



THE VIETNAM VETERANS'

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

SUPPORTING ALL WHO SERVE & HAVE SERVED

JULY 2024



DVA reveals that on the 31 April 2024 there were 76,149 disability claims received on which no decision had been made.

At the same time, DVA boasts that it has cleared or nearly cleared the backlog.

ALSO INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE

- **DVAs KEY POINTS OF DRAFT LEGISLATION**
- **VFVA/KCI SUBMISSION**
- **KEL'S ASSOCIATION HISTORY CONTINUES**
- **VETERANS STORIES**

**NEXT ISSUE
DECEMBER**

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

SERVICES

DVA - Military Compensation

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

Asbestos - Dust Disease Tribunal claims.

Industry super claims - income protection - TPD appeals,

Coroner's inquests

claims for Detriment Caused by Defective Administration - CDDA

Maybe we were a bit hasty with our announcement last issue, of impending downturn in publishing the magazine. While true that advancing age and illness amongst our volunteer staff has slowed us a bit, we intend to carry on regardless, until the talking stops.

So keep talking and get those stories in.

We will carry on keeping on as long as we get contributions.



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

New author **Ted Davies** joins us this issue with 'Memories of a Nasho'.

Welcome back to **John Ingram** with episode 9 of the story of the 'Vung Tau Ferry', HMAS Sydney.

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

Keep those stories coming..

AND SEE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ON PAGE 24



VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION of AUSTRALIA Inc.

Incorporating

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

**Vietnam Veterans Federation Queensland Branch
Inc.**

Veteran Support Centre NQ Inc - Townsville

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

**Vietnam Veterans Federation Victorian Branch
Inc.**

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

**Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia WA
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MEMBERSHIP

**Belonging
Advocacy
Success**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We thank you for your kind support. ■

The Backlog

The DVA web-site under 'Claim processing times' reveals that at 31 April 2024 there were **76,149** claims received on which no decision had been made. DVA also reveals that most claims are taking round a year (some much longer) to process.

Yet a recurring theme of DVA's is that the backlog has been cleared or at least nearly cleared.

The explanation to this conundrum is that DVA has redefined the well understood meaning of 'backlog', restricting to only those claims that have not been allocated to a determining officer.

Of course, whether or not a claim file is in a determining officer's in-tray or not is irrelevant; only the time taken to process the claim after it is received by DVA is relevant.

That waiting time remains dangerously high.

DVA must not only speed up claims processing to reduce veterans' waiting times, it should also be more honest in its pronouncements.





NEWS HEADLINES

Veterans' Compensation Arrangements are Changing.
DVAs key points of draft legislation Page 6

VVFA & KCI Lawyers Submission to Harmonisation draft legislation. Page 10

A further episode in the story of the early days of the Vietnam Veteran Movement Page 27

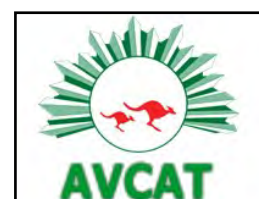
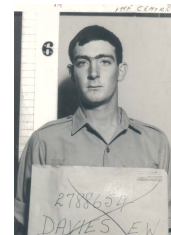
Veterans Story
Memories of a Nasho –Part 1 Page 39

Campaign to award RVCM to Nashos who didn't complete 181 days 'in country' Page 44

Never Leave a Mate Behind. A *Military Ethos*.
About the campaign for the RVCM issue
by Bert Hoebee Page 46

Veterans Story
The continued story of HMAS Sydney in part 9 about "The 'Bloody American' War" Page 51

VVPPAA/AVCAT 2023 report. How well our Scholarship Recipients fared Page 58



WHAT ELSE IS MAKING NEWS

PRESIDENTS REPORT	7
SECRETARY'S REPORT	20
ANZAC 24 POEM FROM G FOLEY	26
RSL NSW SUPPORTING VVPPAA	42
NSW VIETNAM VETERANS DAY	48
NSW AGM MINUTES MAY '24	56
TPI NSW INVITE	60
PSK FINANCE ARTICLE	62
HQ 1ATF REUNION 2024	70

BOOK REVIEWS & EXCERPTS

THE MINEFIELD	17
THE THIRD CHOPSTICK	25
WHEN HE CAME HOME	45
PORKY'S PEOPLE	49
THE LONG SHADOW	50
FROM BOYSCOUT TO BATTLEFIELD	64

FUTURE NEWSLETTERS
OR WEBSITE ADDITIONS
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REGULAR FEATURES

1. Editors notes
2. Federation Affiliates list
2. About membership
4. Headliner News Index
5. Other News & Indexes
18. Advert Physio Support
22. From Editors Desk
24. Letters to Editor
61. AVCAT 2025 Advert
66. Reunions & Notices
68. Branches / Sub-Branches Listings
71. Crossword Corner & Unknown Comic
72. Poem—The Dogs of War—Paul Zaat.
73. Membership form
74. Change of Address Form
75. Mortality Report Form
76. Merchandise list/Pics
79. Open Arms advert
80. Operation Life Advert
81. Last Post
84. Member Discounts

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Veterans' Compensation Arrangements are Changing

There are three compensation schemes covering military service. Many veterans come under more than one of these. This arrangement is complex and confusing adding to the time it takes to process claims. Present waiting periods are said by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide to be far too long and contributing to the risk of suicide.

On the Royal Commission's prodding, the government has expedited the combining (or harmonising as they describe it) of the three schemes and released an 'exposure draft' of the proposed legislation, inviting feedback which may result in changes.

We have submitted a response in conjunction with specialist solicitor Greg Isolani which identifies the need for some changes and additions. We can send you a copy on request.

This is how the government sees the new bill but, of course, the devil is in the detail.

The Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support Bill 2024 aims to overhaul the current veteran compensation system by introducing a more streamlined and unified approach. The key points of the draft legislation are:

- **Simplification:** The bill proposes to simplify the veteran compensation system by consolidating all claims under a single Act. This move is intended to transform the veterans' entitlement scheme from a fragmented structure into one solid foundation¹.
- **Harmonisation:** The draft legislation seeks to harmonise the various laws governing compensation, rehabilitation, and other supports for veterans and their families, making it easier for them to access the support they need¹.
- **Single Act Model:** The new system will operate under a 'single Act' model, which will close eligibility to the Defence-related Claims Act (DRCA) and Veterans' Entitlements Act (VEA), while opening the Military

Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (MRCA) to pre-2004 conditions².

- **Consultation and Development:** The draft has been developed with input from veterans, families, and ex-service organisations, ensuring that the views of the veteran community are taken into account.
- **Acknowledgement of Service:** The bill includes a solemn commitment to respect and support those who have served in the Defence Force and their families, acknowledging the unique nature of military service and the sacrifices made.
- **Reform Objectives:** The government recognises the need for reform to address the complexities and stress associated with navigating the current system, which often leads to delays and confusion.
- **Exposure Draft:** The document available is an exposure draft, meaning it is open for consultation and subject to changes based on feedback from the veteran community and other stakeholders.
- **Government's Commitment:** The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that Defence personnel, veterans, and their families are well looked after, and this bill is a step towards fulfilling that commitment.

This summary encapsulates the essence of the draft bill, highlighting its goals to create a more efficient and supportive system for veterans and their families. For a more detailed understanding, you can review the full draft legislation and its explanatory documents.

We wait to see if our and others' suggested changes will be implemented.

If you want to read the whole new bill, it is on the DVA website.

Read our submission beginning on page 11.



NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The VVFA NATIONAL PRESIDENT COVERING LETTER ON OUR SUBMISSION TO DVA LEGISLATIVE REFORM BRANCH

Legislative Reform Branch
Department of Veterans Affairs
Via email: legislation.reform@dva.gov.au
29 April 2024
Dear Minister,

*Re: Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support
(Simplification and Harmonisation) Bill 2024*

The 'Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc (VFA)' and its affiliate 'Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers Peacemaker Association of Australia, NSW Branch, Inc (WP PAA)', appreciates the opportunity to respond to the exposure draft of the 'Harmonisation Bill'.

The Federation is pleased that the Government has, after many years of consultations/discussions with ex-service organisations concerning the harmonization of the three Acts, has finally produced a draft that appears to have come close to what the Federation has sought and desired, and no doubt other Veterans' Organisations as well, that would ensure that the harmonizing of the three Acts would not disadvantage Veterans and their families after 1 July 2026. We acknowledge that the Government maintained entitlements to Veterans and their families currently eligible under the VEA and DRCA with the intention that they will have a greater choice of potential entitlements after 1 July 2026.

We have also consulted with the South Australian Consortium of Ex-service organisations of Australia - on which our South Australian VF Branch is a member - and have viewed a copy of their response to the draft Bill, which we understand has been sent to the Legislative

Reform Branch. We endorse their views in that response.

Enclosed is the response from the Federation which was prepared in consultation with the VVFNVPAA's long standing Solicitor, Greg Isolani of KCI lawyers, who has been the Federation's solicitor for more than twenty years and has successfully represented the Federation and its clients at the AAT and Federal Court on numerous occasions concerning veterans' and their family's entitlements and Federation related issues. He has over those years acquired a very good knowledge of the Repatriation system, interpreting the various Acts/ Statement of Principles (SOPs), Veteran' entitlements, veteran' family related issues and many other veterans' issues. His input with this response has been invaluable.

We appreciate that there may be more questions to be asked and clarification sought together with an opportunity for a likely Senate committee hearing into the proposed Bill that will allow all parties an opportunity to consider the small details in the Bill and the possibility to seek further clarification with possible amendments taking into account the responses received.

We look forward to working with the Government to ensure that veterans and their families are no worse off by the proposed Harmonisation, and the administration of entitlements are enhanced as part of the reform agenda.

Respectfully yours,
William (Bill) Roberts OAM JP
NATIONAL PRESIDENT VVFA

Read our submission beginning on page10

Just prior to going to print for this issue I will be attending the Federation AGM, held this year at our Far North Queensland-Townsville-Branch. Due to pre-publication print schedules means I need to complete my report earlier than usual.

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHING

As attested to by the number of mail we received since the announcement in our March issue, about a probable change in the make up and future publication, we will endeavour to bring you a printed hard copy journal for the foreseeable future.

Our editor, Bob, received many emails, and has included some, space permitting, in his 'Letters' column on page 24. It is hoped Bob will keep up his usual form for a while yet.

Although, now taking a well deserved break, our National Researcher, Graham Walker AM, who so diligently gave of his valuable time and talent, has indicated he will attempt to lend us a hand from time to time, to enable the quality of our Journal/Newsletter remains intact.

THE STORY OF US

Kel Robinsons continuing serial on the growth of the Vietnam Veteran Movement, and the story of our beginnings, has been well received by our readers.

Another engrossing episode begins on page 27, this issue, and promises to be another enthralling addition for our history buffs.

VETERANS STORIES

In this issue **John Ingram** continues his amazing serialisation of his story about the '*Vung Tau Ferry*', and the many roles HMAS Sydney took in the lives of so many crew and 'passenger', both mechanical and human, over her 24 voyages in and out of Vietnam.

Johns revelations continue on page 51, with part 9 telling of the initial logistical set up of conversion and stowing aboard what was to become the seafaring supply line of troops and machinery between Australia and South Vietnam.

Bert Hoebee gives us an insight into the continuing efforts to have the RVCN awarded to National Servicemen whose time in Vietnam was cut short through no fault of their own.

His letter to the minister, on page 46 fully supports the campaign, by Richard Barry OAM, to have the medal rightfully awarded to some 2,500 veterans, and we dully support both mens efforts on behalf of those veterans.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

In his Editorial article on page 22 our editor has highlighted the plight facing many Ex-Vietnam Veterans Organisations. That is, where are the next generation of Advocates going to come from.

Vietnam veterans are aging and that zest to keep DVA honest is petering out for some. Maybe someone out there has an answer and can enlighten us. It is probably going to come from a paid workforce, but how long are paid staff going to retain the free services we employ now, as a volunteer oriented concern.

In years to come, the outlook for organisations such as ours, could well be few and far between. And the need to closely bring DVA practices into moral compassionate understanding of any new veterans statute must be reigned in where required.

CLOSING COMMENT

In closing, I would like to say thanks to all those who contribute articles for publication, and hope that you continue to bring your stories to us frequently. We will find room for them no doubt.

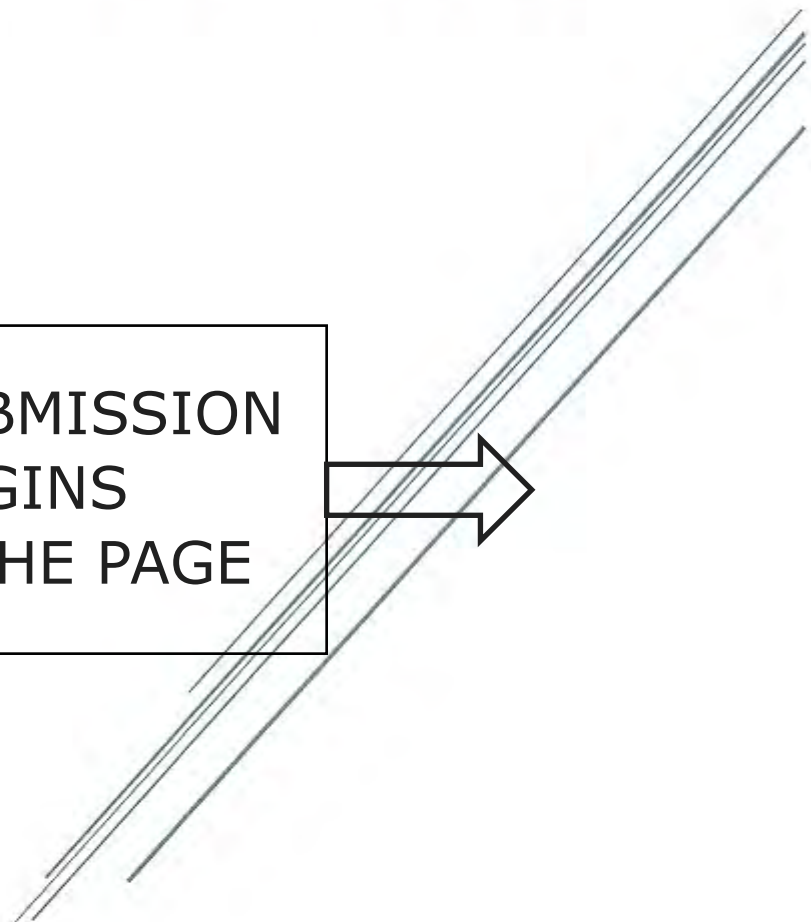
As well, I must add my appreciation to Graham Walker AM, for his over forty years of volunteer service to our Association, which sadly, he informs us, is time enough.

Well done Graham. May retirement bring peace and happiness.

Bill Roberts OAM JP
National President.

