled between Walker and Memorial staff. However, as Walker became aware, a compromise over the text panel did not extend to a revised position on Smith's work, which Ekins 'staunchly defended'. What had changed, though, was that the Memorial was prepared to open up a dialogue on the issue, with Walker invited to write an article for the Memorial's official magazine, *Wartime*. This led to his invitation to present the veterans' case at a conference at the Memorial in September 2009. Here he outlined three principal complaints about Smith's work.

The case against Smith

1. Overt hostility towards VVAA and its leadership

Walker's first complaint pertained to Smith's overt hostility towards the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, whom Smith sought to marginalise from the broader veterans' community since, by his estimate, the group represented only a 'small minority' of Vietnam veterans; the 'overwhelming majority', he asserted (with great authority though little evidence) 'had merged back into the community' and had no interest in the Agent Orange campaign. Smith further alleged that many of those joining the campaign were 'especially bitter about their [post-war] alienation' and, by aligning themselves with groups who had opposed the war, they 'seized on' Agent Orange as a way to explain 'their discontent', as well as 'a likely source of additional repatriation benefits'. In casting judgement on these veterans, Smith deemed their actions to have epitomised 'many of the worst aspects of Australian behaviour in the 1980s', at a time when 'private greed became, for some, a public good'.

Now, as a twenty-one year army veteran and former VVAA member, Walker was justly offended by Smith's remarks and intent on setting the record straight. First, on Smith's inference that the group advocated anti-war views, Walker replied bluntly that 'it did not', advising that a 'survey of the VVAA's journals' of the period would 'fail to find any such sentiment'. As for their aim in seeking a royal commission, Walker maintained that this was quite simple: they wished to establish whether the veterans' exposure to Agent Orange might have damaged their or their children's health and, if so, to seek 'acknowledgement and compensation' in the form of repatriation benefits. No *additional* benefits were sought, as Smith suggested.

Perhaps, Smith would have viewed the VVAA differently had he read a 1987 article by Walker, in which Walker discussed the group's formation, claiming the group was formed only when the veterans were let down by the 'institutions from



Phil Thompson VVAA (Author)

which they had a right to expect sympathy and support': the federal government, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and the Returned and Services League (RSL). As Walker recalled, the veterans were seen as a 'nuisance and a threat' by the Fraser Government, which met their requests for information about Agent Orange with 'platitudes or evasion', while the response of DVA and the RSL was one of 'unsympathetic disbelief' or even 'derision'. This was why the 'sick and worried veterans' turned to each other for support. Walker added that had the government 'acted quickly with more regard for humanity than power' and the others adapted 'to differences between wars and generations', the VVAA might never have formed and there would have been no royal commission.

Of course, Smith's essay tended to skirt around this period leading up to Evatt's inquiry, with no critical eye cast over the actions of the government or DVA. Similarly, while Smith's 'unfettered access' to official records must have led him to the VVAA's submission to the Royal Commission, with a clear outline of the veterans' intentions, these were not discussed by Smith, who instead argued that disaffection and greed lay at the heart of the veterans' campaign.

Compounding Walker's feelings of antipathy

towards Smith were the latter's personal slights against the VVAA leadership, including Tim McCombe, and especially the group's national leader, Phil Thompson (who, tragically, had taken his own life in 1986). Now attesting to the calibre of his colleagues, Walker noted that Thompson was a fourteen-year army veteran, who had served two tours in Vietnam, and who regarded his leadership of the veteran's campaign 'as a continuation of his service'. The same was true of McCombe, who, despite losing a leg in Vietnam, worked tirelessly for the veterans' community, through his roles in the VVAA and VVFA. Walker added that, in recognition of their service, both men received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM), with Thompson receiving his award in 1985, following his valiant effort at the Royal Commission. This act alone should have convinced Smith that Phil Thompson was a 'man of integrity,' rather than the miscreant Smith chose to portray in his essay.

2. Evatt's crucial second finding

Having defended his colleagues' reputations, Walker turned to his second complaint: Smith's incomplete coverage of Evatt's findings (a matter which was also a point of contention in Walker's 'text panel' meeting with Ekins). As Walker noted, Evatt actually delivered *two* separate findings, each at a different standard of proof. The first concerned the veterans' case against the Monsanto chemical company (one of the manufacturers of Agent Orange) and demanded a *civil* standard of proof, with the veterans required to establish a definite causal link between their exposure and their ailments. In this matter, Evatt delivered his highly publicised 'not guilty' finding, which was readily endorsed by Smith (and included on the text panel inscription).

However, there was a *second* finding buried in the body of Evatt's report, which was completely bypassed by Smith but was of major significance to the veterans. As Walker explained, the veterans' principal aim in seeking a Royal Commission was to overcome an impasse with the Repatriation Commission (DVA's *alter ego*), which had refused to grant compensation to sick veterans based on their exposure to Agent Orange. This was despite



Justice Phillip Evatt (NT Supreme Court)

the fact that the *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1943* stated that returned soldiers seeking compensation should receive the 'benefit of the doubt' (as to the source of their ailments). Reportedly, problems had arisen due to the ambiguous wording of this 'benefit of the doubt' rule, even when a 1977 amendment had confirmed its 'generous' application. Some veterans had initially turned to the courts, where they had successfully challenged the Repatriation Commission's decisions, though this had been a costly and traumatic process. Hence, with a royal commission, the VVAA hoped to have the issue resolved in the veterans' favour, obviating the need for further litigation.

Evatt's second ruling, then, was made under *repatriation* law, which required a less onerous standard of proof than his main ruling. And, in this matter, he found that the veterans' exposure to Agent Orange could be linked to two forms of cancer, soft tissue sarcoma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. At the same time, Evatt reproached the Repatriation Commission for its earlier efforts to restrict compensation and, while accepting that it had done so for 'budgetary reasons', he stressed that a 'benevolent' interpretation of the law was 'consistent with parliamentary intention'.

The matter did not end there, however, with the Repatriation Commission now choosing to defer only to Evatt's *main* finding in order to reject the veterans' cancer claims, forcing the veterans into the appeals process. Walker admitted that this was disappointing, though it did not diminish the importance of the veterans'

victory before Evatt, which stood as a clear vindication of the veterans' campaign.

It is thus understandable that Walker found it 'startling' that Smith did not even mention Evatt's second ruling or his rebuke of the Repatriation Commission. Similarly, while Smith referred to a number of the veterans' successful appeals, Walker stated that this was only to 'dismiss their importance', with Smith complaining that the veterans' success 'depended on their being given the benefit of the doubt', as if it were undeserved rather than a legal entitlement. Walker queried Smith's 'personal disapproval of veterans being treated generously', concluding that he found it 'disappointing but irrelevant'.

Also disappointing for Walker was Smith's unreserved support of Evatt's main finding, which was matched only by his vigorous castigation of those who opposed it. As Walker now conceded, the VVAA's case before Evatt was 'a chaotic episode', with the veterans' claims at times 'exaggerated and even hysterical'. Meanwhile, some of their scientific witnesses were 'unreliable and even dodgy', though others were 'world-renowned and reliable experts'. Regrettably, in Smith's black and white depiction of events, he conflated the two sets of experts, thereby revealing the same biases Evatt himself was accused of displaying. Indeed, following the Royal Commission, complaints were made about Evatt's overtly favourable treatment of Monsanto's witnesses and, conversely, his denigration of the dissenting scientists. Not only that, but Evatt was actually accused of 'collusion' with Monsanto when it was found that sections of his own report were lifted directly from the latter's submission. For Smith, however, this was perfectly reasonable, given that the submission was the 'most authoritative' survey of the 'allegations pinned on Agent Orange' and, thus, a 'convenient resource' for Evatt to use.

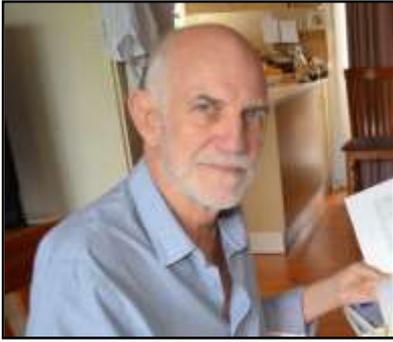
At the time, however, Evatt's behaviour was not so easily excused, with the government authorising a review of the Commission's proceedings. Prepared by senior Hawke advisor, Bob Hogg, the review was somewhat mixed

though, predictably, Smith bypassed most of its harsher commentary, including Hogg's labelling of Evatt's report as 'flawed and lacking] credibility'. Also missing from Smith's essay was any reference to a 1989 conference attended by some of the scientists Evatt had earlier disparaged who in turn questioned the veracity of Evatt's main ruling. Rather, by Smith's account, Evatt's work remained virtually beyond reproach, with his report standing as 'the pre-eminently thorough, authoritative survey of the Agent Orange episode', while the herbicide itself was exonerated of all charges.

3. Smith's ignoring of later research

Here was the basis of Walker's third complaint: that, in his unyielding adherence to Evatt's main finding, Smith ignored later research which 'effectively overturned' Evatt's conclusion that there was 'no reliable evidence' linking Agent Orange exposure to cancer. As Walker now explained, in the early 1990s, at the behest of the US Congress, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) reviewed all available research into the health effects of Agent Orange. In 1993, seven months before the release of Smith's essay, the NAS issued its findings, confirming that 'sufficient evidence' existed (at a civil standard of proof) to link the veterans' exposure to three forms of cancer: non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, soft tissue sarcoma and Hodgkin's disease. Clearly, this was a major turning point in the veterans' campaign, and Smith's omission seemed remiss, to say the least.