THE HARMONISED BILL:
*Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment
and Support (Simplification and
Harmonised Bill) 2024 (Cth)*

OUR SUBMISSION
BEGINS
OVER THE PAGE



Greg Isolani, KCI Lawyers
In consultation with the Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia

OUR SUBMISSION

1. Reform of military compensation scheme

The *Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's* first Recommendation in the Interim report was that the *"Australian Government should develop and implement legislation to simplify and harmonises the framework for Veterans' compensation, rehabilitation and other entitlements"*.

The ensuing legislation process and reform pathway, requires careful amendments to the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (Cth)* (MRCA), the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 (Cth)* (SRCA) and the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (Cth)* (VEA).

The Harmonised Bill with the proposed commencement on 01 July 2026 should, at its core, be Veteran and family centric and importantly administered by a Veteran-centric culture within DVA.

The prospect of DRCA recipients gaining eligibility to the Gold card, SRDP pensions, education schemes, additional permanent impairment amount(s), remuneration loading and a *Veterans' Review Board* (VRB) appeal pathway is attractive.

Similarly, VEA recipients, including widows to access potential to lump sums as opposed to a widows' pension, the increase in VEA pensions that can be converted to lump sums, funeral allowances, standardised household and attendant care rates aligns the benefits with the current scheme and appears to be a net positive.

The "presumptive liability" provisions is welcomed and the further question is how many other conditions can be presumed to be linked to service without the need for complex medical and factual considerations to link the injury, disease or death to a Statement of Principle (SoP), an occurrence whilst rendering defence service and where relevant, clinical onset.

The grandparenting of eligibility pursuant to the VEA and DRCA is a required and relevant safeguard to those with current eligibility and potential entitlements.

However, the right of VEA and DRCA Veterans to make claims under the Bill is not the same as meaning they will receive entitlements as it is subject to eligibility using the SoP regime, the assessment of claims using the GARP and the cap on the level of impairment of the "whole person" under the MRCA as opposed to compensating for each injury sustained under the

DRCA.

There will be "Winners and Losers" based on the application of the current SoP regime, the MRCA "GARP" Tables based on points as opposed to the DRCA assessment based on the level of whole person impairment (WPI) based on a percentage.

There will be a cap as to the amount of compensation payable for DRCA claims based on the post 01 July 2026 assessment.

The standardisation of the appeal pathway for DRCA recipients through the VRB assumes the quality of advocates and the system of training and accreditation is also "fit for purpose".

The threshold questions from the outset with respect to such ambitious reform includes consideration into:

1. Is DVA "fit for purpose" to administer harmonised scheme taking into account processing times to determine and administer claims and entitlements.
2. Is DVA 's ITC systems and personnel capable to manage a potential and substantial influx of VEA, DRCA and MRCA claims pre and post 01 July 2026.
3. The Royal Commission's recommendations are unknown given the final report is due in September 2024. The recommendations may inform the Government and relevant to the Bill on issues including the reviews and appeals, the role of advocates within the claims process and before the VRB, transitional management of injured and medically discharging Veterans from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and other recommendations that need to be considered by Government.
4. Whether entitlement that remain payable, reduced or extinguished under the VEA and DRCA means the Harmonised Bill will produce the best of all 3 current schemes to recognise the unique nature of Military service as opposed to an injury arising out of employment.
5. Is the ADF prepared to maintain and defer medically discharging Veterans before their claims are determined by DVA.
6. Whether the ADF together with DVA should provide a level of rehabilitation and opportunity for Veterans who may be permanently unable to undertake service in their employment category and pass their fitness assessment test to remain in the ADF undertaking alternative service in appropriate employment categories.

7. Is the current SoP regime and requirement to satisfy the "clinical onset" likely to

deny potential DRCA clients post 1 July 2026.

8. Will the DVA treatment regime using the White and Gold card that remains a central and attractive feature of the Bill, hold its currency into the future when evidence suggests a number of treating doctors will not treat Veterans using the Card system as essentially, the rates payable by DVA do not match those payable by other competing entities i.e. Private health, workers' compensation etc.

2. Threshold Issues

A. Liability

There are several "heads of liability" under the MRCA to link an injury, disease or death to service, and the Bill retains the concept of "rendering Defence service" in the MRCA.

The test is whether a person is on duty or is doing something required, authorised, encouraged or expected to be done in connection with, or incidental to, the person's duties in order for liability to be met and benefits paid.

Difficulties arise when applying the test to factual scenarios unique to ADF service as opposed to "employment" in the civilian world. The test has been complicated after the High Court decision of PVYW -v- Comcare involving employees and not ADF members.

Examples of this include but not limited:

- ADF members participating in activities to improve or maintain their physical fitness, outside the physical training required while on duty; and
- ADF members experiencing an injury, disease or death during periods of 'down time' (or approved leave) while posted to seagoing ships or while on exercise.

The Bill does not seek to clarify, identify or recognise the uniqueness of ADF service that does not fit into the normal civilian tests of the "employment" as opposed to the Service connection. There appears to be a requirement to be performing "Defence duty" for a connection to be made that may be interpreted in a restrictive manner to deny liability for a claim.

The Bill should provide clarity about "24/7" coverage where a member is on deployment, exercise or operation sustains an injury or dies. Essentially, the ADF expect members to be available to serve "24/7" - DVA will generally only cover members injured or who die while serving within their 'normal' working hours and performing Defence duty.

Difficulties arise when applying the test to factual scenarios unique to ADF service as opposed to "employment" in the civilian world.

The "temporal test" as added in the Bill thereby overriding the causation system supported by the SoP's, reflects the "in the course of" test in the DRCA and is welcome as this is beneficial to Veterans and the unique nature of service.

Whilst the Bill recognises this category of say service death that occurs "whilst serving" i.e. the "medical event" as noted in the Bill due to, for example, a vascular issue (stroke) or coronary event (heart attack) as recognised by Full Federal Court and High Court authorities, this temporal test can be extended to "performing Defence service/duty" whilst on deployment, exercise or operation or undertaking an activity outside ADF normal hours of service but connected directly to service.

B. Clinical Onset

There are often difficulties in identifying a precise date of clinical onset to meet the requirements of a SoP. The evidence from medical practitioners should be broad as to a "period" in which onset occurred, rather than asking them to nominate a specific

"date". The reference to an estimate and a month is helpful but still requires an actual "date" which can be problematic and may still be too rigid.

The interpretation and application of SoP's should have a degree of flexibility for delegates to try to determine date of clinical onset for the purposes of the Bill to say within a range of months as opposed to a month.

Additionally, there should be a review of the Service deaths occurring on duty prior to 01 July 2026 in order for these claims to be retrospectively determined in favor of a widow or the Estate rather than waiting until the Bill becomes operational in two (2) years' time to then re lodge claims with "new evidence".

3. SoPs and the Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA)

The role of SOPs in determining claims, including restrictions on acceptance of liability which arise from the prescriptive nature of SOP is based on the supposed equity and certainty for Veterans (and their advocates) and will be retained under the MRCA.

In most cases, DVA rely on SoPs to deny claims, rather than a framework to accept a claim. There are many cases in which strict application of a SOP leads to the rejection of a claim where the medical evidence indicates that there is a link between the claimed

(Continued on page 12)

condition and the claimant's ADF service.

The Bill can overcome this "unintended outcome" of the SoP's if there is a discretion for DVA at review level, including at the VRB and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) to "override" the SoP.

This approach allows DVA to obtain and/ or consider medical evidence as to causation when strict adherence to the SOP factors would result in the claim failing despite evidence that the condition is service related.

It is recommended that all SoPs, and particularly those frequently relied on for say orthopedic injuries are reviewed by the Repatriation Medical Authority to determine, if for example, using the DRCA standard of proof (Balance of probability) for the frequent ADF conditions would likely succeed. If so, the SoP's should be beneficially amended to ensure consistency of decision making.

4. MRCA Permanent Impairment Date of Effect

The Bill does not adequately address the complexity of the "date of effect" (DoE) provisions for permanent impairment (PI) compensation under the MRCA.

The current provisions require the current date of effect is the later of:

- a. the date on which a claim for acceptance of liability was made; or
- b. the date on which each accepted condition became permanent, stable and reached the relevant degree of impairment.

There is often difficulty for medical practitioners to identify a "specific date" on which a condition becomes 'permanent and stable'.

The DoE can be linked to the date of the needs assessment conducted under section 325, or with the date of the PI claim itself (noting that a needs assessment occurs at a date determined by DVA and is therefore dependent on how quickly DVA processes the PI claim).

However, advantages and disadvantages for a fixed approach noting amendments to DoE provisions may cause some Veterans to lose their entitlement to an additional 'eligible young person' (EYP) payment under section 80. Ultimately, Veterans should not be prejudiced by inherent delays for DVA to "accept liability" if it means a Veteran loses a potential and substantial back payment and/or denial of a payment for an EYP.

5. Posthumous Claims

The proposed amendment to allow the Estate /Widows etc., to convert PI weekly amounts to lump sums under the MRCA where claims are submitted but not determined before the death of the Veteran is welcome.

However, the weekly payment, that is proposed to be converted to a lumpsum is only calculated up to the date of the Veteran's death as opposed to the duration the Veteran's life expectancy i.e. say age 83 for a Male.

That is, if the Veteran was alive, made a claim and was offered the permanent impairment payment and elected to receive it as a weekly payment, the expectation is that the weekly payment is paid for life. In the event the Veteran dies, the personal legal representative of the

Veteran would be able to convert the amount to a lumpsum up to the date of their life expectancy, not to the date of death.

In addition, the DRCA allows a legal personal representative to make a claim for initial liability for a condition and subject to acceptance of liability, to then make a claim Permanent Impairment compensation after death, whereas the MRCA prevents this.

The Bill should harmonise the right of the late Veterans' personal legal representative under the MRCA to

reflect the DRCA provisions, including:

- a. Removing the exception for PI claims in subsection 321(4) of the MRCA; and
- b. Allowing conversion of PI payments to lump sums, using tables as at date of death.

That is, pre-01 July 2026, DRCA widows or their legal personal representative can lodge new claims for conditions not previously claimed and potentially obtain lumpsums, whereas after the harmonisation occurs they cannot.

The "harmonisation" should not work to extinguish a right to compensation and should remedy the denial of the legal personal representative from lodging new claims and recovering the permanent impairment benefit under the MRCA to mirror the current DRCA provisions.

The "harmonisation" should not work to extinguish a right to compensation and should remedy the denial of the legal personal representative from lodging new claims and recovering the permanent impairment benefit under the MRCA to mirror the current DRCA provisions.

6. Defining Who is the "Legal Personal Representative"

There is a serious issue as to whether the Estate of a late Veteran has the exclusive right to lodge DVA claims, obtain documents, appeal decisions and so forth.

In cases where there is a Will and the Executor of the late Veteran's Estate is someone who is no longer involved or interested in any further engagement regarding the late Veteran (for example, the Veteran's former partner through separation and/or divorce), the next of kin or a parent or new partner may be excluded from the DVA process.

The Executor may have no interest obtaining the DVA file to determine what claims were made, what is outstanding and related matters.

If there is no Will, the next of kin, a parent or new partner may have to apply for Letters of Administration or a Grant of Probate from the Supreme Court to gain the relevant status for DVA to then deal with them in a formal capacity.

That means the late Veteran's parent or new partner who may want to take a proactive role to contact DVA and so forth are denied the right to deal with DVA, receive documents, lodge claims, undertake appeals and so forth.

As the next of kin, parent or new partner are not recognised as the legal personal representative, they cannot access the DVA or late Veteran's medical and other service documents or as outlined above, make any new claims.

There should be a provision whereby, for example, if the Estate confirms in writing or (fails to confirm in writing) after say 60 days whether they wish to act on behalf of the late Veteran with respect to any potential claim, or matter relating to the late Veterans' service, the person who was nominated by the late Veteran as holding the status of being the Next of Kin, should be recognised as the late Veterans' legal personal representative.

7. Transitional Management - Defence to Civilian Life

Whilst the Royal Commission is to deliver its final Report, it appears a substantial amount of case studies and "Lived experience" involves the transition of ADF members into civilian life. The Royal Commission heard from Veterans and their families describe what appeared to be premature medical discharges before DVA

determined claims or where claims were determined, a lack of reasonable support with incapacity payment, or the rejection of permanent impairment claims.

The Bill provides a significant opportunity to "harmonise" the transition from ADF to civilian life and in particular with DVA's support.

The support includes but is not limited to income support to be determined and prior to the discharge (although it may not be paid) whilst the Veteran's superannuation pension is determined.

Further and significant consideration is whether an ADF member should be discharged unless and until such time that all transitional arrangements are in place as outlined above.

Both DVA and the ADF can combine their support via "transitional management" that may include, but is not limited to, the role that the ADF play to keep a member "in-service" even if not in a full-time capacity and remain serving in a particular employment category taking into account their injury.

For example, a member of Special Forces, a Clearance diving team member or an Aircraft Mechanic may, despite their injury, have a capacity to undertake a substantive, rewarding and valuable role in the ADF notwithstanding medical restrictions that reduces their capacity to undertake the inherent requirements of their particular service category.

Obviously, not all serving members may want or indeed have a capacity to remain in the ADF for a variety of reasons. However, the ADF appear to simply want to discharge the member (in most cases medically but there are a number of others, discharged administratively) and the expectation is that DVA will be there to pick up the pieces.

History and the Royal Commission inform us that this can prove disastrous for a number of Veterans who feel they have been let down by the ADF and experience a lack of self-worth that may fuel their depression and impact their fragile mental health.

The MRCA Rehabilitation model will continue in the harmonised Bill so it is essentially "more of the same" and lacks a deeper consideration as to assisting Veterans with a nuanced response as to how meaningful rehabilitation can take place prior to discharge.

It may be that legislation is not, in itself, the ideal vehicle for transitioning members in the category as described above. However, there may be a consultation processes, and Regulations that includes the ADF to allow such a framework to occur in due course

(Continued on page 14)

8. Unintended consequence of medical treatment.

There is a serious lacuna in the MRCA whereby it appears there is a requirement for a "service injury" to be the subject of treatment and therefore a precondition before the "unintended consequence" of a condition arising from that treatment is accepted as a new "service injury".

The Explanatory Memorandum to the MRC Bill did not intend this interpretation as to how this section was to be implemented and neither does the DRCA require it.

Accordingly, there should be clear and unambiguous language in the Bill that the unintended consequence does not have to arise from treatment for a "service injury" before liability can be accepted.

9. Converting DRCA claims to MRCA

It is clear the Bill requires that for a worsening of or a new condition under the DRCA must firstly be accepted under the MRC before the threshold is met to access particular MRCA entitlements. However there needs to be consideration as to how this works in practical reality.

For example, whether the previous DRCA claims and any permanent impairment assessments made with new claims under the MRCA will be the subject of a new GARP assessment to determine if the previous level of WPI impairment (expressed as a percentage) will transfer across to the MRCA assessment.

In some cases, the DRCA impairment points may be reduced on, for example, a GARP - MRCA reassessment and the corresponding points may not be as high as the previous WPI - DRCA percentage impairment assessment.

This may result in the unintended consequence whereby a Veteran makes a MRCA claim for condition after 1 July 2026 that in itself meets the 5-point threshold, however, the overall increase in the impairment points from the DRCA conditions together with a new MRCA conditions does not result, for example in any increase by 5 points to say an overall increase to 50 or 60 impairment points for a potential Gold card.

This also includes the assessment and potential entitlement to the additional disablement amount ADA and the EYP payment whereby the reassessment of ALL (DRCA and VEA) with the new MRCA condition

does not achieve the 5-impairment point threshold.

These will be practical scenarios facing Veterans and their representatives when making new claims for DRCA conditions after 1 July 2026 and clarity is required as to how in practical terms it will operate.

10. The DRCA v MRCA permanent impairment (Lumpsum Payment)

It is apparent there will be a cohort of DRCA Veterans who may otherwise potentially benefit from lodging separate claims and receive compensation for each of and every condition if it is assessed at the minimum 10 percent WPI as opposed to the "whole of person 80 point" limit under the MRCA.

With respect to the reduction of potential benefits payable for multiple injuries under the DRCA, it is proposed that there should be no less than 33% increase of the maximum weekly (permanent impairment) amount payable under the MRCA (and index annually).

The Bill should provide a self-executing time limit, for example, 90 days to determine liability for claims or with respect to incapacity payments or else they will be automatically be accepted.

11. Timely decision-making and delays.

As noted above, the delay as to when liability is accepted may affect the "date of effect" from the permanent impairment and deny a payment to an Eligible Young Person (EYP) being granted the additional compensation amount or the Veteran receiving a back payment of the weekly amount to an earlier period.

The Bill should provide a self-executing time limit, for example, 90 days to determine liability for claims or with respect to incapacity payments or else they will be automatically be accepted.

There can be obvious safe guards and ensuring the "clock stops" if, for example, the DVA are waiting on information from the advocate, Veteran, (such as) a medical report and so forth.

Additionally, if the claim is with respect to permanent impairment the failure to make a decision in say 120 days results in the claim deemed to be rejected and the Veteran can exercise their right of review to the VRB thereafter.

This self-executing mechanism is not unique as other States use similar self-executing provisions such as the Victorian Work Cover scheme and the Commonwealth Seacare compensation scheme.

As DVA are well aware, the Royal Commission received a substantial amount of "lived experience" evidence with respect to the delays regarding the determination of claims and the devastating consequence for Veterans who take their lives.

The statistics of suicide in some way disguise the huge category of Veterans who experienced delays with respect to timely decisions that may have influenced their decision-making, including acts of self-harm and various forms of abuse, for example, Alcohol and Substance misuse.

Whilst the pledge of the Government in particular since the death of Jesse Bird to implement "Veteran-centric reform" is admirable, it does not make up for lack of timely decision-making.

12. Interest on Late Determinations

Further consideration should be given to the payment of interest as prescribed under the MRCA with respect to the late payment of permanent impairment claims if, for example, there is a failure to make a determination with respect to incapacity payments within 90 days and for interest to be paid on any backpay.

Again, safe guards can be implemented to "stop the clock" such as if outstanding information is not forthcoming from the Veteran, advocates, medical provider and so forth.

13. Compensation rates and Step Down After 45 weeks.

Given that the "cost of living" has not been factored into the Bill that is not due to solely "interest rates", consideration should be given to increasing the "step down" or the percentage of incapacity payments after 45 weeks from 100% down to 75% to say 104 weeks.

Additionally, the Bill should recognise that Veterans are not simply Commonwealth employees, who like Comcare employees face the same "step down" as to the percentage of incapacity payments from 100% to 75% after 45 weeks.

Accordingly, and to recognise the beneficial nature of the Bill for Veterans who are not simply Commonwealth employees, the stepdown should take effect not only after 104 weeks, but the percentage step down from 100% should be to 80%.

14. Eligible Young Person or Child-Primary Responsibility for Daily Care Test

Interestingly, the Bill proposes to recognise and pay the person who has the "primary responsibility for the daily care of the eligible young person or child" the EYP additional lump sum payment of approximately \$104,000.

Fundamentally, the amount is paid to recognise the most serious injuries to Veterans assessed at 80 impairment points and to assist their EYP's due to the extent of the injuries. It is designed to compensate them and their children, not someone who fits the definition of having the "primary responsibility for the daily care of the eligible young person or child".

It is designed to compensate them and their children, not someone who fits the definition of having the "primary responsibility for the daily care of the eligible young person or child".

This proposal is not clearly articulated in the Explanatory Memorandum and may create a substantial and unintended consequence whereby, for example, a Veteran may share the care of the eligible young person with a former spouse, but may not quite fit a definition or be categorised as the "primary responsibility for the daily care".

This can occur even when the Veteran has a substantial but not the actual primary care on a daily basis because of

say, their Defence injury, living remotely or other circumstances.

Nevertheless, they are financially penalised by not receiving the additional lump sum amount noting that having injuries assessed at 80 points means they are already penalised as they lack the capacity to earn substantial amounts and carry a high degree of restrictions and impact on their lifestyle.

This may be in contrast to their former partner who may be working and fully supported in another relationship, yet receive the lumpsum(s) as they are defined as having the primary responsibility of the daily care of the EYP's. They are now enriched because of the former partner/Veteran's misfortune.

There are additional and substantial family court considerations that remain unknown. This may include, for example, a Veteran not wanting to engage in a property settlement of a particular percentage amount as they anticipate to be assessed at 80 impairment points and the person with the "primary care with daily responsibility" will benefit from the additional EYP payment.

(Continued on page 16)

As the EYP payment may be substantial, that is, for example if there are say three or more children, a Veteran may receive family law advice to reduce the percentage of the property settlement to the former partner as they may be receiving say \$300,000 or \$400,000 in future for the EYP.

Ordinarily and quite appropriately, a Veteran may rely on receiving the EYP lump sum payments in order to, for example purchase a property or reduce a substantial mortgage that in turn, forms part of an EYP's inheritance.

The EYP amount may or allow the Veteran to downsize in future and enjoy a tax-free increase in the value of the property and so forth by receiving the EYP payment that in turn may generate more wealth for the EYP's.

It is the Veteran who sustains the injuries who should not only be compensated for having such a high degree of impairment, but is also best placed to decide how best to spend or invest the amount.

There are other mechanisms to provide for the person with the 'primary care with daily responsibility' of the EYP's by for example, increasing the Child Education Allowance amount.

15. Reviews Appeals and Legal Aid

The background to legal aid is complex as the Commonwealth's policy with respect to legal aid is generally managed by the Attorney-General's portfolio.

The scoping study undertaken by Mr Rob Cornall AO recommended that funding to assist Veterans with reviews should be provided by Government through DVA. That study also examined alternative advocacy models.

The Bill should consider a legal aid scheme whereby once an appeal is made to the AAT (noting that the government is proposing to replace the AAT with a new administrative review body- ART) there is an amount available through a "DVA Legal Aid- type scheme" for the Veterans' legal representative.

This approach and capacity by DVA to determine and pay legal costs is consistent with their long-held practice to engage outside i.e. Panel law firms to act on their behalf who represent them before the AAT without having to go through the Attorney General's office.

16. Claim for Detriment caused by Defective Administration.

The Royal Commission heard many "lived experience" stories with respect to not simply delays by DVA to recognise entitlements and payments but the defective administration associated with the payment of benefits and determination of claims.

There are substantial examples of the "Detriment caused by Defective Administration" by the DVA causing severe financial hardship. In these cases, the scheme to recover the "damages" caused by the detriment is extremely limited, opaque, time-consuming and highly discretionary as usually the claim is processed through Department of finance.

The Bill should provide a clear, transparent and if necessary, categories as to the level of compensation or categories of compensation for detriment caused by defective administration.

The Bill may provide for regulations to clearly articulate the nature of such a scheme, the criteria, potential level of Compensation available for detriment etc. It should also provide an appeal right as DVA may simply deny the right to make such a claim or the damages have occurred in the circumstances. Accordingly, a right of appeal should include a review to the VRB and the AAT.

Conclusion

The issues raised herein will be refined in time given the Bill is likely to be the subject of a Senate inquiry where further and specific examples of emerging and current issues with the proposed Bill can be raised.

Greg Isolani - Partner
KCI Lawyers
gregisolani@kcilawyers.com.au

William (Bill) Roberts AM JP
National President
Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.
billr@vfvfagranville.org

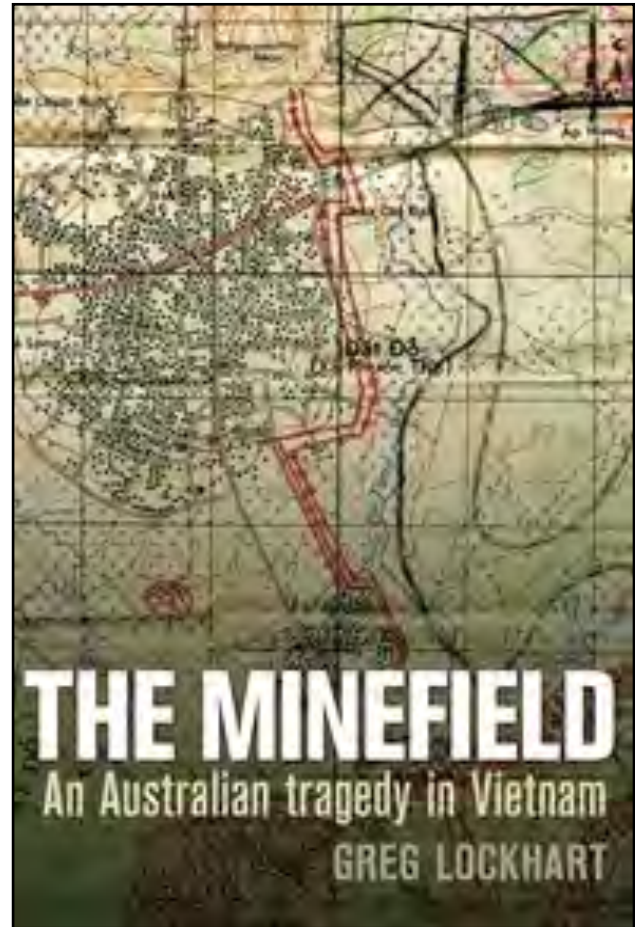
How could this disaster have happened?

Extract

Captain Paul Jones served in the Artillery Tactical Headquarters at Nui Dat in 1967:

‘By August-September 1967 there was a general concern around the HQ that mines were being lifted from the minefield. My understanding also was that Brigadier Graham shared the concern that mines were being lifted. I recall being asked to include likely approaches to the minefield in the Regiment’s H&I program.’

A week or so before Graham relinquished command of 19 October, he told a journalist: ‘Charlie may take some time to admit it, but he is virtually finished in Phuoc Tuy Province. He has lost the people and resources, and without these he cannot live.’ The 1ATF H&I program powerful verification that these were anxiety driven last words. Despite the confident tone of his remarks, he knew what was happening in the minefield.’



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(NSW BRANCH)**

8th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (8 RAR)

2025 NATIONAL REUNION

26TH, 27TH, 28TH FEBRUARY 2025

SYDNEY

VENUE: BANKSTOWN SPORTS CLUB - 8 Greenfield Parade, Bankstown NSW 2200

PROGRAM: WEDNESDAY, 26TH REGISTRATION 1400 -1700 hours

MEET & GREET 1800 – 2100 hours

THURSDAY, 27TH NATIONAL AGM 1000 HOURS

COMPANY GET-TOGETHERS - ALL DAY

FRIDAY, 28TH MEMORIAL SERVICE & COMMEMORATIVE DINNER

All official activities will be held within the Bankstown Sports Club premises.

Accommodation is available in the Mercure Hotel attached to the Sports Club

Please register your attendance with Kevin Sullivan on 0416 262 924 or kevinsully1948@gmail.com

Or NSW Branch President Mick Carter OAM on 0432 500 632 or cartercm@optusnet.com.au

Or NSW Branch Secretary Ron O'Connor on 0413 008 025 or secretary@vfvfagranville.org

And an information pack will be sent to you.

FROM THE SECRETARY



NSW BRANCH

2024 AVCAT SCHOLARSHIP RAFFLE PRIZE WINNERS

The NSW Branch congratulates the following members who were successful prize winners in this year's AVCAT Scholarship raffle draw.

The Raffle assists with the funding of scholarships for the children and/or grand-children of Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers, who may be 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.

The Raffle was drawn in the Veteran Support Centre Office, Granville, in the presence of Committee members on Wednesday, 22nd May 2024. The Lucky winners are:

- 1st Prize: David Faint Hallidays Point NSW**
- 2nd Prize: Sam Oanarello Croydon Park NSW**
- 3rd Prize: Gladys Bak Cootamundra NSW**
- 4th Prize: Carrol Bateman Denham Court NSW**

We thank all our ticket buyers for their support of the, most worthy, AVCAT Scholarship program. And, don't forget to read about the efforts of our current Scholarship recipients on page 54.

Ron O'Connor JP
Hon. Secretary

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS:

At this years AGM, 15 May 2024, Acting President Bill Roberts OAM JP, presented two awards for Life Membership of the Association, in recognition of their volunteer efforts over many years of service at the Granville office.

Alexander (Sandy) Bishop, for his generous contribution of time, wisdom, and compassion for fellow veterans. Sandy has been a valued Committee Member for more than 10 years, and has shown in that time to both support and encourage growth and impart knowledge in many of the Committees directives and processes.

Patricia (Pat) Thistlethwaite, for her generosity of time over more than twenty years, taking care around the office so that the environment was always in sound condition for the benefit of all who worked and visited the premises. And, in partnership with husband Ken, provided a decorum of peace for any troubled veteran who ventured within.

The NSW AGM minutes can be read on page 56.

DONATIONS:

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

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

\$2,000	Mrs. Pauline Limn (on behalf of husband, Alan)
	Michael Cardinaels
\$1,000	Beverley Semfel
\$300	Mark Hoare
\$200	David Howell

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

City of Bankstown RSL Sub-Branch

32 Small Ship squadron RAE Association

*NB: *Please see the RSL NSW Article on page 42 regarding its benevolence policy, and the welcome promise of funding some of our associations wellbeing services.

Acting NSW President, Bill Roberts OAM JP, and myself will be contacting RSL NSW upon our return from official duties, at the VVFA National AGM, held in Townsville in June.

I am sure the funds will be well received by our members and, in particular, those directly responsible for our Compensation and Wellbeing Advocacy. Not forgetting our in-demand Outreach Program journeys to remote NSW regions and Darwin, twice yearly.

The funding comes at a time when we have concerns about financing in the wake of a, downturn from DVA BEST Funded Grants, and a fall in normally robust donations from the veteran community.

Like so many ESOs, our dwindling membership numbers and the consequential drop in income from it's sources, has indeed put certain pressures on some of our activities.

I think our Editor, Bob, has brought home the message in his Editorial on page 22 (overleaf).

Ron O'Connor JP

Hon. Secretary

What's In your garage?