Perhaps, as Walker suggested, it may have been too late in the publishing process of Smith's work to make any amendments, but this failed to explain why Smith did not subsequently mention the findings, such as in the 1994 *Bulletin* article. What Smith could not have mentioned, however, but which Walker now described, was the significance of the NAS study for Australia's veterans when scientists here confirmed its findings in late 1994, leading the Repatriation Commission to accept these cancers as 'war-caused' and dispensing with the need for the appeals process.



Graham Walker (author)

Having argued his case against Smith, Walker summarised his position. He stated that Smith's essay was 'fatally flawed when it was written' and had since been 'further discredited and superseded'. Sadly for the veterans, it remained the official version of events. Walker called for the veterans' story to be rewritten.

The right of reply Peter Edwards 2009

Speaking at the 2009 conference on behalf of FB Smith was Peter Edwards, himself a distinguished professor and the editor of the series to which Smith had contributed. Not only that, but prior to the conference, in a *estschrift* honouring the now elderly Smith, Edwards had written in defence of Smith's contentious work while advancing his own views on the Agent Orange affair. At the conference, Edwards delivered a slightly modified version of this tribute essay.

As with Smith's account, Edwards' narrative was limited in context, bypassing both the veterans' battle with the Repatriation Commission and Evatt's second ruling, thus failing to address one of Walker's complaints. Regarding his further complaint, that Smith accused the VVAA of expressing anti-war sentiments, Edwards offered a minor concession, stating that although the veterans were supported by anti-war groups, they 'varied widely' in their approach towards the war.

As for the veterans' purpose in seeking a Royal Commission, Edwards followed Smith's lead by invoking the motive of personal gain, albeit not in the form of 'additional' repatriation benefits, as Smith had suggested. Rather, Edwards proposed that the veterans, in adopting an 'American

approach' to the issue, sought to use the Royal Commission to win compensation from the suppliers of Agent Orange. However, while surmising that the 'deep pockets' of the chemical companies had made them 'attractive targets', Edwards queried the wisdom of taking on such a powerful foe, with 'access to the best legal and scientific expertise'. On top of this, the veterans faced the complex task of trying to prove a direct causal link between their illnesses and their exposure, but this task was fraught with 'obstacles': for one thing, Edwards observed, 'too little time had passed for some long-latency diseases to have become evident' and for a causal link to thus be confirmed.

Now, to make his claim about the veterans' intentions, Edwards again followed Smith's lead in bypassing the VVAA's submission to the Royal Commission, which explicitly stated that they *did not* seek 'sums of money by way of compensation', but rather 'to have their war-caused illnesses recognised and treated as such' (just like veterans of other wars). As for their apparent naiveté in taking on Monsanto, it must be remembered that the veterans did not set the terms of reference of the Royal Commission, so their 'adversarial contest' was not one of their choosing; neither was their task of trying to prove a direct causal link between their illnesses and their exposure. Finally, regarding Edwards' claim that this task was hampered by the long latency of some diseases, surely this should also have precluded Evatt from delivering (and Smith from condoning) an unambiguous 'not guilty' finding, a point which Edwards failed to make.

On the contrary, having disparaged the VVAA's case before Evatt, Edwards broadened his critique to encompass the VVAA's whole campaign, which he accused of doing a 'major disservice' to the veterans' community. In particular, he alleged that by focusing on a number of 'relatively uncommon' ailments, the group inadvertently diverted attention away from other ailments which were rife in the veterans' ranks, including Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and alcohol and smoking-related illnesses. This in

turn led to a delay in treatment and compensation for these ailments, which, to Edwards' mind, was the 'real tragedy' of the Agent Orange affair.

With this comment, Edwards drew a line between the campaigning veterans and the broader veterans' community, with the latter (undeniably larger) group deserving of empathy while the former was largely dismissed. Moreover, by blaming the VVAA campaign for taking attention away from these other ailments, Edwards conveniently sidestepped the failings of the Australian authorities and the fact that there would have been no campaign had the veterans' concerns been allayed and repatriation benefits duly granted. Finally, in accusing the VVAA of delaying support to veterans with PTSD, Edwards ignored the fact that, in the early 1980s, the group had played a key role in setting up a nationwide counselling service for veterans, helping to expedite both treatment and compensation.

Turning to Walker's third complaint, concerning Smith's omission of the NAS findings, Edwards confirmed that Smith's essay was with the publisher at the time of the study's release and thus was unavailable for amendment. But, as Walker stated, this failed to explain why Smith did not later raise the findings, such as in the *Bulletin* article. Instead, Smith sought to dismiss his critics by deferring to the outdated assessment of Sir Richard Doll (which, recent evidence indicates, may also have been tainted by the fact that Doll had been a paid consultant of Monsanto at the time).

In any case, whether or not Smith raised the NAS study was a moot point in Edwards' view, since it did not represent a 'dramatic overturning' of Evatt's ruling, simply because its findings were 'as much political as scientific'. As Edwards explained, 'the Agent Orange lobby' in the US had been putting pressure on members of Congress, who in turn had pressed the authorities to deal with the issue of compensation. Hence, when framing the NAS inquiry, the latter had done so in a way which would allow the scientists to 'give a degree of support' to the veterans' claims, thereby opening the door to a *limited amount* of compensation.

Similarly, when the NAS report reached Australia, the government here wished for a quick endorsement by this nation's scientists, so it could also offer *some* compensation to the veterans. When seen in this light, Edwards concluded, it was clear that the scientists were offering not so much a definitive assessment as a politically expedient way to bring some closure to the affair.



FB Smith 2009 (ANU Press)

Now, while it is true that there was a political dimension to the NAS study, a more nuanced depiction of events leading up to the study would have been more instructive. Moreover, it remains unclear why Edwards did not cast a similarly sceptical eye over the Royal Commission, which was arguably 'as much political as scientific'. Certainly, this point had been made by other scholars in this country, who indicated that anything other than a 'not guilty' ruling would have been politically untenable. Domestically, there would have been the economic implications of large-scale compensation for the veterans while, geopolitically, it would have placed Australia onside with communist Vietnam, which was pursuing charges of chemical warfare against the United States. More broadly, it would have had serious (and unacceptable) repercussions for the chemical industry, both here and overseas.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, this side of the story was bypassed by Edwards, who remained focused on reducing the import of the NAS study, now observing that the evidence assessed in the study did not pertain to veterans but civilians, who had probably had 'far greater exposure' to the herbicide. Accepting the NAS results thus also

meant the 'quiet acceptance' of the assumption that the same outcome applied to both groups.

Edwards also queried the results of the US study by contrasting them with those of a 2005 Australian study into the incidence of cancer in Vietnam veterans. He noted, in particular, that while the former had recently added a fourth cancer (a form of leukemia) to its 'sufficient evidence' category, the latter upheld these results in *only two* cases. Adding to this was the fact that the most common form of cancer among Australia's veterans was actually melanoma, which had 'not been associated' with herbicide use.

Overall, then, Edwards stated that while the Australian study did reveal an increase in the rate of cancer among this country's Vietnam veterans, this was also true of veterans from the Korean War, suggesting that 'factors other than the herbicides ... were at fault'. Unlike Smith, however, Edwards did not exonerate Agent Orange, conceding that it 'may have made some contribution' to the veterans' ailments. But 'numerically' these were 'far outweighed' by the illnesses caused by alcohol, smoking and stress; the Australian study 'pointedly' referred to this association.

Thus judging from Edwards' account, the Australian study bore out his portrayal of the Agent Orange campaign as a wasteful venture, with other factors largely to blame for the veterans' poor health. In truth, however, the Australian study was not quite as dismissive of the herbicide as he implied. For instance, while Edwards noted that the Australian study confirmed only two of the four cancers in the NAS's 'sufficient evidence' category, he skimmed over the fact that it also found 'significantly elevated' levels of three other cancers for which the NAS study found only 'limited evidence' – lung, larynx and prostate cancer. And, in the case of prostate cancer, the Australian study indicated that risk of the disease 'was significantly associated with herbicide use'. Similarly, while Edwards claimed that melanoma had not been associated with herbicides, the Australian study cited research to the contrary, indicating that it could not rule out

a link between this disease and an 'arsenical agent' found in (the herbicide) Agent Blue.

In brief, the Australian study stated that due to the 'wide range of health effects associated with Vietnam service and Agent Orange exposure', there was 'a need for continued study of the veterans' community. And, since 2005, research has continued, with two recent US studies offering further evidence of a link between herbicide use and prostate and skin cancer. Meanwhile, in its 2008 biennial review, the NAS concluded that having gained 'a greater understanding of the trans-generational effects' of the veterans' exposure, it accepted a link between the herbicide and spina bifida in veterans' children. Further research in this area was also recommended.

McCombe and Walker step up the push for a new history

If the powers that be at the War Memorial thought that the 2009 conference would appease the veterans, they were sorely mistaken. Rather, by ignoring certain concerns while offering a fresh indictment of the VVAA, Edwards merely inflamed the issue further, as made evident by the correspondence he now received from McCombe and Walker.

Veterans' response to Edwards

As McCombe informed Edwards, one of McCombe's primary concerns with Edwards' address was its focus. To his mind, an *official* account of the Agent Orange affair should focus on the veterans and how they dealt with the prospect 'that their exposure might have caused damage to them and their children'. By contrast, the veterans were relatively minor characters in Edwards' narrative, which centred on issues more 'relevant to a wider scientific debate' concerning the herbicide's impact.

Tim McCombe (author)

Of course, one of the reasons why Edwards had focused on the science of Agent Orange was



presumably to weaken the import of the NAS study, by noting, for instance, that it had relied on civilian data. However, as Edwards knew, this reliance had been necessitated by the fact that there were

insufficient data to determine the exposure of individual veterans, apart from those who had actually sprayed the herbicides. But, as Walker now instructed him, there was 'good evidence to show that there had been the *potential* for troops to be sufficiently exposed', and the NAS study was based on this assumption. And the study found that 'on the balance of probabilities' (that is, to a civil standard of proof) several cancers could be linked to Agent Orange, thus 'clearly' overturning Evatt's main finding.

This issue aside, Walker told Edwards that he was 'astonished' by his failure to discuss Evatt's second finding given that it was his 'most important finding' in terms of the veterans' case. In his response, however, Edwards was unwilling to concede this point, stating only that this second finding had to be viewed 'in the context of [Evatt's] overall finding', though not explaining why this was the case. Rather, Edwards seemed more intent on keeping the discussion centred on *his* argument than on revisiting the veterans' complaints. As he told McCombe, the problem was not that 'the Agent Orange hypothesis was totally unfounded' but, by focusing 'time, resources and effort' on their campaign, the veterans took attention away from PTSD, smoking and alcohol, whose impact was far more widespread; this was why *his* central argument was that this was the 'real tragedy' of the Agent Orange affair.

Now, again setting aside Edwards' selective

sympathy, there remained the issue of his equally selective presentation of events, to which Walker was compelled to respond. Surely, he asked, if the Agent Orange affair was the 'great tragedy' Edwards suggested, was not the source of that tragedy the 'intransigence' of the Repatriation Commission, which had precipitated the veterans' campaign? Of course, Edwards' account did not delve into the failings of the government agency, instead attributing the lengthy nature of the affair solely to the misdirected efforts of the veterans.

Moves for a new account

With Edwards thus failing to redress the situation, the veterans turned their attention to a remark made during Edwards' address which seemed to offer them a compromise of sorts. In particular, while stating that he saw 'no merit in withdrawing or rewriting Smith's essay', which '[stood] up well in the light of later evidence', Edwards also indicated that he would welcome a new, 'independent' account of events, ostensibly because there was now 'much more to write about'. Confusion arose, however, as the veterans took Edwards to mean a new *official* account, though this notion was quickly dispelled – by Edwards, Ekins and Gower.

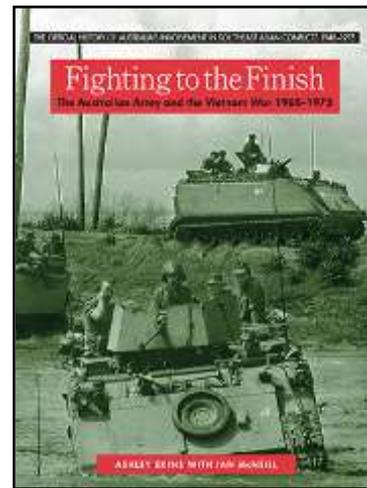
In any case, as Gower told McCombe, such a proposal was not even feasible as the War Memorial's Official History Unit had disbanded: Edwards had left in 1996 and only Ekins remained. But when Gower then mooted an alternative proposal – for DVA to take on the project – McCombe took exception, quipping that this would be like asking 'the Fox to supervise a report on missing Chickens'. Instead, McCombe sought to go over Gower's head by writing directly to the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Warren Snowdon, both to press the case for a new history, prepared by the Military History Section of the Memorial, and to request financial support. In doing so, McCombe impressed upon Snowdon just how strongly the veterans felt about the issue of Agent Orange, which remained 'one of the unhealed wounds' of the Vietnam War.

Unfortunately, despite the clear intensity of McCombe's feelings, his letter to Snowdon yielded no results and the veterans' push for a new history again stalled. That is, until April 2011, when the veterans' row with the historians was suddenly cast into the public spotlight, following the release of the proceedings from the 2009 conference. Taking up the veterans' case, the *Canberra Times* reported how 'senior figures' at the War Memorial were 'resisting any move' to have the Agent Orange story retold, with the veterans' concerns now compounded by the fact that Smith's 'fatally flawed' account was being 'accepted by a new wave of historians'. With Ekins left to defend the Memorial's stand, he explained that revising an official history would end 'a tradition of independence' dating back to 'the work of Charles Bean'. He conceded, however, that 'in light of more recent developments,' a 'fresh review' of the story was warranted, just not as part of the *official* history.

Ekins' 2012 book on the Vietnam War

But, having reiterated the Memorial's compromise proposal, Ekins then went on to prolong the conflict with the veterans with his 2012 release, *Fighting to the Finish*, the final volume in the Memorial's nine-part series on South-East Asian conflicts. Speaking again to the *Canberra Times*, Ekins was clear that the intention of his book was not to end the 'acrimonious' debate over Agent Orange, but rather to bring 'all the available facts to life', a curious comment given that a mere three pages were devoted to the issue. And, as with Smith and Edwards, Ekins did not even mention Evatt's second ruling, referring only to his main 'not guilty' finding. That said, Ekins did state that doubts persisted after the Royal Commission 'among veterans and others' as to the damaging impact of Agent Orange, with reference made both to the NAS study and its significance to Australian veterans.

Overall, however, Ekins had again let the veterans down, with McCombe informing him that they 'had hoped for better' than a mere



repetition of Smith's 'insulting account'. Meanwhile, to his colleagues, the veteran vented his frustration over the Memorial's intransigence, querying whether it was 'more interested in seeking the truth or maintaining the status quo'. Certainly, McCombe had good reason to believe that the latter was the case, with this view further confirmed by the news that Peter Edwards had been commissioned to write a summary volume of the Memorial's recently completed series. Of course, from the Memorial's perspective, Edwards was the logical choice as he had served as the series editor. But, to the veterans, Edwards' selection represented yet another slight, due to his 'continuing support' of Smith's controversial work. Accordingly, McCombe appealed to Edwards to decline the commission and, when that failed, to at least correct his earlier, erroneous claim that the VVAA campaign had delayed assistance to veterans with PTSD.

Sensing that the veterans were growing increasingly impatient, Edwards wrote to McCombe and Walker to assure them that his book would 'not necessarily be bound' by the contents of Smith's account and that 'different points of view' would be canvassed. Subsequently, however, he sent the pair an ominous sign that they would again be let down. In particular, while Edwards stated that he understood their concerns over Smith's essay, he considered it important to now 'get beyond the arguments of the 1980s and early 1990s' and to place the Royal Commission in the context of the

long debate over Agent Orange. In short, it was time to move beyond Smith's flawed account.

Surely, Edwards must have known that this would not be acceptable to the veterans, with McCombe now making their feelings abundantly clear. He wrote that:

Whatever the reason for FB Smith failing to include all the evidence in his account and for his wild attack on the campaigning veterans, [his] account so angered and distressed veterans [that] it became not only a record of a legacy of the Vietnam [War] but also became a legacy itself.

For this reason, McCombe held, it was insufficient simply to correct Smith's errors; the substantial toll his essay had taken on the veterans also had to be acknowledged.

The veterans' campaign gains momentum

With that said, the VVFA was no longer willing to leave the matter in the hands of the historians; and, in late 2012, the group began a concerted and well-targeted campaign for a new history. It started with the production of a magazine with Phil Thompson's image on the front cover, bearing the inscription 'Phil Thompson vilified,' a copy of which was sent to all members of the Australian War Memorial Council (the body responsible for the 'conduct and control' of the Memorial's affairs and which would need to give its approval for a new history).

Despite these efforts, however, the initial response was lukewarm, with Council chairman, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan (Ret'd), trying simply to allay the veterans' concerns by promising that the 'points raised' by the VVFA would be raised in Edwards' upcoming book. But, as McCombe explained to Doolan, this was unlikely to suffice, since Edwards' work would be a summary of all nine volumes and any discussion of the Agent Orange affair would thus 'be limited to a paragraph or two'. He therefore reiterated the need for 'a separate full-scale study', whose conclusions 'could not but differ markedly' from those of Edwards and Smith.

With McCombe working behind the scenes, Walker again went public with the veterans' concerns, speaking out on Canberra radio against 'the War Memorial's inaction'. Then, in a bid to broaden their campaign by gaining the support of the Australian public, the VVFA launched a petition on the website *change.org*. In a reworking of Walker's 2009 address, the petition offered a brief overview of the dispute over Smith's essay, before outlining the group's demands: first, for a new history, which would reflect the truth about Evatt's findings and the possible harm caused by the veterans' exposure to Agent Orange and, secondly, for recognition that the VVFA campaign had been conducted in 'the best ANZAC tradition'. As Walker remarked to his colleagues, this petition would show the Memorial that they were 'not just a few isolated dilators [sic] whinging about something' that no one else really cared about.

Certainly this was the case, with the petition receiving thousands of signatures and garnering the support of other veterans' groups, including the VVFA and the Australian Families of the Military Research Foundation, with the latter reposting the text of the petition on their own website. Meanwhile, a support group for younger veterans known as 'The Warrior's Return' used its Facebook page to urge members to support their 'older Veteran family' by signing the VVFA petition. These veterans were also asked to consider how the 'biased historians and public servants' might one day interpret *their* history, clear evidence of the damage inflicted on the War Memorial's standing.