Kel Robertson, who is writing about the origins of the Vietnam veterans' movement in Australia, is anxious to see any Vietnam Veterans Action Association or VVAA documents you may have from the period between Dec 1979 and June 1981.

He has early copies of Debrief but is keen to see:

Minutes of the May 1980 National Congress of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association (venue probably Canberra) and related correspondence;

Minutes of the March/April 1981 Sydney multi-state meeting convened by the NSW Branch of the VVAA (and related correspondence); and minutes of the May 1981 VVAA National Congress in Canberra and related correspondence.

If you have these or any other documents from the Dec 79 to mid-1981 period, Kel is keen to hear from you. Please email him at vvhistory99@gmail.com

Kels' article this issue begins on page 27.

FROM THE EDITORS DESK

What is the stated responsibility of the Department of Veterans Affairs?

DVAs' responsibility is to support the wellbeing of those who serve or have served in the defence of our nation, and their families.

DVA is the primary Australian Government entity responsible for developing and implementing programs that assist the veteran and ex-service communities. DVA provides wide-ranging programs and services that can be grouped into two categories, care and compensation. It administers medical including hospital care and adjudicates on disability claims submitted to it.

It also administers the Veterans' Review Board (VRB), an independent appeals tribunal that reviews DVA's rejections.

How has the Department of Veterans Affairs performed?

Over many decades, the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia (VVFA), along with other Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs), have found it necessary to fight hard against DVA's injustices and bad decisions. For example, we waged, for many years, a campaign to have DVA apply the correct standard of proof in adjudication of veterans' disability claims, a campaign that was eventually successful, benefiting thousands of sick and disabled veterans. A multitude of other examples have been recorded in this magazine over many years.

We are the first to acknowledge that once just liability is accepted, DVA and its staff are very well equipped to administer proper compensation, and wellbeing support for veterans. However, in another example of injustice and ineptitude, there are lengthy delays in veterans receiving entitlements because the backlog of disability claims DVA has allowed to bank up. It remains at over 70,000 with processing taking round a year (with some much

longer). We have campaigned for years for this to be remedied. Recently The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has added its weight by stating that this unreasonable delay may add to suicide risk.

Many qualified very experienced Compensation Advocates continue to report that DVA staffers unreasonably delay the processing of claims. There are unnecessary referrals of veterans for medical reports from their own doctors, ignoring the doctors and psychiatrists who have been treating the veteran. Then there are those annoying, even infuriating, delays when DVA staff contact a veteran claimant direct instead of contacting the ESO's compensation/pension officer.

DVA has also been guilty of accusing some veterans of false claims without proper research. This, of course, can have devastating consequences. DVA must take more care before making such accusations.

And here's something that beggars belief. DVA is claiming that the backlog of disability claims has been cleared. It is able to do this by using a definition of 'backlog' that includes only those claims not allocated to the determining team. But that simply means that the determining teams' in trays are piled high; it doesn't mean claims are being processed faster. Without making their definition of 'backlog' clear, DVA and the Minister are making misleading claims that the backlog has been cleared. It is simply a case of bureaucratic and political playing with the truth.

And now DVA is entrusted to create a new Veterans Entitlement Claims Process that harmonises the three disability schemes presently in place. As has been pointed out, DVA has, in the past, tried hard to get around aspects of these schemes, especially the standard of proof required.

The VVFA and other ESOs over the years have tried hard, with some success, to keep DVA honest. It is certainly true to say that without our campaigning over the years, veterans now would be much worse off.

And who will fill the void?

The VVFA's New South Wales branch alone has been helping well over 1,000 veterans, and ADF personnel, annually, apply for disability pensions. For many years, as well, we have guided about 300 a year to appeal DVA rejections of their pension claims., very successfully.

Those totals are close to doubled when the Australian Capital Territory, South Australian, Queensland WA and Victorian branches contributions are included, as well as our Outreach Program trips to Darwin, and isolated remote NSW regions.

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

But in very near future nearly all Vietnam veterans will be approaching 80 years of age and many who are now hard working volunteers will cease their work for one reason or another.

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

Who will take over the task?

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

There are certainly plenty of younger veterans' organisations like Soldier On and The Warriors' Return doing good work, but most do not help veterans with their disability compensation claims. With some exceptions, these organisations are interested only in reintegration activities,

leaving the 'bread and butter' work of disability pension claims to others.

Worse, there are unscrupulous firms and associations starting up, that actually charge veterans and ADF personnel for their claims application services, taking a percentage of any payment granted by DVA.

The VVFA have and never will charge any ADF member and ex-service personnel for our services by our fully qualified Advocates, both paid employee and volunteer.

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

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

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





NB: A lack of space prohibits us from publishing a number of similar letters and other communications, which were gratefully received. Thank you all.

Dear Editor,

Thank you for all the support you have demonstrated thus far with this Campaign. President Bill has been an excellent supporter.

I have attached a recent OpEd written by Mr Bert Hoebee - a retired lieutenant-colonel and Vietnam veteran.

We are trying to encourage Minister Keogh to take another look at our campaign based on equity, fairness and justice.

If space permits you might like to include the OpEd in the next issue of the Vietnam Veterans' Newsletter.

Kind regards

Richard Barry OAM.

NS Vietnam veteran and facilitator.

[Ed note: We are only too pleased to assist Richard in his endeavours on behalf of Vietnam veterans', ex-national servicemen. We include both Richard's and Bert's articles in this issue. See pages 40 and 42 respectively]

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the wonderful historical episodes of the "Vung Tau" Ferry by John Ingram. Very enlightening for me, and many of my former fellow shipmates.

It brings back many fond memories for me in particular as I was 'crew' for 9 of her 25 voyages until 1971. Thanks to John, and your extraordinary Newsletter.

Cheerio from a happy reader.

DW— Sydney.

Dear Editor,

The story by 'Boris' in the Hobo Woods with BCoy 1 RAR brought home the plight of the 'Tunnel Rat' and I would welcome readers to another publication, 'Tunnel Rats' by Jimmy Thomson with Sandy McGregor. I think copies are still available from Allen and Unwin.

Keep up the good work of the publication as long as you can guys. It's a superb magazine, a tribute to all involved, and sad to read that it may not continue in the printed form much longer.

Name withheld on request.

Dear Editor,

Oh, the thought of never getting another copy of my favourite publication in the post is daunting. I share each issue with my postie, (a Vietnam veterans -ARVN son).

We share a cuppa during his rounds, have a quick laugh at the cartoons and 'The Unknown Comic' page. Then he leaves me to my crossword.

Please keep it going a while longer.

Regards friends,

Dawn, a War widow.

The Editor responds:

Dear Readers,

Certainly our item in the previous issue, about our advancing age and illness amongst those of us who volunteer to keep the Newsletter afloat, has hit a nerve with our valued readers.

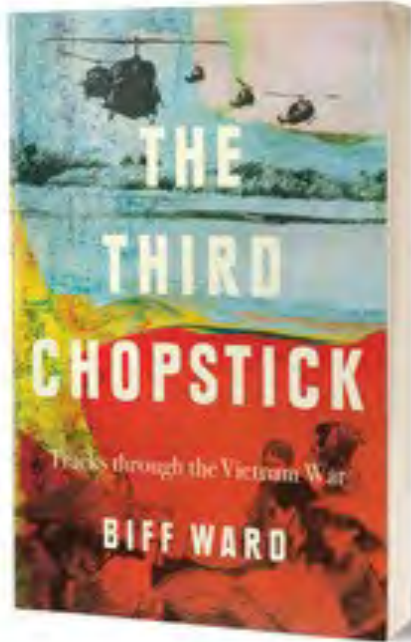
We will try to maintain it's current format for the time being, and rely heavily on the input of quality articles that effect many veterans feelings. We will continue to bring you stories from veterans about their experiences, not only from Vietnam, but all over the world and at home if we see merit in the article/s worthy enough for our readers.

As long as we keep getting material, newsworthy, and popular, we will endeavour to carry on as long as we are able. So keep them stories coming.

Bob Freshfield OAM

The Editor.

Do you remember Ray Fulton?



Do you remember Ray Fulton?

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

This book, amongst other things, is about him.

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

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

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

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

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

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MY VIETNAM VETERANS' ANZAC DAY, 2024

Today when I hear those sombre notes of The Last Post,
And that Rightful sadness besets, I will remember
Empty chairs in family homes, where men and women
Who served are missing from family tables,
Where the laughter of Freedom ought to be.

I will remember the innocence of children and young people,
Looking into uncertain futures beset, with avarice; dogmas;
Of human manufactured Climate threats; of enslavement
To devices; poor incomes; poor prospects for shelter;
Of people dislodged from homelands, then despised.

I will remember my partner,
Who has tolerated those lasting scars of war, selflessly!
The ones within that are not visible at a glance,
That masks the horrors of conflict and that urge to win,
But in reality, simply set a stage for future dilemmas.

I will remember this Country's 'blackfellas',
Who despite the war they fought from 1788
Through to now, have been slaughtered or denied existence
And when they did fight in 'recognised' wars,
Along side old conquerors, they were denied medals or thanks.

I will also remember deeply, past mates,
Who I stood beside, and who put self-interest second,
To give all of us that extra time
To enjoy this wonderful Country and Its 'Opportunities'
I WILL remember, Lest we forget!

By Graeme Foley
3RAR First tour 1967-68



From the dusty archives

The story of the early days of the Vietnam veteran movement:

Who was involved and what happened

Next page



VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS

Article 12

Context Is Everything: The reasons for early support of the Action Association

Part C

This instalment continues a review of the reasons why active supporters of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association (later the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia) committed to the organisation in its establishment period between late December 1979 and the end of February 1980.

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

Previous articles surveyed the extraordinary range of pointers in the late 1970s and early 1980 to wartime chemical exposure as the cause of existent or anticipated health issues for Vietnam veterans and their families. In a period in which there was no reputable public science directly connecting such wartime exposure to those health problems, these pointers had the potential to motivate veterans to act in various ways, including to call for investigations and compensation. The pointers don't, though, explain why veterans felt the need to establish and support an organisation of their own.

That Vietnam veterans would organise in some manner to press the Federal Government to respond to their health concerns was, in a sense,

no surprise. It was the Federal Government which had sent them to war and organising was the longstanding way in which veterans (and community elements at large) pursued their goals. It's what Australian veterans had traditionally done for purposes ranging from the conduct of social and commemorative gatherings to the influencing of Government policy on repatriation, defence and social issues; it was what they had done between the World Wars to oppose Australian communism. The surprising number of Australian Ex-Service Organisation (ESOs) above the unit level which existed by the early 1980s speaks to the organising effort of veterans and the preparedness of individuals to join and support multiple organisations.

It makes sense that war veterans, in particular, thought it appropriate to organise, bearing in mind their training and deployment in and as groups, and their shared wartime and post-war experiences. The tendency for retired senior

officers to fill the executive positions in ESOs said much about the comfort of generations of veterans with service-replicating groups (and, perhaps, about the altruism and relevance deprivation of those senior officers).

Organising also facilitated the delivery of welfare assistance to struggling veterans, war widows and war orphans; there was a long history of organising for charitable and self-help purposes in Anglo-centric cultures. Organising for these purposes met with strong societal approval, as demonstrated by the number of citizens traditionally recognised for service to charitable and community organisations, including veterans' bodies, in honours lists.

More importantly, though, organising was consistent with the message peddled by umbrella ESOs that any assistance provided by Governments to veterans was 'hard won' and needed to be protected from grasping bureaucrats and forgetful Governments. According to this argument – one reminiscent of the 'protecting working conditions' *raison d'être* advanced by Australian trade unions – it was only through strength of numbers and the application of collective pressure that Government assistance to deserving war veterans would be maintained, let alone expanded. The reporting by ESOs on the (alleged) success of their various activities – and particularly reporting by the RSL on the alleged success of its lobbying of the Federal Government – seemed to confirm to Australian veterans the link between organising and the continuance of repatriation benefits. This was so, even if scrutiny of Federal Government responses to RSL representations in the 1970s shows that the League enjoyed only modest influencing success in that period and consequently had little reason to claim a "special relationship" with the Federal Government. (The League would not have been the first public organisation in Australian history to have mistaken consultation and social interactions for the exercising of influence.)

Organising, too, had historically provided many ex-servicemen – whether incapable of full-time employment or retired from the services/work – with a sense of purpose. The administrative talent and capacity existent in the ex-service community – and especially in ex-regulars who'd done their time and were thereafter under-employed or unemployed – was of huge benefit to community organisations. ESOs were also important outlets for this pent-up capacity; veterans at large benefited enormously from the efforts of a sub-set of their colleagues.

In addition, the way in which repatriation benefits were historically administered in Australia – through a Federal Government agency juggling the demands of veterans' support, appropriate use of public funds and budget constraints – necessitated various sorts of advocacy and lobbying activities; the existence of organisations able to perform those functions was consequently encouraged. The inclusion of ex-servicemen in the senior management of the repatriation agency (as Commissioners or Deputy Commissioners) and the presence of ex-service representatives on appeal bodies – in both cases to allay fears that the repatriation system was operated by individuals without experience of military service – might also be said to have justified the existence of ESOs; veterans organisations were to varying degrees consulted about Commission senior appointments and were invited to nominate tribunal members.

Moreover, the larger ESOs were also means by which the Government could conveniently disseminate information and receive feedback on proposed initiatives (even if, as the founding of the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service was to prove, Governments often enough considered private discussion with the RSL National President or sounding of the League's National Executive to be a convenient substitute for consultation with the broader ex-service community).

(Continued on page 30)

Most of these impetuses or rationales for organising were to some extent applicable to Vietnam veterans in very late 1979 and early 1980 when most State branches of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association were established. Most will be revisited later in this article.

For Vietnam veterans, though, there were additional cohort-specific rationales for coming together.

They included a not unreasonable view that the Coalition Government would need to be pressured into investigating chemical harms and compensating victims. Veterans came to this view having concluded that the Coalition, despite early placatory comments and undertakings, would be reluctant to acknowledge harms while ever it:

(a) contained members who were representatives of agriculture-reliant electorates (highly dependent on defoliants and other chemicals);

(b) included members who had been in office at the time of the 1978 and 1979 Federal inquiries clearing the key defoliants for domestic use;

(c) identified itself as the party of business (including, by definition, the manufacturers and retailers of defoliants and other chemicals);

(d) included (and was headed by) Ministers from the war years; and

(e) was intent on reducing Government expenditure (the publicly avowed budgetary goal of the Fraser Government) and was thus reluctant to provide support to chemical affected veterans and family members.

Vietnam veterans soon speculated, too, that the Government was unlikely to undermine its US counterpart's 'no liability' position on Vietnam chemical exposure.