Director Nelson arrives

With the petition gathering support, an event was also taking place at the War Memorial, which, according to Walker, was vital to the success of their campaign: the appointment of Brendan Nelson as its new director. In fact, even before Nelson took up the position in December 2012, the VVFA had sent him a copy of Walker's 2009 paper. And, to their delight, Nelson had 'actually read it', inviting Walker and McCombe to meet

with him after he assumed the role. As Walker explained, this invitation was significant as it allowed the veterans finally to 'break through the Wall of Silence' to speak directly to the War Memorial Council, with Walker invited to discuss the issue at a Council meeting on 14 August 2013. Here, the veteran again outlined the case against Smith that he had repeatedly made over the past five years although, on this occasion, the outcome was gratifyingly different. To Walker's understanding, the Council reached 'a unanimous decision' that a new historical account was warranted.

Edwards' new book summarising the *Official History*

Of course, even with momentum building for a new account, the historians retained the power of the pen. And, judging by Edwards' new summary volume, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, they were not yet willing to concede too much ground. To begin, by Edwards' own admission, his work was merely an 'impressionistic summary of a long and complex subject', with only five pages devoted to the Agent Orange affair. Thus, as anticipated, his coverage of any specific matter was brief, including a vague reference to Smith's work as 'an essay of one aspect of the story which itself became part of an ongoing controversy'. That said, Edwards did compensate to some extent for his earlier, unfavourable depiction of the VVAA, both by recognising its role in establishing a counselling service for veterans with PTSD and by acknowledging that the group had formed only because the veterans had been 'profoundly disappointed' with the way in which the authorities had met their concerns about Agent Orange.

Also significant was that, for the first time in an official history, Edwards referred to Evatt's second finding, that 'there did appear to be a link between [Agent Orange] and some cancers'. Unfortunately, Edwards offered no context for this finding, mentioning neither the 'benefit of the doubt' legislation nor the veterans' battle with the Repatriation Commission. Rather, he merely stated that '[a]mid the continuing conflict over the

standard of proof and the continuing arguments over toxic chemicals' many veterans made successful compensation claims. McCombe also noted that this omission of information, while causing confusion for the reader, allowed Edwards to avoid the 'inevitable conclusion' that the second Evatt ruling had vindicated the veterans' campaign.

Hence, while conceding that Edwards' book contained some relevant points, McCombe considered that Edwards' own errors and the brevity of his account made it 'no substitute for a full, independent study'. Apart from this, the veteran took umbrage at an offhand remark Edwards made concerning the 'confrontational attitude' of the VVFA (clearly directed at McCombe and Walker). As McCombe retorted, it was this 'confrontational attitude' which had enabled them to make 'important improvements' in veterans' welfare. Certainly, while the two veterans may have been a thorn in the side of the historians, elsewhere they were being lauded for their contribution to their community, as evidenced by McCombe's 2001 receipt of an OAM. Now, in early 2014, it was Walker's turn to receive recognition, as he became the Senior Australian of the Year for the Australian Capital Territory. While the award acknowledged that Walker had 'assisted thousands of veterans to receive their entitlements', tellingly, it also recognised his key role in the campaign for a new history of the Agent Orange affair.

Scoping study announced for a new history

Clearly, the tide had turned in the veterans' favour. And, in early April 2014, some twenty years after the dispute began, Brendan Nelson wrote to Tim McCombe to inform him that approval had been given 'to initiate a scoping study' in preparation for an 'independent, single-volume' history, which would focus on 'the post-war medical and health issues affecting Vietnam veterans'. Special attention, he noted, would be paid to 'the impact on veterans' health of [their] exposure to herbicides'. It was to be understood,



*RAAF crop defoliation operation,
Vietnam, c. 1968 ([AWM P01733.005](#))*

however, that this account did not constitute a revision of Smith's history; rather, it was necessitated by 'the knowledge gained' in the ensuing decades.

Now in declining health, Professor Smith was unavailable for comment – he died on 3 March 2015 – while Edwards was publicly diplomatic, proposing that the '[m]atters previously raised by ... the VVFA should be assessed' as part of any new work. As for the veterans, McCombe stated that they were 'delighted and grateful' to receive the news, though he chose not to reflect on the scale of their achievement, which was left to historian Greg Pemberton, himself a former War Memorial contributor. Pemberton noted that, while a successful challenge to the official record was not without precedent, this was the first time it had been mounted from the 'trenches'.

Certainly, the veterans had won a formidable victory, achieved in no small part through the dogged determination of McCombe and Walker. And with their victory came vindication, following the completion of the scoping study for the project. Prepared by Dr Peter Yule of the University of Melbourne, the study delivered a blunt appraisal of Smith's work, which Yule considered to be 'too narrow and tendentious for an official history'. Yule also admitted to being taken aback by its 'strident and condemnatory tone' and 'direct attacks' on the VVAA leadership and held that Smith's failure to interview the veterans had been a serious mistake. Summing up his view, Yule noted that

[u]niquely for a contribution to an official history, Smith's approach and conclusions have led his work

becoming [sic] part of the continuing controversy over Agent Orange rather than simply an analysis of it. It could even be argued that it has fuelled the controversy.

Finally, after two decades, it seemed that the voice of the veterans had been heard.

But in a final twist to their saga, the veterans' triumph was tempered with great sadness, as news arrived on 31 January 2015 that Tim McCombe had died suddenly. McCombe's death, clearly an enormous loss to the veterans' community, also meant that he was never able to read Yule's study, which was only received by the War Memorial Council in March. Nor was he there to congratulate Graham Walker when, in June, Walker was made a Member of the Order of Australia, for his work on behalf of the veterans' community, including his successful lobbying for a new history. Finally, and of greatest poignancy, is that McCombe will never read the history for which he campaigned so vigorously. And, with the task of preparing that history now in the hands of Peter Yule and a completion date of around 2019, Graham Walker still has a long wait ahead of him.

Closing remarks

If there were any doubts as to whether the veterans were right to take on the War Memorial over Smith's essay, these have surely been dispelled by Yule's study, not to mention the numerous accolades recently bestowed on Walker. If this still seems insufficient, however, it may be worth considering how Smith's contentious account accords with the Memorial's own description of its official histories.

What is an official history?

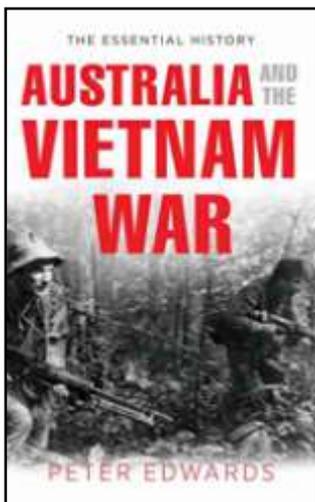
According to the War Memorial's website, its 'histories are "official" in that they are commissioned by the government' but they 'contain the authors' own interpretations and judgements' rather than following 'any official or government line'. Apart from this, they are said to provide 'a comprehensive, authoritative and accessible account of the Australian experience of war'. In essence, they offer an independent and

thorough coverage of events.

So how does Smith's work measure up against this description? In terms of the second point, it does very well, at least *officially*, as indicated by Edwards' 2009 paper as well as a recent remark made by Brendan Nelson, that 'Smith was commended by his peers for the comprehensive and balanced nature of his study'. Of course, behind the scenes, the assessment has been less favourable, with Yule's study labelling the essay 'narrow and tendentious.'

As for Smith's autonomy, both Smith and Ekins referred pointedly to Charles Bean and the official historians' long tradition of independence; Nelson was equally pointed when he affirmed that Smith's essay was *not* 'an officially sanctioned interpretation' of events. Yet it seems implausible to the outsider that the War Memorial has no oversight over the works released under its imprimatur or that its more contentious works are not subject to any official vetting.

Indeed, even if we do not accept the cynic's depiction of official histories as 'mere propaganda', there remains the perception that they are approved by the government of the day, which has an interest in shaping the 'collective memory'. Certainly, Smith's work has the appearance of being government-sanctioned, with



the overall purpose of endorsing Evatt's main 'not guilty' finding. This would explain why his narrative was framed in such a narrow context, omitting details which would have shown the Royal Commission in a less than favourable light, when in truth both

Evatt and his report had been severely criticised.

Still, simply to dismiss Smith's essay as an apologia for Evatt's inquiry does not explain his antipathy towards the VVAA, over which opinions remain divided. Yule offers a diplomatic

explanation, attributing Smith's approach to his being a writer of nineteenth century history, with an obvious reliance on written rather than oral records. Also, since the protagonists in Smith's earlier works were dead, Yule states that it was 'impossible to offend them' so Smith was able to take 'a crusading approach ... and criticise the[ir] actions and motives'.

Now, while Yule's second point may also have some merit, it does seem plausible that Smith's reliance on the Royal Commission transcripts contributed to his own immoderate position. As British historian Rodney Lowe notes when discussing the issues inherent in official histories, they 'are liable to be "captured" by the powerful assumptions underlying official records' in turn 'constructing an unbalanced "first draft of history"' which will invariably 'prejudice later interpretations'. This certainly seems to be the case with Smith's essay.

How do official attitudes affect official histories?

Yet, to put Smith's tendentious account down to incomplete research and a 'crusading approach' does not seem an adequate explanation. This prompts a revisiting of Smith's claims of autonomy, claims which Graham Walker has clearly rejected. In advancing his view – which he admitted is based on 'supposition' – Walker looked at the institutions best served by a negative portrayal of the veterans. Starting with the War Memorial itself, Walker stated that it 'was probably not attracted to stories that gave the war a bad name' and perhaps felt that the veterans stood 'outside the ANZAC tradition' in failing simply 'to "shut up and take it"'. Adding to this was the fact that the VVAA was off side with both DVA and the RSL, with which the Memorial maintains close connections. (For example, Rear Admiral Doolan has been since 2009 both a member of the Memorial's Council, including a term as Chairman from 2012 to 2015, and National President of the RSL.) Finally, Walker believed that there may have been 'a class aspect' to Smith's approach in that the VVAA

involved no former senior officers, consisting mainly of former non-commissioned officers and former national servicemen, who may have been 'seen by the elites as ... a scruffy nuisance'. Hence, with Smith's own conservative 'predisposition and a little encouragement', he may have seen the VVAA in a similarly negative light.

As for Edwards and Ekins, Walker was unsure of their motivation, suggesting that perhaps they were just 'reluctant to be seen to be wrong'. It is also likely that a collegial spirit and a desire to preserve the War Memorial's standing influenced Edwards' and Ekins' efforts to uphold Smith's flawed account. Whatever Edwards' and Ekins' purpose, it is clear that, to date, the Memorial has failed to provide a thorough, independent account of the Agent Orange affair, thereby doing a great disservice to the reading public, the history profession and the Vietnam veterans. Smith, by offering such a narrow and skewed presentation of this complex episode, robbed his essay of credibility, with any legitimate points invariably lost amid the accusations and invective. While Edwards' subsequent effort lacked the virulence of his predecessor's work, it failed to correct Smith's main misconceptions or to present a broader, more even-handed account of the controversy.

Perhaps most disconcerting of all has been the perpetuation of the idea that the motives of the VVAA were dishonourable and that the group's leaders were driven by a desire for personal gain. The veterans have tried their best to counter these claims, as made evident by Walker's 2009 paper. Similarly, in a 2012 posting on the VVFA website, McCombe wrote of the 'remarkably fine behaviour' of these men, who were 'dedicated to remedying an injustice' being visited on the veterans and their families. Of course, this sense of injustice was noticeably absent from the accounts of both Smith and Edwards, which, in turn, meant that their narratives were largely devoid of the frustration, isolation and desperation the veterans experienced in their lengthy campaign for the truth. In short, by failing to present the veterans' side of the Agent Orange story, the historians stripped away the emotion from what was, for

many, an intensely emotional time.

To conclude, it is worth reflecting on a remark made by Peter Edwards at the 2009 conference, referring to his and Graham Walker's papers as 'a tale of competing narratives'. Surely, it is not the role of the official historian to compete with those whose history they are writing, but rather to incorporate their personal recollections into the official historian's own comprehensive account. By failing to do this, these official historians led the Vietnam veterans into a bitter and protracted controversy and, in the process, stepped out of their role as chroniclers of history to become part of history itself. ■

Jacqueline Bird is an independent historian, with a particular interest in the role of science in warfare. She completed her PhD at the University of Queensland, focusing on the role of scientists in the development of the United States nuclear weapons policy. The thesis was subsequently published in the United States. She is currently looking into the Australian experience of Agent Orange.



*Agent Orange victims, Ho Chi Minh City, 2004
([Wikimedia Commons/Alexis Duclos](#))*

Thousands of Part-Service Pensioners to lose their pensions or have them cut.

Recently, the government introduced changes to the Service Pension's assets test thresholds which will take effect from 1 January 2017. The thresholds indicate the value of the assets you can own (excluding your home) before you lose your eligibility for the Age Pension.

From 1 January 2017, around 2,800 Part-Service pensioners will lose their pensions and about 10,000 Part-Service pensioners' payments will be reduced.

- ◆ Part Service pension, home owners
Couples who are homeowners will not receive any pension when their assets (not counting their home) reach \$823,000 in value. Single homeowners will stop receiving any pension when they have more than \$547,000 in assets (not counting their home).
- ◆ Part Service pension, non-home owners
Singles who don't own a home won't qualify for any pension if assets total \$747,000. And couples will lose entitlement to any pension after they've accumulated more than \$1 million in assets.
- ◆ Full Service pension, home owners
If you own a home, the new assets thresholds will allow you to hold assessable assets up to \$250,000 (singles) and \$375,000 (couples) without impacting your full-pension entitlements.
- ◆ Full Service pension, non-home owners
The new assets thresholds for those who don't own a home will be \$450,000 (singles) and \$575,000 (couples).

The Six Year Freeze on Medicare rebates will apply to DVA White and Gold card holders

The government is pausing the indexation of Gold and White card payments to doctors for six years. In other words, they are freezing those payments so that they will not be increased as the cost of living and wages rise.

Back in 2003, DVA payments to medical specialists had been falling behind because the government had not been properly increasing them to keep up with the cost of living increases and Australia wide specialist fees. So an increasing number of specialists were refusing to accept the Gold and White cards. By the time it was fixed, hundreds of specialists were involved in the boycott. Veterans were having less and less choice. The situation became ridiculous when a veteran had to be flown from Tasmania to Melbourne because no relevant specialist in Tasmania would accept the Gold Card.

Now the government is doing it again. And the result will, over time, probably be the same.

Just another indication of what the government *really* thinks of veterans?



VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

And ITS AFFILIATED BRANCHES & SUB BRANCHES

MEMBERSHIP REQUEST FORM

I WISH TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE FEDERATION
 AT THE NOMINATED BRANCH/SUB-BRANCH BELOW:
 ALREADY A MEMBER? DO NOT USE THIS FORM TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP
 CONTACT YOUR BRANCH AND ASK FOR A MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM.
 DO NOT USE THIS FORM TO NOTIFY A CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR CONTACT.

NOMINATED BRANCH/SUB-BRANCH DETAILS:

BRANCH/SUB-BRANCH NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN/SUBURB: _____

STATE: _____ POSTCODE: _____

DETAILS FOR ALL BRANCHES AND SUB-BRANCHES CAN BE FOUND ELSEWHERE
 IN THIS MAGAZINE OR AT OUR WEBSITE, <http://www.vvfa.org.au>

MY DETAILS:

SURNAME	GIVEN NAME	MIDDLE NAME
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/TOWN/SUBURB	STATE	POSTCODE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

PHONE: (HOME)	(MOBILE)	(WORK)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

EMAIL ADDRESS

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

NEXT OF KIN: (NAME)	(RELATIONSHIP)	(CONTACT NUMBER)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SIGNED: _____ Date: _____

PLEASE CUT OUT, COPY OR SCAN THIS DOCUMENT AND SEND THE COMPLETED FORM TO YOUR
 NOMINATED BRANCH OR SUB-BRANCH. UPON RECEIPT THE NOMINATED BRANCH OR SUB-BRANCH
 WILL FORWARD THEIR RESPECTIVE APPLICATION FORM AND PAYMENT REQUEST SHOULD YOUR
 NOMINATION BE SUCCESSFUL.



BankstownSports

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

in conjunction with

BANKSTOWN DISTRICT SPORTS CLUB

Invite you to attend

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

THURSDAY, 18 AUGUST 2016

**COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
BATTLE OF LONG TAN.**

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.

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.

You may wish to avail yourself of the TRAVELODGE HOTEL located within the club premises at special rates for those attending the function. You can stay the prior evening or following the function. However, we advise to book early. YOU MUST MENTION THE VIETNAM VETERANS FUNCTION TO ACHIEVE THE SPECIAL RATES.

For bookings call 02 9793 0000 or 1300 886 886.

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 from 1 July. \$35.00 each.

See opposite for event details and ticket order form

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

email to secretay@vfganville.org



*Vietnam Veterans, Peacemakers & Peacemakers
Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc
& Bankstown Sports Club,
Present*



**VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2016
THURSDAY 18 AUGUST**

ITINERY & TICKET ORDER FORM

0900hrs Doors open. Meet & Greet at the Grand Ballroom entry hall.
Bar opens 0930hrs to 1030hrs (at the discretion of management and closed for the service.)

1100hrs Memorial Service with Chaplain Shane Mount
& Guest Speaker MajGen. Brian A (Hori) Howard AO MC ESM (Rtd)
(Service scheduled for approximately 40 to 45 minutes)

1150hrs Entrance to Grand Ballroom & function proper
1215hrs Buffet Lunch
1300hrs Entertainment provided by Bankstown District Sports Club
Featuring Australia's quintessential entertainer COL ELLIOT

TICKETS \$35.00 per person
Tickets are to be pre-purchased/ordered, and can be paid by cash in person from the Granville office. Alternatively you may pay by Cheque, Money Order, or Credit Card. (using the cut-out form below). Tickets will be numbered and include your table number. **Don't forget to leave a contact number in all instances.**

TABLES Tables will be set for ten (10), and if you wish to organise a group, let us know when booking and all booked tables are to be paid for by Friday 12 August for catering purposes. (REFER TO NOTES ON PREVIOUS PAGE)

ACCOMODATION Special rates have been offered for those wishing to make use of the TRAVELODGE HOTEL located within the club premises, and is available for anyone wishing to stay overnight the evening before and/or following the function. You should make arrangements by contacting the hotel, 02 9793 0000 or 1300 886 886 **And don't forget to mention you are attending the Vietnam Veterans function**

RAFFLE Raffle prizes will be on display, and tickets will be sold throughout the day, with the draw to take place immediately following the entertainment. Please find a seller and make your purchases frequently.



Name of ticket purchaser _____ Contact number _____

Number of Tickets _____ Amount enclosed \$ _____ by (Circle one) Cheque Money Order Credit Card (See below)

Name of card holder _____ Card type _____ Ticket/s @ \$35 (qty) _____

Card number

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Card Expiry Date ____/____ Amount (this transaction) AUD\$ _____ Signature _____

Contact Number _____

Cut out and send completed form, make cheques etc., payable to VVPPAA (NSW Branch) Inc., PO Box 170 Granville NSW 2142.