The perceived need to apply pressure to the Federal Government appeared to be borne out by the initial refusal of Veterans' Affairs Minister, Evan Adermann, to conduct an external enquiry into chemical harms and then – after urging from veterans and the media – his reluctant agreement to a scientific investigation by a Government-



funded arm of Sydney University ... but still not the judicial inquiry sought by the

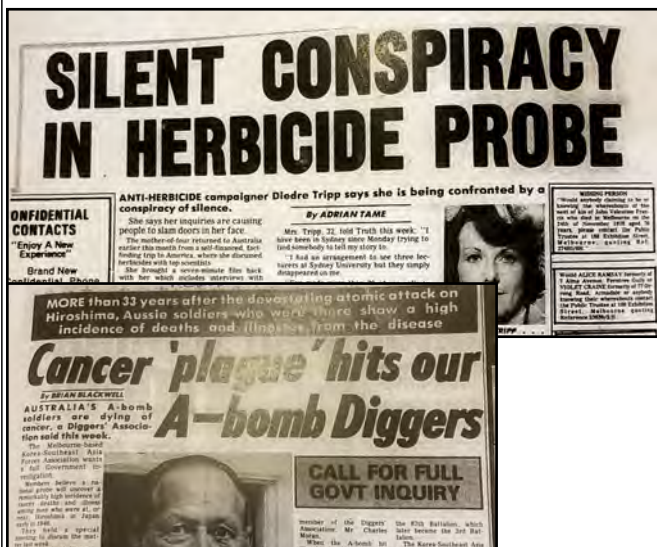
Association. The lesson thereby learnt, early in the establishment period, was that it was organisational pressure, backed up by the media, which pushed the Federal Government to take actions it wasn't keen to initiate.

Organising was justified also by a view that the Federal Government was not beyond covering up its negligence on the chemical exposure issue, bearing in mind the high potential cost of compensation for veterans and the implications of chemical bans for Australian agriculture/export income. This was a view again encouraged in the establishment period by the Government's initial refusal to set up an external inquiry etc.

A number of cover up or 'conspiracy of silence' allegations were made in the establishment period about wartime exposure to chemicals. These were supported by allegations in the same period that the Australian Army (a) had been complicit in chemical cover-ups during the war (by telling servicemen that defoliant sprays were mere insecticide);

and (b) had covered up the true death circumstances of a South Australian servicemen who'd officially died from dehydration.

Adding to suspicions about a Vietnam chemical cover-up were recollections of Government handling of pre-Vietnam military chemical and radiation exposure allegations: handling characterised by denials and long-delayed admissions of responsibility (see the previous instalment in this series). Cover-up suspicions were ones already encouraged by a tradition of concealment/conspiracy allegations in media stories about the civilian use of defoliants; unusually attentive readers will recall that there were cover-up allegations about defoliant exposure in Cairns in the establishment period, as well as suppression claims regarding a report on NSW defoliant exposure. Other 1970s cover-up and whitewashing stories also contributed to a view that Government was well practiced at concealing things it didn't want revealed to citizens.



The fact that the Federal Government claimed during the establishment period that it had been “following” defoliant-related developments in the US for a number of years would have fuelled suspicions of a cover-up. Veterans could justifiably have wondered when, in the absence of agitation by the Action Association, the Government would, finally, have revealed that

there was a potential problem with chemical exposure.

Governments, in appearing reluctant to admit to the exposure of servicemen to harmful substances in various conflicts, encouraged conspiracy theories about the ‘burying’ of those harms in contravention of Hanlon’s Razor (which suggests that stupidity, not malice, is more often the explanation for wrongs). Whether dealing with a Government which had stupidly ignored the Vietnam chemical harms issue or one that had determinedly kept knowledge of those harms secret, it was thought that Vietnam veterans would need the power of numbers to bring about an investigation.

A cover-up on Vietnam war chemical harms would, of course, have seemed unsurprising to veterans who believed themselves to have been betrayed by Government in war and peace ie who believed: (a) that Australian military operations in Vietnam had been strategically limited by politicians and that more should have been done by the same politicians to restrain anti-war elements at home; and (b) that their service was inadequately recognised by the Federal Government (demonstrated by poor support for



transition to civilian life and by inadequate or begrudging compensation for problems believed to be war caused).

Organising was justified, too, by the expectation that manufacturers of chemicals used in Vietnam and in the civilian sphere were, for commercial and legal reasons, unlikely to admit to any wrongdoing (and to thereby prompt

(Continued on page 32)

restrictions on use or damages claims). Early in the establishment period US manufacturers involved in Agent Orange legal action formally claimed that their Government's negligence had made it responsible for any harms resulting from wartime chemical exposure. Australian manufacturers of the same and similar chemicals would also not have wanted their products to be banned or subject to restrictions, as they had been elsewhere.

The lengths to which major chemical companies could go to avoid blame for harm caused by their products had been indicated in mid-1979 by a US expert who "charged the



chemical industry with suppressing, manipulating and destroying vital data on the health risks of many toxic and cancer-causing substances." The same expert had further claimed the absence of a permanent ban on 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D was down to political and economic factors, rather than science.

The idea that businesses could place profits before safety and could knowingly supply a dangerous product was given particular credence before the establishment period by Australian media reports about litigation over the Ford Pinto petrol tank design flaw (which saw the tank explode on even low-speed rear impact and resulted in a series of fiery deaths in the US). In the establishment period further Pinto legal proceedings, following the August 1978 deaths of three teenage girls and the recall of the vehicle, were reported, with prominence being given to the fact that Ford knew of the fault and did nothing about it, despite the small cost of rectification. Ralph Nader's earlier exposure of deadly design faults in the General Motors Corvair might also have been recalled by Vietnam

veterans. The placing of profits before safety was also a potential part of the defective product occurrences mentioned in an earlier article in this series, and was most notably exemplified by the thalidomide tragedy but also well demonstrated by smoking-related deaths.

At least in theory, Vietnam veterans who saw merit in organising for the group-specific reasons outlined above would have expected a subset of existing ESOs to not just be at the forefront of efforts to resolve the chemical issue, but to be potential 'hosts' for their groups. Yet sufficient numbers of Vietnam veterans in the majority of States and Territories chose to adopt the model advanced by Bernie Szapiel and Holt McMinn in mid-December 1979 and set up their own organisation(s).

Many Vietnam veterans had, by late 1979, joined ex-service organisations performing widely varying functions and with differing memberships. These organisations ranged from those operating at multiple levels (like the RSL and the Korea and South East Asia Forces Association (KSEAFSA) to those existing only at a local level (like the Geelong Veterans Association said to have been founded in 1974). They ranged from those with multi-theatre of war memberships (like, once again, the RSL and the KSEAFSA) to ones which were conflict-specific (like the Gippsland group again) or engagement specific (eg the Rats of Tobruk Association). They ranged, further, from ones which were service-specific (the Naval Association) to ones that were disability-focussed (eg the blind and partially blind). Veterans may also have been members of regimental and unit organisations. There was, within this wide range of groups, no shortage of ESOs to, in theory, pursue the matters of concern to Vietnam veterans. However, a mix of factors made most of these organisations unlikely champions of Vietnam veterans troubled about the consequences of chemical exposure; some were formally function-limited, while others were by inclination unlikely to take up a cause which saw them in conflict with a conservative Government or, perhaps, any

Government.

Some veterans in the establishment period believed that the RSL was the entity best equipped to represent Vietnam veterans' interests in relation to chemical harms. The holding of early 1980 Vietnam veteran meetings on RSL premises to discuss the chemical issue and to formally establish branches of the Action Association doubtless reminded some veterans of the vastly greater resources and power the RSL could theoretically deploy in the chemical cause. And the League was not slow to use such meetings to absorb Vietnam veterans. It recruited new members in (at least) Melbourne and Perth, and prevented the establishment of an Action Association Branch in WA (see previous articles in this series). At least initially, too, prominent RSL figures seemed supportive of Vietnam veterans' calls for a chemical investigation and compensation ... even if the National President, Sir William Keys, was soon in retreat.

Other veterans, though, were less inclined to place their faith in the RSL. Many would have recalled the unwelcoming reception they'd received in RSL clubs during and after the war and would have concluded that the League (which, admittedly, did not run the clubs) would consequently be unconcerned about their later welfare. Some veterans may also have recalled the League's enthusiasm for conscription and the war, and may have deduced that it wouldn't be keen to accept its share of the blame for placing servicemen in the way of chemical harms. (Interestingly, none of the veterans the author has interviewed recalled RSL actions before 1980 which might have offset a negative impression of the organisation; they didn't, for example, recall RSL opposition to anti-war elements during the war, the funding of war-time recreational amenities in Vietnam, the League's war-time gift program or any RSL advocacy during the war for improved service and post-service conditions. Just as importantly, none recalled any efforts by RSL sub-branches to assist them in the 1970s.)

The historical lack of useful action by the RSL on the defoliant issue would, in particular, have made some veterans pessimistic about the prospects of substantial RSL action in early 1980. Veterans outside WA would not, it's true, have known about the WA RSL's failure to make the promised July 1979 defoliant submission to the National Executive. Similarly, the failed opportunity to properly investigate the impact of chemicals after Justice Toose's 1972 questions about a defoliant/cancer link may not have been widely recalled 8 years later ... and may, in any event, have been excused on the basis that US concerns were yet to emerge. However, the failure of League National President, Sir William Keys, to act in a substantial way on Bernie Szapiel's request for help in March of 1979 was something veterans were reminded of in late 1979/early 1980. Some veterans may have recalled, too, the lack of any public RSL reaction to the brief resurgence of media interest in the Vietnam chemical issue in May 1979. And within the establishment period Keys' changing position – in effect the League National Executive's changing position, because Keys dominated that body – morphed from support for the Action Association's goals to



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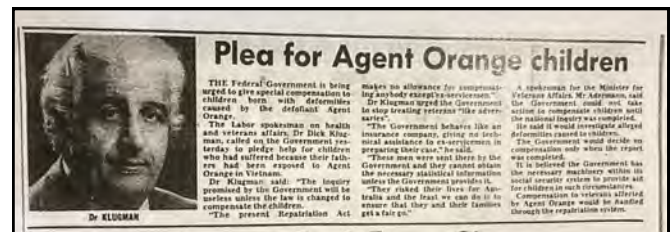
support dependent on a proven link between chemicals and harms – a retreat well covered in the media.

Any lack of confidence in the League's support for veterans' chemical concerns would have been reinforced by recollections of the RSL's focus on issues of importance to its predominantly WW2 membership (especially to the apparent detriment of gassed servicemen from WW1). Vietnam veterans would reasonably have anticipated dilution of Vietnam-specific concerns by the League's broader membership. A complementary yet less flattering view – that the League lacked the mettle to take on the important forces opposed to investigation of the wartime chemical issue – would also have made some Vietnam veterans sceptical about a useful RSL-intervention. The result was inevitably a view among some Vietnam veterans that only they could be relied upon to pursue their interests. That view – driven by a perception that others could not be trusted to push the chemical struggle through to a useful conclusion – worked in concert with various factors tending to bring Vietnam servicemen together and to incline a proportion of veterans to support an organisation of their own. These factors tending to bring Vietnam veterans together are now explored.

The claimed uniqueness of the war, itself (even without exposure to chemicals) enabled veterans to be seen as 'different' by others and, more importantly, by themselves. Their post-war experiences, whether characterised by community hostility or indifference, also enabled them to be seen as unique, once again by others and by themselves. (The uniqueness of Vietnam veterans'

experience was publicly remarked on as early as 1966 by the (then) RSL National Secretary, Bill Keys.)

Inevitably, the possibility of chemical harms (where illnesses, children's disabilities and failed pregnancies weren't already linked to chemical wartime exposure) did even more to push veterans together; some doubtless thought that being poisoned made their cohort chillingly unique, despite the chemical exposure of some previous groups of servicemen. Fear of latent



harms and, in particular, fear for the wellbeing of family members, was inevitably a strong binding factor.

The poor experiences some Vietnam veterans had of post-military life – made most graphic by the circumstances of men who'd descended into alcoholism, unemployment, homelessness and criminality (but also highlighted by the desperate circumstances of those with failing health not accepted as war-caused by DVA) added to the view among many Vietnam veterans that, as a group, they were less well cared for than previous generations of servicemen. Even members of the cohort who were doing well could conclude, on learning of the circumstances of their most troubled colleagues, that Vietnam veterans as a group were not receiving the assistance they were owed (and which they believed had been provided to earlier cohorts). Had the Vietnam men been aware in early 1980 of the less generous repatriation arrangements which applied to them and other veterans of South-East Asian conflicts (because of a legislated restriction on the conditions that could be claimed for – the "occurrence" requirement) there would have been even greater cause to think themselves poorly treated.



Of course, some Vietnam veterans may have been instinctively attracted to the Action Association by the David and Goliath nature of the struggle ahead. Similarly, others who'd experienced their own and familial health problems, and had received no meaningful help from the repatriation system or ESOs, may not have needed to think twice about active commitment to the new organisation. What other options did they have in late 1979 and early 1980? Who else could give them hope?

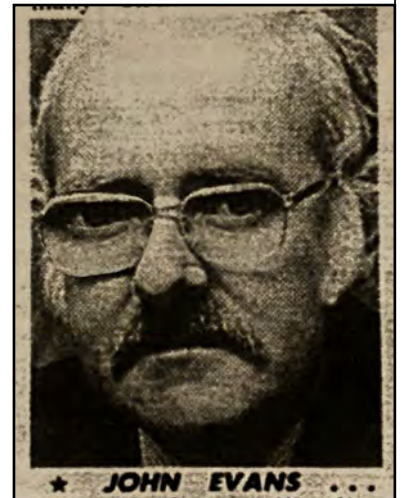
But for other veterans made time-poor by the need to care for sick or disabled children, and juggling the demands of employment with family responsibilities, there probably needed to be prospective benefit of some sort, if they were to be active participants in the new organization. It wasn't enough that their options for assistance might have been limited. They needed to believe that there would be positive consequences of their own involvement, even if they thought the founding of a State component of the Action Association to be an inherently positive thing.

Foremost among the positive consequences that could be hoped for was, of course, success ie the obtaining of Government agreement to an independent investigation of chemical harms and to compensation for affected individuals, including wives and children. Even with a good understanding of the powerful vested interests – political and commercial – ranged against them, most active members could have believed that there was some prospect of success.

The idea that the new organisation could succeed was doubtless encouraged by the attention paid to its claims in the establishment period by significant individuals and, especially by the responses of Veterans Affairs Minister Adermann and other politicians to the Action Association's requirement for an investigation into ill-health and child deformities; the announcement of a scientific study on 7 January 1980 and its allocation to an institution a few days later would have been seen as a significant step, even though

that study wasn't the judicial inquiry sought by the Association and notwithstanding doubts soon aired about its independence.

Success was made plausible, further, by the other early achievements of the Action Association, itself. These achievements – including the establishment of branches in multiple States, the obtaining of meetings with Minister Adermann, the garnering of continuing media attention, and the acquisition of voluntary expert assistance of various sorts – had as much to do with the energy, determination and larrikin assertiveness of the inaugural president, Holt McMinn, as with the support of scientific adviser, John Evans, with the support of the media and the fact that the McMinn/Szapiel call to organise had not fallen flat.