MERCHANDISE

Selling merchandise is a valuable resource for our Branches and Sub-Branches to raise revenue that allows us to maintain our offices administration, pay rents, provide office equipment and volunteer staff amenities, and cater to the veterans that visit our premises around Australia for assistance.

With the recent upgrades and introduction of the National Office for the Vietnam Veterans Federation moving away from the NSW branch Office, to Canberra. And the introduction of a National website, <http://www.vvfa.org.au>, we have now taken the opportunity to include a range of merchandise products at all our Branches and Sub-Branches, as listed and sold formerly through the NSW State Branch exclusively.

NSW Branch will remain as the supplier source for the other State Branches and Sub-Branches. However, once identified as the purchaser for your Branch/Sub-Branch, you will be eligible for rates at reseller prices, plus bulk postage and handling charges through Australia Post.

To place your bulk orders and set up your reseller identity please contact the Granville office at: accounts@vfvfgranville.org or phone 'Romina' on (02) 9682 1788.

INDIVIDUAL PURCHASERS ARE INVITED TO CONTACT THEIR CLOSEST BRANCH/SUB-BRANCH FOR INFORMATION OR TO PLACE AN ORDER.

Shooey and the Vagabond Crew Play for the Troops in Afghanistan

John Schuman and the Vagabond Crew volunteered their time and energy to undertake a Forces Entertainment Tour through the Middle East region in March, 2016.

John Schumann and Hugh McDonald of the Vagabond Crew, who are best known from their days in the Australian folk-rock band Redgum, performed with some of their band and Taasha Coates, lead singer of the Adelaide band The Audreys.



John Schumann meets Australian Army soldier Private Louis Carbery, of Task Group Afghanistan, during a visit to Camp Qargha near Kabul, Afghanistan.



Taasha Coates of The Audreys and Hugh Mc Donald of the Vagabond Crew perform for deployed troops at Camp Baird, Australia's main command and support base in the Middle East region, during a Forces Entertainment Tour on 3 March, 2016.



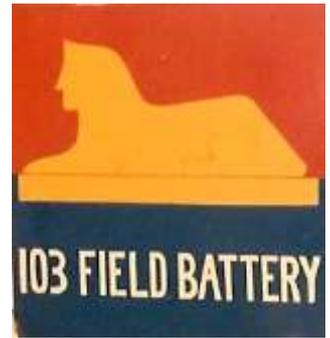
John Schumann and Hugh McDonald of the Vagabond Crew



Australian Army soldiers of the 8th/9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, pose for a photo with Australian musician John Schumann (centre) after a Forces Entertainment Tour concert at Camp Qargha near Kabul, Afghanistan, on 5 March, 2016.



THE STORY OF GUNNER PHILIP CHARLES NORRIS



Philip Charles Norris, a postman from the Sydney suburb of Granville, NSW, was conscripted into the Australian Army in September 1965 with the first intake of the new National Service Act. After the 10 week initial induction and basic, recruit, training, he was posted to 103 Field Battery, a sub unit of the 1st Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery.

In April 1966, just 2 months after his 21st birthday, Philip heard that the regiment was warned to prepare for operational service in South Vietnam. He married his childhood sweetheart, 17 year old Maryanne, on May 7 1966, and by May 20 Philip had arrived with his unit in Vietnam, and went immediately to the Nui Dat Australian Task Force base.

On the eve of the famous battle of Long Tan, August 17 1966, about 100 mortar rounds were fired into the Task Force Base and the 103 Field Battery positions, at around 2.45am. Reported later, it was a barrage from the 2,500 strong Viet Cong 275 Regiment trying to soften up the base for an assault the following afternoon. Following the salvo, Philip, who had been asleep in his bunk when the attack started, was found up and walking about, but obvious to all he had a very serious head wound, from shrapnel.

Philip was medevaced, at first to Vung Tau Australian Army Hospital, and word filtered back to his mates that he had succumbed to his wounds and died. Philip was subsequently listed on the Regiment Memorial and in the book, the Battle of Long Tan, as killed in action. To all his mates, a source of bereavement at every reunion since.

However, in a dramatic twist of fate Philip Norris' story does not end there. 26 years later, at the opening of the Vietnam War memorial in Canberra, former 103 Field Battery unit member, Paddy Durnford, stood up to pay his respects to the fallen, and one he knew personally. Philip Charles Norris' name was not among the 500 plus names at the memorial.

What started out as a request by former Battery Commander, Major Neville Gair, for Paddy, a two-tour Vietnam Veteran, to find out if Philip was still alive, turned into a rollercoaster ride, with every revealing turn an emotional twist for his old Army mates, and others we'll meet later.

Confronted with the DVA and 'The Privacy Act' Paddy was at first denied any information. In Paddy's words, they did offer 'to forward a letter to Philip, if he could be found.' It didn't take long, and Paddy was contacted by Sister Elizabeth Miles, who had been caring for Philip since 1998.

Then the jigsaw seem to come together piece by piece. Philip was evacuated from Vietnam to the Department of Veterans Affairs' Hollywood Repatriation Hospital in Perth. His wounds were stabilised, and he was then relocated to Concord Repatriation Hospital in Sydney NSW. In 1970 Philip was again relocated to the repatriation section of Callan Park mental Hospital, -(later to become Rozelle Psychiatric Hospital), - which served the needs of wounded veterans of both World Wars, Korea, Malaya, and Vietnam conflicts.

In the intervening years we know that Philip was, for a short time, allowed weekend leave to visit the family home at Granville, where he and Maryanne had time to be alone. In 1969, a baby was born and named Mary Elizabeth, and it was around this time

that Philip found he must remain in constant care at the Rozelle Psychiatric Hospital which became his virtual home.

Maryanne continued to visit Philip until 1972. Through the years she had formed a relationship with a DVA Welfare Officer and finally divorced Philip in 1992 to remarry. Sadly Maryanne died of cancer in 1997. Philip was 13 when his father died, and then his only brother was tragically killed in a traffic accident in 1977. Only Philip's Mum, Olive Jean Norris-Perkins, was left and visited her son several times a week, welcomed him home for weekend leave, and according to Sister Miles, '...was involved in Ward programs, and was utterly committed to his care and well being'.

Mrs Perkins, a tireless worker for Legacy in the Granville and Parramatta area of Sydney's west, continued to care for her son until 1995, when she became too frail and went into a nursing home. She died in 1999.

In 2007 Rozelle Hospital H Ward was closed, and Sister Miles was given the responsibility, in consultation with families and the hospital Social Worker, to find the most appropriate nursing homes for the hospital's five remaining veteran patients, including Philip. As far as Philip's relocation was concerned, the impression was that he had a wife and daughter who were once involved in family matters, but who had lost touch with him over the years.

Philip made it clear that he wanted his wife and daughter found, and proper applications were made through the Salvation Army Family Tracing Service, in Sydney. Within a month, in August 2007, his daughter Mary had been found.

Sister Miles remembered her first meeting with Mary. 'The Social Worker and I drove to Mary's home taking with us some of Philip's personal effects. The visit was most successful, with Mary overjoyed at the prospect of seeing her father again after so many years.'

Mary and her husband visited Philip the following week with the first meeting being described as wonderful. Mary spoke to her father constantly by phone and visited him frequently.

Philip's remaining years of joy with a family he never knew he had came down to a few good men, his comrades and a nurse's compassion.

Paddy admitted that he had become more than emotional during the hunt for Philip and his family. After the phone calls to the Granville office of the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia, (NSW Branch), and getting assistance from Barry Bannerman and Bob (Blue) Gagan, the pieces slowly came together.

While Philip cheated death on that day in Vietnam, languishing in hospital psychiatric wards for over 40 years, he finally succumbed and passed away sadly on 3 August 2010 at the young age of 65. In accordance with his mother's wishes, Philip was buried at Pinegrove Cemetery at Minchinbury NSW.

A measure of closure was brought to Philip Norris' story when Sister Elizabeth Miles, as his representative, was invited to attend the 40th Anniversary Memorial Service for veterans of the Vietnam War, in Canberra. Sister Miles said it was a privilege to attend the ceremony, and it was there that she met personnel who had served with Philip.

With Paddy's assistance Sister Miles also took the opportunity to speak of Philip's service and subsequent hospitalisation with a number of dignitaries including (*The then*), Governor General, Major General Michael Jeffery, and the Prime Minister John Howard. Later, a letter would arrive from the Governor General acknowledging Philip's service in Vietnam.

In June 2011 Sister Elizabeth Anne Miles was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for services to Psychiatric nursing. And, in August 2011 Mary invited Sister Miles, Paddy Durnford, Barry Bannerman and Bob Gagan to accompany her to the battle field Nui Dat, and there to attend the 45th memorial service of the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August.

[Taken from an article sent to the Editor and reconstructed for print...Ed]

REUNIONS & NOTICES

REUNIONS & NOTICES

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR OUR CHILDREN

Our readers would be aware that this Association, which is affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, has for many years funded Scholarships for children or grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans and also Peacekeeper and Peacemakers, who are struggling on their Repatriation Pensions and do not have the spare financial resources, or are in necessitous circumstances, to help these children through tertiary education.