Action Association success was made to seem credible, in particular, by widespread media and public sympathy for Vietnam veterans and for the war chemical cause, noting that that cause was in step with community apprehension about the impact of chemicals and, in particular with the impact of chemicals on children and the unborn. (Some prominent VVAA figures would later claim that it took a good while for the Association to elicit media and public sympathy, but this claim is at odds with the number and flavour of media stories/commentary in early 1980, and with the majority of published letters from members of the public about the chemical issue at this time.)

The extraordinary support of NSW RSL sub-branches and clubs for the NSW Action Association during 1980 (covered in a later article)

(Continued on page 36)

demonstrates that even other veterans were sympathetic to the Action Association's goals.

There seemed to be promise, too, in activities as various as the involvement of the Association's legal adviser in the US class action and preparation of other litigation, and others' plans for a trip to Vietnam to gather evidence and to shoot an income-generating movie. And, if all that wasn't enough, money seemed not to be a problem (albeit because key individuals self-funded their travel etc.).

Ironically, the RSL's inflated claims to success in influencing Governments (mentioned earlier) may have encouraged a view among Vietnam veterans that they too, if persistent enough, could enjoy lobbying success. Even more ironically, the moratoria, and what they exemplified about the utility of collective action, appear to have had some influence. Some veterans may also have felt optimistic about local outcomes because US veterans were engaged in a similar struggle.

Another of the things which may have attracted active support for the new organisation might have been instinctively known of viz. the psychological benefit of taking action. Notwithstanding any apprehensions active members of the new organisation may have felt about the unfamiliar tasks ahead of them, the taking of action after a period in which help seemed inadequate or beyond reach was bound to have a positive psychological impact. By organising, they were taking some measure of control over matters and would consequently experience (at least for a while) a range of uplifting feelings. Word would soon have spread about how good it felt to be doing something in aid of the chemical investigation and compensation cause.

Early active participants would readily have anticipated the same sense of purpose experienced by Szapiel and McMinn, and evident in early public pronouncements by the two men. That sense of purpose, whether aimed at improving their own situations or the situations of

others, would have been especially attractive to veterans whose business ventures had been unsuccessful, whose post-war employment was uninteresting or disempowering, who were unemployed or who were otherwise dispirited. Association-related activity of almost any sort was soon valued by unemployed or under-employed Vietnam veterans.

The sympathy which characterised media stories on individual veterans and their families in the establishment period may also have been a gratifying prospect for veterans contemplating active involvement. Someone outside their own cohort could yet be acknowledging and validating their difficulties by writing about them. Similarly, active participation in the Association promised ongoing reassurance that families were not alone in dealing with their difficulties and fears. The sharing of common experiences and coping strategies among wives anecdotally began at the time of initial contact and was probably touted as a

benefit of

Vietnam Veteran Kevin Rowney and family



Vietnam Veteran Tony Stefanou and wife Helen



Vietnam Veteran Michael Woods and child

Vietnam Mr Tony Stefanou pictured with his wife, Helen. Mr Stefanou believes the loss of his three children contracted by himself and his wife are a result of exposure to Agent Orange.

involvement, even for those wives already aware of the intractable nature of their husbands' problems. That the banding together of these veterans and their wives had attractive therapeutic consequences can't be doubted.

Veterans considering active membership would also have been aware that Australian society approved of work on behalf of veterans and of organisations doing that work. The New Year's Day and Australia Day honours lists published in the establishment period included, as they had traditionally done, people who were specifically rewarded for service to veterans. Aspiring active members could legitimately see themselves as part of the "caring for veterans and their families" tradition, even if conservative Australians, noting

engaging in struggle against the Government which had let them down in war and in peace (see earlier remarks in this article about betrayal) would have been an additionally attractive aspect of active involvement, just as a participation in a concerted struggle against a repatriation system regarded as unsympathetic, may have been satisfying.

As ex-officers expressed little early interest in the new organisation, there were also opportunities for prospective members from the other ranks to make a difference and not play the passive or subordinate roles to which they were mostly relegated in other service organisations. This aspect of things made the Action Association different from other ESOs from the very beginning and would have made active membership a positive thing for some. (The notion of looking after other veterans would also have sat well with the senior members of the other ranks who'd been trained to look after their subordinates while in uniform.)

Similarly, the "uncharted" nature of early activities and the absence of internal restrictions on the action of Association branches and office bearers (mostly because the organisation was new and lacked a functional framework) may have been especially attractive for the ex-WOs, NCOS and corporals who'd been trained in the military to be decisive and to prize action over deliberation. Such individuals weren't limited in action by the bureaucratic processes which hampered the keen and the energetic in larger, more bureaucratic organisations like the RSL (with its 5 layers of decision making and long-established policies and procedures.)

Finally, it should not be forgotten that the most frequently stated early goals of the Association in the establishment period – the holding of a judicial inquiry and the (consequent) providing of Federal Government care and compensation to any harmed individuals – were not unreasonable ones. The inquiry request was

(Continued on page 38)



the Association's early conduct and criticism of the Fraser Government, may have harboured doubts about the organisation's respectability. The satisfaction likely to be gained from altruism and work for the Action Association also sat in contrast to the less remarkable aspects of civilian life and day-to-day civilian work.

Something resembling military camaraderie could also be an attractive aspect of participation in the new organisation, along with some semblance of teamwork, although not in all cases in a traditional service-like environment (as veterans' wives and mothers performed a variety of functions in some early branches, and would continue to be prominent in some branches and sub-branches).

For some veterans the prospect of

made at a time when there were many Government inquiries afoot (see the forthcoming instalment in this series covering 1980 events). The care and compensation request was in keeping with the spirit of Australian repatriation and with the long existent 'contract' between servicemen and the nation, even though, in seeking care and compensation for affected family members, the request sought to broaden the reach of the repatriation system.

The next instalment will examine further reasons for Vietnam veterans to actively support the Association and will survey other commentators' explanations for the founding of the Association, thereby concluding the exploration of why the organisation came to be. ■

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

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

If you have any documents or photos of the early days of the VVAA or VVFA, maybe in those boxes in the garage, Kel would be grateful to receive them.



Vietnam Veterans' Stories

Memories of a Nasho – Part 1 Recruit Training

By Ted 'OKA' Davies OAM AFSM

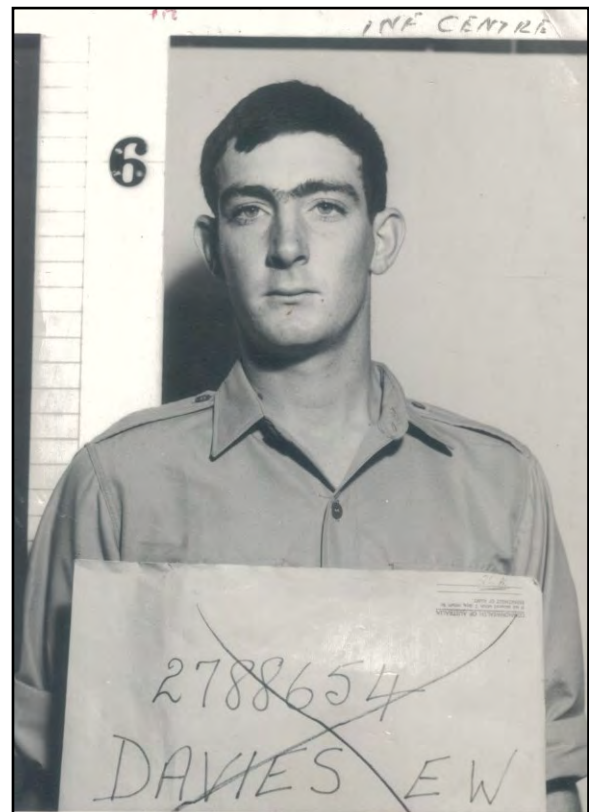
I was working as a jackaroo (an apprentice farmer) on a famous sheep stud “Haddon Rig” just north of Warren in central NSW when I turned 20 and as required at that time lodged my National Service registration papers.

Not long later, I received the notification that I had been selected and was required to attend a medical examination at the Nyngan hospital. There were about a dozen other young men there and we were all country boys, as fit as “Mallee Bulls” and all passed the examination.

My formal notice from the Army arrived requiring me to report for recruit training to Kapooka Army base near Wagga on the 7th February 1968. The day arrived and I was picked up from the Wagga train station in an army bus along with a heap of other young men. When we arrived at Kapooka and got off the bus, there was a Sergeant with a very loud voice ordering us to get in a line with our bags. As I looked around, I realised how different we all were. There were surfies with long bleached hair, hippies with beads, some rockers with brylcream hair, some Beatles boys with mop-tops and a variety of others too.

We all had to swear the “Oath of Allegiance” and then off to the Q Store, where as we moved along, all this strange army clothing was issued to us. From slouch hats to Bombay bloomer long shorts, from giggle hats to bathroom dilly bags, from army greens to brown WW2 hobnail boots and every other thing that we might need. We were then taken out to the very back corner of the base to the old WW2 section which was called “Silver City” because the old corrugated iron buildings were painted silver. These buildings had not been used for many, many years as newer brick buildings had been built. However, as the sheer number of new recruits had grown very substantially, the newer

blocks were full. We had to reopen this old section and get it operational again.



My mother had told me that if I had a good haircut before I went into camp, I would be OK. However, that was not to be and the army barbers had great delight in giving us all No 1 haircuts. In my very

(Continued on page 40)

first official army photograph, there I am, looking like a criminal holding up a large envelope with a number that I have indelibly etched on my brain, my army number which I will take to the grave.

After that, we were gradually introduced into the army way of life by our platoon sergeant, Sgt Smithers who had two corporals to assist him. Sgt Smithers became the most important person in our lives – part mother, part teacher, part mentor and part mongrel. He had to take us from civilian street to soldier and he did it very ably too. Drill, drill and more drill. Sgt Smithers believed in the old axiom that practice makes perfect. He obviously attended the same school as all other training NCO's and if we made a drill mistake was "going to break off our arm, stick it up our arse and use us for a plough". Attention, stand at ease, left turn, right turn, on parade, right marker, dressing, left right, left right, left right etc., etc., etc.

Quite a number of my fellow recruits had never left home and it was a shock for them to be suddenly thrust in with a whole lot of other fellows in a completely strange environment. We were called to be "On Parade" each morning at 0600 hrs with both bedsheets over our shoulders so that we were forced to completely remake our beds. There were strict guidelines about how we had to exactly fold our clothing and set them out in our bedside lockers. Officers with an obvious mongrel streak in them would conduct white glove inspections of our accommodation blocks with extra duties for the whole hut if they found anything at fault. Even light fittings had the white glove passed over them to check for dust.

We were taught about army traditions. One of these, was that whenever we entered a building where a photograph of the Queen was present, we had to break our belt. That is, we had to unclip the brass buckle on our black webbing belt. We were told that this tradition came from the days of old, when knights in the presence of their Monarch, had to undo their sword belt. By doing so, they would be unable to draw their sword and threaten their King or Queen.

The Kapooka recruit training centre was a very busy place in 1968. There were hundreds of recruits at varying stages of training with "Passing Out" parades seemingly every other week. Additionally, there was a large number of training and administrative staff.

The Airforce also had a training base just outside of Wagga at Forrest Hill. On the few occasions that we managed to get a "Leave Pass" to visit the city of Wagga, there were large numbers of young military personnel at the various pubs and clubs and just wandering the main streets of the town. We were warned to be on our best behaviour but, occasionally there were scuffles with some of the local lads who made unkindly remarks about "Nashos and the military in general. We felt that it was our patriotic duty to convince these lads of the "error of their ways". Of course, the MP's (Military Police) were usually not far away and we had to be careful to not overstep the mark.

We were introduced to our basic weapon, the SLR. They were brand new in cases, wrapped in greased paper and covered in grease. After we had cleaned them, we were instructed in how to strip them down and clean and care for them. Then came the parade ground drill of shoulder arms, order arms, present arms. Over and over and over, we practiced these drills in seemingly an endless number of drill sessions. We even learnt how to slightly loosen the rifle stock so that when we did our rifle drill, the wood would make a cracking sound as we shouldered or ordered arms. In fact, we became rather proud of our drill skills and the exactness of them. The "smack" of every man in the platoon's hand hitting the rifle stock as one sound when shouldering or ordering arms left a proud and satisfying feeling.

Finally, we were able to fire our SLR's, initially on the 25 metre range which was on the base. After that we attended live firing on the old Wagga rifle range alongside the Wagga – Narrandera Road and fired over 300 yards.



That's me, back row 5th from the right. 26pl. E Coy 1RTB Kapooka April 1968

Army armourers were there with us to adjust the sights and our instructors were present keeping things safe and offering pointers to us. We were even given turns in the target pits pulling down and marking targets. This was the very first time we heard the “crack, crack, crack” of rounds going closely over our heads.

Drill, drill, drill, practice, practice, practice as we gradually became soldiers. A part of the course was the handling and throwing of grenades. Not the smooth body M26 grenade we came to know in Vietnam but the old WW2 pineapple grenade so called because it actually looked like a small pineapple. This was done at a specially constructed and sandbagged area. It was a nervous time for all because of the fact that some recruits might freeze up and drop the grenade or not throw it properly with the danger of an explosion closer than expected.

Midway through our training, we received our first leave. I remember 6 or 7 blokes cramming into a Holden HD sedan to drive non-stop all the way to Adelaide for their leave. It would have been a very squashy trip there and back.

Our Silver City buildings were right at the back end of the base next to the main north-south railway line with the Wagga-Albury Road on the other side of the line. A number of us recruits discovered that

we could slip out through the back fence, cross the rail line and hitch a ride to a nearby village called Uranquinty. This small town had a single hotel with a large shed-cum-beer-garden out the back. We spent a number of nights there with strangely a good number of other young fellows who although dressed in civvies, looked suspiciously military???

Time quickly slipped by with various training sessions

filling every minute of the day and many evenings too. My strongest memories are of physical fitness, army regulations, order of rank recognition and drill, drill and more drill. We learnt that whilst we had to individually qualify to pass the recruit training, it would always be the team that mattered. The 20 mile march was the final hurdle which we did as an overnight exercise.

And then finally, we arrived at our marching out parade. It sort of happened quickly so that before we realised it, we were at the end of our recruit training and were to be posted to the next stage of our time in the army. Of the men in my platoon, they went off to different courses for further training and I was posted to the Ingleburn Infantry Centre for Infantry Corps training. This was really no surprise as I was a bush boy used to living and working outdoors in the field. The surprise for me was that I was the only one of the 42 other trainees in my platoon to be sent to Ingleburn. I did however meet up with one of my fellow recruits, Bob Saillard at the ARU (Australian Reinforcement Unit) in Vietnam in early December 1968.

Ted Davies AFSM OAM story will continue in our December issue.

—Ed

How the RSL NSW Veteran Support Fund is making a difference to the VVPPAA

The RSL NSW Veteran Support Fund (VSF) plays a vital role in providing support and services to veterans and their families. The VSF was established in 2023 to align financial support provided by RSL NSW sub-Bran­ches by pooling their donations to prioritise and make a greater impact on veteran wellbeing programs.

This financial year, 72 RSL sub-Bran­ches have donated more than \$7 million to the VSF to bolster the support provided by veterans' charities and ex-service organisations, such as the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (VVPPAA).

This July, RSL NSW will donate more than \$100,000 via the VSF to support the VVPPAA in NSW. The services delivered by the VVPPAA compliment the services and support delivered through the RSL NSW network of volunteer advocates and the RSL's partner charity, RSL LifeCare Veteran Services.

As an example of the VSF in action, the Kokoda – Walk With Us program has benefitted from financial support from RSL NSW this year. An initiative of the Raising the Bar Foundation, Kokoda – Walk With Us sponsored veterans on an 11-day journey along the Kokoda Track - where they harnessed resilience, built mental wellness, and regained a sense of purpose.

The Kokoda – Walk With Us initiative was nominated for the VSF by the City of Wollongong RSL sub-Bran­ch.

The sub-Bran­ch President, Peter Lipscomb, said "Through initiatives like Kokoda - Walk With Us, the RSL NSW VSF isn't just changing lives. It's reshaping the narrative around veterans, showcasing their strength and resilience. It's a testament to the power of collective action and community support."

RSL NSW welcomes VVPPAA members to join their local sub-Bran­ches and benefit from the mateship and camaraderie. Whether you have retired from service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) or are still serving, joining RSL NSW means more than being invited to commemorations and events. Just like the VVPPAA, it's not just what you get as a valued member, it's also about what you can do for other veterans and their families. Join RSL NSW for free today and to access support and services and become part of a like-minded community of peers.

Together, RSL NSW, RSL LifeCare Veteran Services, and the VVPPAA can continue to drive positive outcomes for current and ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Force, and the families who support them.

To find out more about the RSL NSW Veteran Support Fund or to join RSL NSW, please visit www.rslnsw.org.au

Tyler McDonald
Content & PR Specialist
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Images courtesy of RSLNSW



Campaign to award *Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal* to Nashos who didn't, for one reason or another, complete 181 days in country

Dear Secretary,

Since 1996 I have been lobbying successive governments to fully recognise a cohort of men who were called up and lawfully completed their service in South Vietnam and through no fault of their own were sent home, with less than 181 days in country, for civilian reinstatement under the National Service Act (1964 as amended). They were under no obligation to extend their service.

The National President Mr William 'Bill' Roberts OAM, on behalf of the Vietnam Veterans Federation, has been an ongoing supporter for many years and at my request has sent brilliant letters to the responsible Minister.

May I respectfully ask, if space permits, that the following be included in the next Newsletter please?

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

Kind regards

Richard Barry OAM

6RAR SVN 1969.



“The Minister for Defence Personnel has declined to make a decision for some 2,500 National Servicemen from across the nation, who served less than 181 days in South Vietnam to be awarded the *Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal* (RVCM).

In recent months Defence Honours & Awards has revealed an amended interpretation regarding the eligibility criteria for the RVCM.

If you have been refused the RVCM (Or not yet applied), and have been officially diagnosed with war-caused PTSD, it might be worthwhile if you submit an application attaching any previous documentation including all medical reports.

Without guarantee, cases will be considered individually on their merits.”

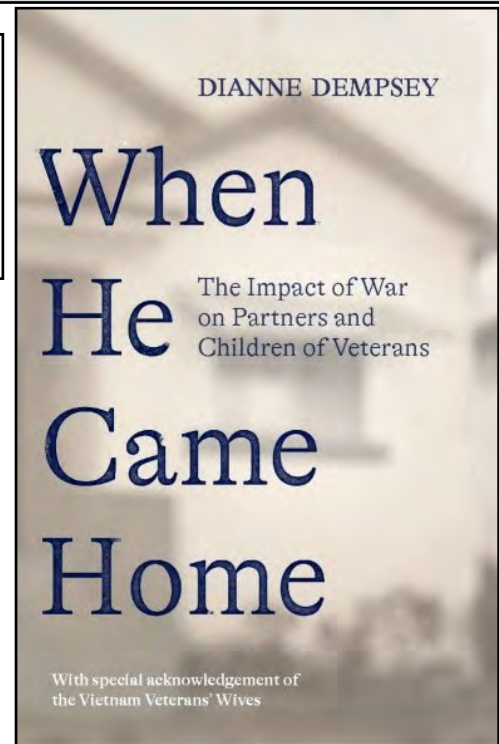
See the article by Bert Hoebee beginning on page 42.

How did our families cope when we came home?

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

Extract

Despite the counselling service to of my children don't talk to each other. I find it very sad. One daughter has changed her name. I believe she wants to divorce herself form our family but emotionally she finds that difficult. Her reflection on her childhood is biased towards the problems of her upbringing. She explains to me that we were lacking in empathy towards her. She said to me once — when you weren't around Dad was very hard on me..■



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NEVER LEAVE A MATE BEHIND

Military ethos

by

Bert Hoebee

As the sun rises on each Vietnam Veterans', Remembrance, National Servicemen's and ANZAC Day,

many of the 19,000 NS men who served in Vietnam will be looking forward to a day of camaraderie, respectful honouring of comrades lost, tall tales and true and the odd drink or two with old mates. They will proudly wear their full array of medals during their activities around the country to reflect and to honour and recognise every individual who served in Vietnam. That is only right and proper.

Not necessarily so for some 2,500 National Service conscripts, who, if they choose

to or are still able to attend, may face opprobrium and offensive questioning by

others, including friends and family, and worst of all, even ostracism as 'short

timers' from some of their former comrades-in-arms, in clubs and pubs; simply

because they do not wear the Republic of Vietnam's Campaign Medal (RVCM),

pictured. That is definitely not right or proper.

Not to express support and understanding of the predicament of these men, and engage the Ministers on their behalf, would seem to be needlessly vindictive. Must it really continue in this way?

Despite having served just as bravely as their comrades, they have not been equally

respected, honoured and recognised. They have long been denied the campaign medal

which was made available to all allied military personnel who served meritoriously in

support of the Republic of Vietnam. Eligibility is determined by Australian authorities who are

doggedly applying the 181-day eligibility criterion. They seem to go to extraordinary

lengths to find ways to deny these men, instead of working with empathy to find a way to

award them the medal. The denial of the RVCM came about due to an unforgivable

government blunder many years ago. Even now, there is a lack of bureaucratic and political

will to recognise the unfairness and inequity that these men seek to have righted.

The Campaign seeks a determination that those NS-men who served fewer than 181 days in

South Vietnam (SVN), and who were returned home for discharge at the end of their

prescribed service in the ARA(S) having served at least 60 days in SVN, be awarded the

RVCM. This period was chosen to mirror the Republic of Vietnam's approved 60 day 'end-of-war'

rule and applying it to each NS man who necessarily reached their own 'end-of-war' at

the end of their compulsory service.

Meanwhile and paradoxically, in March 2022, also after a long period of similar denial, all

members of the 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF) in which all battalions contained NS men,

gained retrospective eligibility for the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit

Citation (RVCGWPUC). That is rather incongruous since both awards have similar intent:

either for recognition of individual 'meritorious service' (RVCM), or for 'noteworthy

achievements along with noble sacrifices' for 1



ATF units and their members (RVCGWPUC).

We all know that from day one in Vietnam, the NS men also faced all the horrors of war.

They did their duty to the maximum according to law and had no obligation at all to put off

their return back to work, study and family and risk their repatriation entitlements. Those

who were killed or wounded did, of course, receive the RVCN.

These NS men have been joined by Senator Paul Scarr (LNP, Queensland), who has undertaken not to let the Campaign rest while ever he is in the Parliament. You may have heard of his impassioned



speech on it in the Senate recently. Following powerful submissions by the Campaign's proponent, Mr Richard Barry, OAM, as well as Senator Scarr and others, Senator Scarr and the author briefed the Minister for Veterans'

Affairs and Defence Personnel on it in detail last year; yet the Minister refused to make a decision, on grounds that he believed that it would be unlawful to do so. All this after more than a year in office during which he was fully aware of this distressing situation, as was the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. Really, Minister?

This non-decision was made even though the previous Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, with agreement from the then Minister for Defence, had recommended that approval for the issue of the RVCN be put to

whole of government consideration, when

the last election intervened. This was known by the cohort concerned. They were nearly there, especially when senior members of the then-opposition, even some now-Ministers

had written: 'I can assure you that Federal Labor supports your campaign to have the RVCN awarded ... , on the grounds of individual justice, fairness and equity.' Many others wrote in the same vein. Due to an unconscionable betrayal and breach of trust the Campaign needs to battle on even now, despite this and overwhelming support from numerous members of all parties and many leading Australians. Notably, Australia's ex South Vietnamese

servicemen and their wider community, also came out in strong support of these men.

The continued denial and lack of recognition has led to even deeper withdrawal into

isolation, contributed to frustration, despair and worse; even for those who were not

already suffering from war-caused PTSD that is now being aggravated by their own

government's obstinance and unreasonable delay in seeing them equally and properly

recognised. This inhumanity needs to stop. Time is now of the essence and the Minister,

guided by equity, fairness, his conscience and the Executive, has the power to resolve this

matter for the benefit of these veterans.

When will the Minister finally act equitably and empathetically and show determined

leadership to let these veterans now have this medal? It would be an immense contribution

to the trust and morale of our armed forces of tomorrow.

© Bert Hoebee, April 2024



**NSW STATE BRANCH & BANKSTOWN SPORTS CLUB
ARE COMBINING ONCE AGAIN TO HOST THE 2024
SYDNEY VIETNAM VETERANS DAY COMMEMORATIVE
SERVICE AND CELEBRATION
TO BE HELD IN THE SPORTS CLUB GRAND BALLROOM
SUNDAY 18 AUGUST 2024**

The Event Organisers and Bankstown Sports Club administration wish to confirm that this event is subject to all NSW government COVID-19 related restrictions and regulations that are or may be in place at the time of the planned event.

It is hoped that this major event will take place as planned and that we may all come together once more to share our memories and rekindle old mateships. The usual itinerary of service will take place as in previous years and we remind intending parties of the following format:

- 0900hrs** **Doors open. Meet & Greet at the Grand Ballroom entry hall.**
 Bar opens 0900hrs to 1015hrs (at the discretion of management) and closed for the
 Commemorative Service.
- 1030hrs** **Memorial Service with Guest Speaker Mr Ian R Thompson OAM x 9 Sqn**
 (Service scheduled for approximately 40 to 45 minutes)
- 1150hrs** **Entrance to Grand Ballroom & function proper**
- 1200hrs** **Entertainment will be provided by the *BANDITS***
- Admission:** **\$50.00 each. You may wish to book a table of 8 persons.**

ADMISSION IS BY PREPAID TICKET/S ONLY.

Accommodation at the Mercure Hotel, Bankstown, adjacent to the Sports Club is to be by private consultation, and the rates offered will be advised. Breakfast at your own volition. Make sure you mention this Function when making your booking. Contact the Mercure Bankstown booking on (02) 8111 7100, or book on-line and quote this event.

Any further enquiries, and to book your table/ticket can be made by contacting the Granville office.

Phone: 02 9682 1788. Email: accounts@vfvfagranville.org

Keep watching our NSW website for updates prior to the event. www.vfvfagranville.org.

PORKY'S PEOPLE

An Illustrated History of the Seventh Battalion

The Royal Australian Regiment

First Tour of Duty

South Vietnam 1967-68

ISBN: 978-098751113-3

Compiled, written, and typeset by Karl Metcalf



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email Anthony Keech

porky_seven@bigpond.com

About Porky's People

This book tells the history of the Seventh Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (7 RAR) during its first tour in South Vietnam. The book primarily uses images to tell this story, whether they be photographs, artwork, maps, or newspaper cuttings. As the title of the book states, it is about Porky's People and the priority for selection of images has been the people who served in or supported the battalion.

The book is set out generally in chronological order so that the reader can easily follow the sequence of events. The scope of the book covers the period from the raising of the battalion through to the time it returned to Australia and the immediate aftermath.

Each operation has its own chapter with an accompanying map. A short introduction to each operation is provided — sufficient for the reader to understand what the operation was about and the key events. For some operations there are a large number of photographs, and these chapters are necessarily much longer than other operations that have few, if any, photographs.

Newspaper articles have been selected on the basis that they directly describe 7 RAR activities or people, or they provide relevant background information.

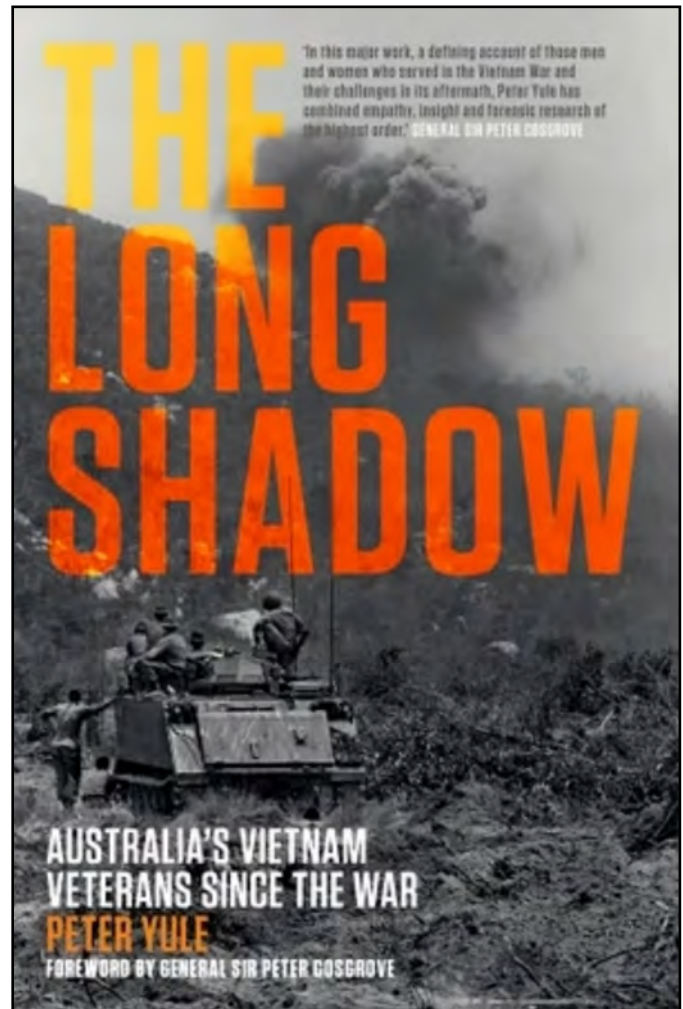
This illustrated history captures the essence of that deployment through a unique composition of narratives, reports, records, maps, newspaper clippings, personal reflections and photos. Karl's work is a tribute to all of Porky's People but, in particular, to those of 7 RAR who gave their all in the war."

John Paget
7RAR 20 Apr 1967-26 Apr 1968

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

Extract

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



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Vietnam Veterans' Stories

From letters diaries and memories

HMAS SYDNEY: the bloody "American War" 1966-67



Here we have Part 9 of the story of HMAS Sydney told by one of the crew, John Ingram

(Part 9 tells of the initial logistical set up of conversion and stowing aboard what was to become the seafaring supply line of troops and machinery between Australia and South Vietnam.)