Presently the Association provides funding for two Scholarships – **“Tim McCombe OAM Scholarship”**, named in honour and memory of Tim, who passed away in January 2015, and was a long serving and much loved and respected President of the Association/Federation. The **“Phil Thompson OAM Scholarship”** was named in honour and memory of Phil who was a founding member and highly respected former President of the Federation who passed away more than 20 years ago. These Scholarships are available nationally and parental membership of the Association is not a requirement.

The Scholarship provides for funding of \$3,000 per year for three years, provided that the recipient continues to meet the eligibility requirements and the availability of funds.

The Scholarships are mainly funded from the proceeds of the **Association’s Annual Raffle”**. Your continued support of this Raffle would allow us to continue to assist these children with Scholarships and is be very much appreciated.

The Scholarships are administered on the Association’s behalf by the **“Australian Veterans’ Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT)”**, who also administer other scholarships funded by the Australian Government (Long Tan Bursaries), and sponsors such as Legacy, RSL, TPI and a number of other organisations.

AVCAT usually calls for applications for Scholarships in August of each year, with a closing date of 31 October of the same year. The Scholarships on offer, the eligibility requirements of those Scholarships, will be advertised by AVCAT through the Association’s Newsletter and other media outlets, prior to that date.

However, those wishing to make general inquiries about the Association’s 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

Virtually all the recipients of the Associations Scholarships since its inception have done very well in their chosen vocations. The following are progress reports/results/achievements of the Association’s Scholarship recipients: Jeremy Nyman (2014) and Liam Dwyer (2015). There were no scholarships awarded for 2016 as both recipients are continuing with their studies.

Jeremy Nyman - Bachelor of Design (Communications) Degree, Swinburne University of Technology.

Jeremy who lives in Kew, Victoria, was granted the **“Phil Thompson” Scholarship** in 2014 as a grandchild of a Vietnam Veteran (Chaplin) and has continued his studies with the help of the Scholarship. His achievements are:

Semester 1 (2014): **4 “High Distinctions”**
Semester 2 (2014): **1 “High Distinction”, 3 “Distinctions”**
Semester 1 (2015): **2 “High Distinctions”, 2 “Distinctions”**
Semester 2 (2015): **4 “High Distinctions”**

It is very pleasing to note that in 2014 Jeremy was awarded a **“Certificate of Excellence”** for the **“2014 Top Student in a Unit Prize”**, in recognition of the student with the highest mark in **“Design Studio: Visual Communication”**.

Liam Dwyer – 3rd Year of Bachelor of Engineering, University of Queensland.

Liam who lives in Wellington Point, Queensland, was granted the **“Tim McCombe OAM” Scholarship in 2015**, as a **grandchild** of a Vietnam Veteran. His grandfather served in the Australian Army with 3 CAV Regt (1969-1971). His achievements during 2015 are:

Semester 1 (2015): **4 “Credits”**
 Semester 2 (2015): **2 “Credits”, 1 “Pass”**

Liam has written the following letter of appreciation.

“I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to both AVCAT and the VVFA/VVPPAA for your continued support and generosity in providing myself with the honour of receiving the Tim McCombe OAM scholarship for 2015. I have found this scholarship particularly beneficial in all aspects of life, be they university or personally oriented.

In 2015, I was successful in achieving predominantly credits and a solitary pass. I endeavour to continue to uphold these standards whilst looking to improve through hard work and better time management in 2016. The monetary support provided through this scholarship has made these results all the more achievable and enabled continual focus on my studies whilst maintaining a successful work/life **balance”** - Regards, Liam Dwyer

It is also pleasing to see the wonderful results and achievements of our current scholarship recipients. It only highlights their determination to succeed under hardship in the true ANZAC Spirit.

The Association continues to be extremely proud of those that it has supported with the Scholarships over the years and is determined to continue this support for as long as we are able to do so. We wish them well and every success during the course of their studies.

William (Bill) Roberts OAM, JP
 Senior Vice President - VVPPAA, NSW Branch
 Director - AVCAT

AT A GLANCE



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS' CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

To find out more please feel free to contact AVCAT:

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



To contact Bill, for more information and AVCAT is unavailable
 Ph: 02 9682 1788
 E: billr@vfvagranville.org
 Mon-Fri 10:30—3:30

Scholarships open August, close October. See over page.



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

SCHOLARSHIPS

FOR THE CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN
OF AUSTRALIAN VETERANS



The Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) is a not-for-profit organisation. AVCAT administers bursaries and scholarships to help children, and in some cases grandchildren, of Australian veterans with the costs of full-time education. The most deserving candidates are provided with financial assistance to facilitate their tertiary studies.

"It means the world to me that someone I don't know cares about my education and believes I have potential."
2014 Recipient

One of the scholarships administered by AVCAT is the VVPPAA Scholarship, specifically available for the children and grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans.

If you would like to find out more about this or any of the sponsored scholarships that AVCAT administers, please contact us:

P: 02 9213 7999 E: avcat@dva.gov.au W: www.avcat.org.au

APPLICATIONS OPEN 18th AUGUST

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR
A SCHOLARSHIP?
DO THE ELIGIBILITY TEST
NOW!
(See opposite)

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP OR BURSARY THROUGH AVCAT?



Are you a child or a grandchild of an Australian veteran?
 YES Go to Question 2. NO You are NOT eligible!

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

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

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

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

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

Please contact AVCAT for more information.

NOTES:

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

 To find out more please feel free to contact AVCAT:



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

*OUTREACH PROGRAM
 PENSION TOURS*

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

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

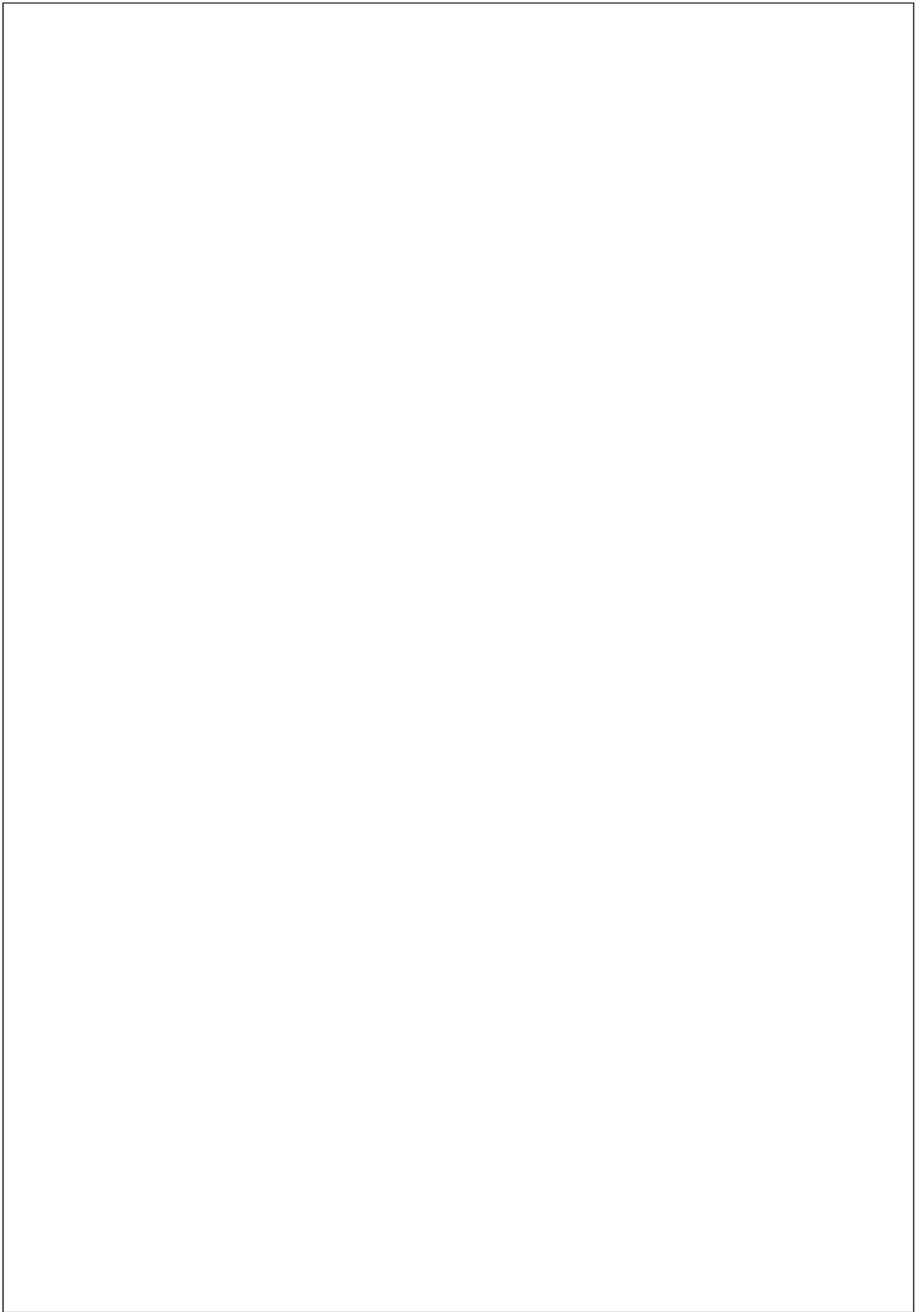
In the event that members have friends who need assistance they are urged to contact Dennis Hanmer OAM who will coordinate the visit program. Of course, the more people wishing assistance in any one town or rural area, the more fulfilling the trip will be for the team.

Remember, we assist all Veterans, and service and ex-service personnel, in any matter relating to your service that may require the lodgement of a claim or application with DVA..

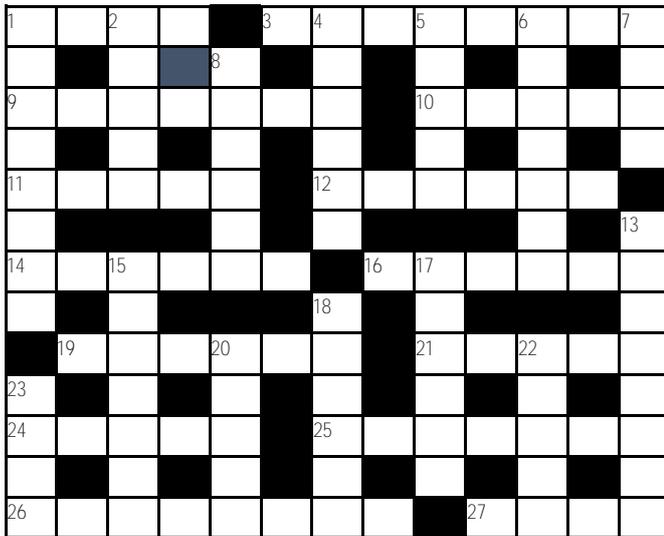
The team will provide assistance and advice to ALL Veterans of ALL conflicts, including Peacekeeping and Peacemaking deployments.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR REPATRIATION BENEFITS? OUR SERVICES ARE FREE.

Contact: Dennis Hanmer OAM (JP)
 Mob:0428 388 221 Ph: 02 9682 1788
 Fax: 02 9682 6134
 Email: secretary@vfvagranville.org
 Mail: VVPPAA (NSW Branch) Inc.,
 PO Box 170, Granville. 2142



CROSSWORD CORNER



ACROSS

- 1. Be quiet!
- 3. Bikini Pattern
- 9. Hard building rock
- 10. Restrict
- 11. Wearied of world
- 12. Finally, and....
- 14. Shown wrongly
- 16. Goddess (Greek)
- 19. Utter disaster
- 21. Army Chaplain
- 25. Door hanger
- 26. Close inspection
- 27. Not hard

DOWN

- 1. Olympic event
- 2. Burn with water
- 4. Publicly
- 5. Weight (abbrev.)
- 6. Director (Cecil B)
- 7. Ballet skirt
- 8. Violin (C&W mus)
- 13. Woven wall art
- 15. Two-Up tosser
- 17. Upended
- 18. Move at meeting
- 20. Lolly
- 22. Stern play
- 23. As a result

Solution next issue

Correction to March Crossword: 18 down was SRI with fourth space blank (black). Apologies folks.

THE UNKNOWN COMIC

Some people can't handle the truth!

Our teacher asked what my favourite animal was, and I said, "Fried chicken."

She said I wasn't funny, but she couldn't have been right, because everyone else laughed.

My parents told me to always tell the truth. I did. Fried chicken is my favourite animal.

I told my dad what happened, and he said my teacher was probably a member of RSPCA.

He said they love animals very much.

I do, too. Especially chicken, pork and beef.

Anyway, my teacher sent me to the principal's office.

I told him what happened, and he laughed, too. Then he told me not to do it again.

The next day in class my teacher asked me what my favourite live animal was. I told her it was chicken. She asked me why, so I told her it was because you could make them into fried chicken. She sent me back to the principal's office.

He laughed, and told me not to do it again.

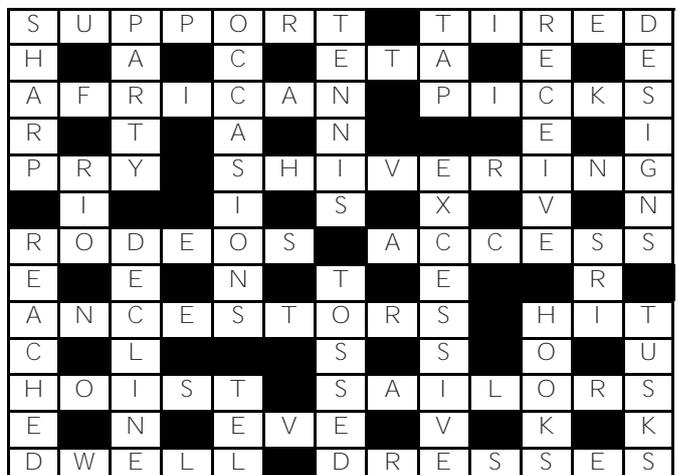
I don't understand. My parents taught me to be honest, but my teacher doesn't like it when I am.

Today, my teacher asked me to tell her what famous person I admired most.

I told her, "Colonel Sanders."

Guess where the hell I am now.....

MARCH 2016 SOLUTION



BRANCH LISTINGS NSW SUB-BRANCHES

BRANCH LISTINGS OTHER STATES

FACES IN THE MIST

I stand here this time each year, in the soft grey
light of dawn
To pay a silent tribute, to the legend that was born
Abandoned on war's millstone, you lay a tragic grist
When you went to join the legions, of the faces in
the mist

You thought yourself immortal, to the perils that
you faced
But death is a close ally, of decisions made in haste
For life is full of chances, to be seized or to be
missed
That pays the fatal reaper, of the faces in the mist

Yours was not the honour, of country king or
queen
A rally to the colours, the greatest ever seen
You cared not for the danger, as you rushed off to
enlist
A passport to eternity, for the faces in the mist

All the propaganda, that made a mighty fuss
You put it all so simply, it was them or it was us
Freedom's cries were pleading and you knew you
must assist
The valiant and righteous ones, of the faces in the
mist

You did not bask in glory, marching home from
war
So many lives to rebuild, like those who'd gone
before
But old age and illness, has snared you from our
midst
Now I see your ghostly forms, with the faces in the
mist

When life's final drum roll, summons me from this
earth
I hope that heaven's stewards, will grant me a safe
berth
For there's one thought that haunts me, from the
doubts that still exist
Will my descendants see me, amongst the faces in
the mist

By Thomas Hamilton.

SA STATE PRESIDENTS' REPORT

Our state president John (grumpy) Hough has resigned as President as of the 11th April 2016. He has been unwell for some time and is now not able to continue as our President

Thank you John for all you have done for the Federation during your Presidency,

We look forward to your company and advice when you recover.

We have been battling with the S A State Government over their plans to close our Repatriation Hospital. A 140 000 signature petition did not deter them.

Mental health will be relocated to the Glenside Hospital in a new facility. Most other needs will be dispersed all over the city.

We can only hope their plan works or even more confusion will be our lot for the foreseeable future.

Camp Andrew Russell, our veterans bush retreat, at Alawoona near Loxton in the Riverland is continuing to be improved and welcomes visitors. Described as rustic and not in the league of a Big 4, but still worth a look.

Congratulations to Mal Thiele for moving from VP to President and Bob Ellis to VP.

By the time you read this our annual Coral Balmoral commemoration will have been carried out with our Patron the Governor of South Australia Mr Hieu Van Le and many members attending.

NSW STATE PRESIDENTS' REPORT

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan and should be commemorated by all. The action was indeed a monumental battle in which our soldiers exhibited extreme bravery in the face of a numerically superior and well trained enemy force. Notwithstanding these facts, we should also remember all who served in the Vietnam War regardless of the tasks which they were allocated to perform. We remember our infantry, armour, artillery, field squadron engineers, signallers and their support services who fought in the Battles of Coral, Balmoral, the Ho Bo Woods, Long Hai's, Binh Ba, Baria and in numerous other battles and contacts of this protracted war.

You are also reminded that the NSW Branch Vietnam Veterans Day Service and commemoration will again be held at the Bankstown Sports Club on Thursday 18 August (see details on pages 26 & 27). We have Major General Brian (Hori) Howard (Rtd) as Guest Speaker, and entertainment will follow the service with Col Elliot.

I would also take this opportunity to remind you that if you received a Gold Card simply because you have reached the age of 70 then your wife/partner would not automatically be entitled to receive the War Widows pension and the accompanying Gold Card should you pass away before your wife/partner. Should you believe you fall into this category I strongly suggest you to seek advice from one of our experienced pension officers.

Frank Cole
NSW State President.

A MESSAGE FROM NSW STATE SECRETARY

Once again we say THANK YOU to our many members who have made a financial donation to their State Branch.

Without these donations we would find it much more difficult to cater to the needs of our war veterans, service and ex-service persons generally.

Periodically, we will publish a list of individual NSW Branch donors of amounts of \$200 or more. Whilst ALL donations are gratefully received, and combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are too numerous to list.

Donors to the NSW Branch of \$200 or more since the last Journal were:

\$10,000	Joseph Ronan (Estate of)
\$5,000	Pat Stuart
\$1000	Amelia Jenkins Warren Axford
\$500	Brian Wood Greg Isolani (KCI Lawyers) Reg Bateup
\$200	Name withheld on request Elton Robinson Dianne Laurie

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

Ron O'Connor
NSW State Secretary





VVCS - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service

A service founded by Vietnam veterans

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

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

Veterans Line can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and counselling. Phone 1800 011 046.*

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



1300 924 522

Our programs

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

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

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

91 Milton Street,
Ashfield NSW 2131

&

7 Blake Street,
Kogarah NSW 2217



Last Post





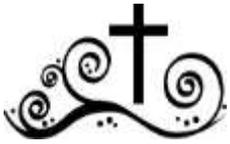
Last Post





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

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.

Please consider leaving a bequest in your will

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

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

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

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

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

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

OPERATION Life



REGISTER NOW!!

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

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

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

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



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

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

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

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