HMAS SYDNEY's crest is that of her namesake city while her motto is **"Thorough and Ready"**. This motto had relevance as an operational aircraft carrier but was certainly not the case in the mid-1960s as a nondescript and euphemistically titled **Fast Military Transport** with a consequential change in pennant number from R17 to A214. We, the Ship's Company, reduced the motto to **"Rough and Ready"**. In sailor speech this translated to "get the bloody job done!".



Our Commanding Officer in 1966 was Captain "Tony" Synnot, an outstanding leader in every respect and later to become Chief of the Australian Defence Force (1979-82) as Admiral Sir Anthony Monckton Synnot KBE,

AO (as in this official photo).

The ADF involvement in this long and tragic

conflict is well documented in official accounts. I've no intention of reproducing in this personal record. Rather, my objective is to record incidents I recall or experienced; not "highlights or lowlights", but matters remaining in my mind decades later.

By 1966 I'd been in the RAN 10 years. The operational experience of "Konfrontasi" between Indonesia and (now) Malaysia, and demanding training, such as that undergone in 1962 at the Jungle Training Centre, Canungra QLD, had boosted my sense of worth as a junior officer. That said, no amount of preparation equips one fully for the "unknowns" of combat, of how one will react in a life-threatening situation or lead men in challenging and confronting circumstances.

In April 1966 the SYDNEY was to commence a long overdue refit. Instead, we were "under sailing orders" but the matter of "when" was veiled in secrecy. Not even our "nearest and dearest" were to be informed.

(Continued on page 52)



Troops from 3 RAR embark at Garden Island

Early one morning I was under the shower when my wife entered the bathroom, angry and emotional. For the second time in two years of our marriage I was about to go to war again. She'd learned on the 0600 ABC Radio news the SYDNEY and her two escorts were to depart that day for South Vietnam, fully laden with her 600 combat soldiers and the appurtenances with which to fight the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Regular Army. Of course, her anger was justifiable, more so in that I'd failed to confide our imminent departure. I was the dutiful, professional sailor maintaining a position that overlaid spousal loyalty.

The departure from Sydney Harbour was both sombre and emotional with sailors and soldiers lining the flight deck for the ceremonial departure. But at the Heads all changes as the entire complement is "stood down", to change into sea "working dress" and then mustered for emergency lifesaving drills. As the big ship, loaded to the gunwales with thousands of tonnes of fuel, stores, military vehicles ranging from ambulances and graders to tracked vehicles and howitzers sets course north, the escorts race to take up station.

The "old girl" belches smoke as her boilers are called upon to feed more steam to her turbines, her plates grind as the swell from abeam causes the characteristic roll of a carrier with a top weight problem. There is a distinct throbbing aft as the huge propellers pass through 18 knots. In the boat spaces are young soldiers experiencing "mal de mer", wishing they were anywhere but onboard a Fast Military Transport taking them to war and a very uncertain future.

The first night at sea on any deployment is always an emotionally stressful time as one reflects upon the tearful eyes of those nearest and dearest left behind. There's no beer issue that evening and many soldiers prefer to rest on their bunks or on camp stretchers or sling their new-found hammocks rather than attempt a meal (or "scrab" in sailor talk). For the fortunate soldiers it will be 365 long days and nights before they see Sydney once more.

The SYDNEY is a compromise; outdated as an aircraft carrier for fixed wing aircraft, yet has a flight of four Wessex 31B helos embarked for ASW (anti-submarine warfare) protection complete with a range of support equipment and spares; has 600 plus combat troops and their military hardware embarked; is the major fleet training unit and is engaged in a "hot" conflict in war-torn Vietnam.



To manage this menagerie of SYDNEY's men and equipment are just 21 naval officers drawn from the permanent and reserve forces.

HMAS SYDNEY 1966

The SYDNEY also doubles as the Navy's primary training ship for both junior officers and sailors. Each deployment she undertakes (until retired from this arduous duty in 1972) will see an average 200 young sailors ranging in age from 17, and 12 midshipmen 17-19 years old, embarked at any one time, not only for training, but forming an integral part of the ship's company. These trainees will fill complement billets on the boiler plates, in the sea-boats, in fire-fighting and damage control parties, manning the fuelling-at-sea rigs, loading the helos with provisions and the guns with ammunition.

Once the ship enters the Coral Sea temperatures and humidity levels rise noticeably. North of New Guinea life between decks becomes most uncomfortable both day and night. SYDNEY is not air conditioned but reliant on old and very noisy fan forced air, distributed via overhead trunking. These fan motors often overheat resulting in acrid, black smoke being piped into compartments. Fire is a constant threat in a warship and SYDNEY has embarked thousands of tonnes of combustible material including fuels for her own consumption in her boilers and generators, for her helos and destroyer escorts. Should the salt water sprinklers be activated in the vast hangar spaces just 80 mm of surface water would capsize the ship with TARANGAU in PNG as the sole fleet oiler, SUPPLY, is unavailable. This is a fine, deep-water harbour (some say the finest in the world) but facilities are next to none. Rather comically SYDNEY is required to undertake a stern refuelling evolution, a task I'd never seen previously or subsequently in my naval career. In lay terms SYDNEY anchored, without tug assistance, as close to the shore as possible without grounding.



Secured to palms in Seeadler Harbour, Manus Island 1966

Two lines were then taken by sea boat and secured to large palm trees. A heavy 6-inch fuel line was then passed to shore and connected to a corroded pipe line. Atop a nearby hill was a huge rusty, furnace fuel oil storage tank of WW2 vintage. When SYDNEY was ready to receive, the valves were opened and under gravity feed, hundreds of tonnes of heavy black furnace oil filled our tanks. After some six hours we recovered the gear and re-joined our escorts at sea that evening.



Underway replenishment from HMAS SUPPLY: Banner reads "Good luck 5 & 6 RAR and RAAF"

At sea SYDNEY replenished her escorts every few days with furnace oil, distillate and potable water while she, the SYDNEY, required a "big suck" from an obliging allied forces oiler at least weekly. These oilers were the SUPPLY, when available, or a British RFA (Royal Fleet Auxiliary). However, this was a rarity after Britain withdrew her armed forces from the Far East generally from 1969/70. Thereafter oilers from the USNS were commonly used for fuels and

potable water.

Voyages to and from Vietnam was shrouded in secrecy with few officers onboard aware of the actual route. We kept well clear of merchant shipping lanes and, whenever possible, distant from land for fear of being spotted.

(Continued on page 54)

Changes in course were common and our escort/s changed station frequently. We knew we were being monitored by submarines and ELINT's (intelligence gathering ships) of non-friendly countries (read the Soviet Union and China) prepositioned in, or approaches to, the South China Sea.

On Voyage 2 SYDNEY and her escorts went to the second highest level of shipboard security upon departure from Seadler Harbour with all doors, hatches and scuttles closed. This made the SYDNEY a hell hole of quite unbearable and unrelenting heat. In addition, we were required to wear protective clothing to limit the personal injury liable from an explosion or fire, including mortar and gunfire or missile attack. We were also required to carry at all times cumbersome gas masks for instant fitment.

When venturing outside the "gas citadel" one's body had to be completely covered. On re-entry to the "citadel" we had to be "decontaminated" for chemical, biological or nuclear radiation reasons. While this was a safety precaution and, in hindsight, never required in a real-life situation, we didn't know that in 1966. It was to accustom us to the routine of "inconvenience" which even included immersing footwear in a white lime solution to neutralise any contaminants.

While this routine posed a very real hardship on the ship's company the skipper, Captain Synnot, couldn't afford to take any chances with such a valuable cargo of lives and equipment. I had initial reservations and frequent grumbles but these dissipated when I considered the fate of our illustrious forebear, the cruiser SYDNEY, tragically lost with all 645 officers and men in 1941 at the hands of a deceptive German armed raider, the KORMORAN, masquerading as a friendly allied tramp. Consequently, for days on end one had to pacify angry sailors and soldiers that this "inconvenience" was in their best interests.



40 mm Bofors gun crew in Defence watch. Note dispersed ammo boxes.

In later voyages high states of damage control and battle preparedness were not instituted until the night before entering the declared threat zone. At anchor off Vung Tau the ship had to be at the highest state of Damage Control commensurate with the loading/unloading task. If the program permitted, or the threat level dictated, SYDNEY and her escort/s would proceed to sea overnight rather than remain exposed to the very real risks associated with being at anchor close to shore in a hostile environment. This was not an option exercised during my six return deployments to South Vietnam in the SYDNEY.



SYDNEY's quarterdeck awash en route to Brisbane

My departmental day duties would occupy at least 10 hours, seven days a week. In addition, every night at sea I'd have a four-hour watch in DCHQ (Damage Control HQs) deep in the bowels of the ship beneath the waterline. There were occasions when the few Seaman/Executive Branch officers borne were either too exhausted from their bridge watch-keeping duties as OOW (Officer of the Watch) or were required elsewhere in their "Part of Ship". I'd then put on my Seaman "hat" and perform the duties of OOW on the bridge "driving the ship". My assistance as OOW was more often sought when sea conditions were most uncomfortable and sea sickness prevalent.

My "Action Station" was OIC of the aft casualty clearing station (ACCS), otherwise known as the Wardroom (officers') mess. The theory was that in combat anyone wounded in the after half of the ship would be brought to the ACCS where I'd perform "triage" by assigning a degree of priority and direct the wounded to SBAs (Sick Berth Attendants) who'd treat wounded personnel. For this task I'd undergone a Navy sponsored one day St John's Ambulance course in which I'd learnt very basic first aid!

SYDNEY carried one medical officer (in this commission the fine Surgeon Lieutenant Sam Sakker MBE). His post was the Sick Bay with just several beds and a basic operating "theatre" in the forward half of the ship. Seeking Sam's professional advice in the event of a serious incident involving casualties was a big ask indeed. I was permitted to inject pethidine (I'd practised injecting skills on an orange) and I'd learnt to suture and dress wounds. Apart from some first aid kits all the rest was left to me and my imagination including the use of dining tables as pretend operating room tables and lounges as beds for victims. Mercifully in the SYDNEY we didn't have any cause to use the ACCS in combat for I feared the outcomes.

Good healthy and tasty food is extremely important in the Navy. Sailors will endure extended hardships at sea providing they are fed well and often. SYDNEY had vintage (1940s era) galley equipment in all three galleys and bakery but the equipment was reliable, albeit manpower intensive. Refrigeration was the ancient "Brine system", more effective in cold northern Atlantic waters than the Pacific. In theory, we could maintain 30 day's endurance of perishable food items which required some form of cool/cold or dry storage, including a very significant array of medical stores ranging from surgical packs to condoms.

We fed 1000 men four times daily in all situations and sea states. Complaints were never raised nor did we ever run out of food. There was always enough quality, well prepared food for everyone. Sailors and soldiers could eat as much or as little as they wished, the menus were varied and the bakery was functioning around the clock producing the best breads and delicacies imaginable. Ships in company, especially from the USN and USNS, would request bakery items. In Vung Tau harbour we were able to gift freshly baked breads and rolls to the RAN Clearance Diving Team, US Marine Corps and South Vietnamese Navy personnel assigned to harbour and ship protection. These were prized "currency"!



HMAS SUPPLY refuelling SYDNEY & DUCHESS concurrently at 18 knots and 30 metre spacing. Underway replenishing could take a demanding 4 hours. Note minimal wake from the SYDNEY while DUCHESS has completed a "big suck" & is powering away to resume escort station.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE WE WILL CONTINUE JOHN INGRAMS AMAZING INSIGHTS INTO THE TRAVELS OF THE 'FUNG TAU FERRY'.

INCLUDING THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE FOUR STAR COMMANDER OF US FORCES IN VIETNAM (1964-68), GENERAL W C WESTMORELAND.



**VIETNAM VETERANS', PEACEKEEPERS AND
PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
(NSW BRANCH) INC.
[VVPPAA NSW Inc.]**

**MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT 8 MARY STREET GRANVILLE ON WEDNESDAY, 15TH MAY 2024**

Senior Vice President, W Roberts OAM JP, declared the meeting open at 1035 hours and recited the Ode.

Present: There were 12 members present at the meeting as per the attendance book

Apologies: J Rogers OAM JP, D Hanmer OAM JP, D Maher OAM, I Morrison, J Wrigley, G Boekel, R Gagan

Confirmation of the Minutes of the AGM 2023

Moved and Seconded that the minutes of the AGM held on 24TH May 2023 were a true record of that meeting.
CARRIED.

Business arising from the minutes of the AGM 2023

There was no business arising from the 2023 AGM

President's Report

Senior Vice President, W Roberts presented his report which included the following:

ESORT Activities

Briefed the Meeting on the role and composition of the ESORT forum advising he had attended an ESORT Meeting and Budget Session in the ACT on the 14th May 2024.

AVCAT

Informed the Meeting that the AVCAT team is being evicted from the DVA premises it occupies in Sydney and that it will be seeking alternative accommodation. Other actions by DVA suggest a reduction in on-going support for the AVCAT program, which should be of major concern to veterans.

Harmonisation

Advised that the Federation had responded to the exposure draft of the 'Harmonisation Bill', prepared in consultation with the VVFA/VVPPAA's long standing Solicitor, Greg Isolani of KCI lawyers, who has been the Federation's solicitor for more than twenty years. In principal, the proposed Harmonized Bill appears to be acceptable, but there will still be scope for further discussion and amendments.

The VVFA also endorsed a response submitted by the Consortium of Ex-service Organisations of Australia, of which the South Australian VVF Branch is a major participant. The VVFA endorsed the views of that response.

Treasurer's Report

In accordance with NSW corporate legislation it is the Association's duty to present the financial statements and audited reports for the 2023 financial year, ending 31st December 2023, and seek their acceptance at this AGM as a true record of those accounts.

It was Moved and Seconded that the Treasurer's Report, 2023 financial statements and Audit Report be accepted and that the Senior Vice President and Treasurer be given authority to sign the Audit Report for lodgment with NSW Fair Trading and the ACNC. CARRIED.

Membership Report

The Secretary tabled the year to date Membership Report for the NSW Branch which was duly noted.

Welfare Report

The Secretary tabled the year to date Welfare report which was duly noted.

Proposals to vary the NSW Branch Constitution

VARIATION

Delete Clause (4) in Paragraph 19 – Compilation and Membership of Committee

“Clause (4) states, the President shall not hold office in or be employed by any other veterans or ex-service organisations”

Reason for deletion

It is considered the clause is restrictive and unwarranted.

Moved and seconded that the NSW Branch Constitution be amended as proposed. CARRIED

Appointment of Association Auditors

It was Moved and CARRIED unanimously that Simone Murad CA, trading as BusinessDEPOT (previously trading as APTUS Accounting and Advisory) Accounting and Advisory was reappointment as the Association auditor.

Life Membership Recommendations

1. It was moved and CARRIED unanimously that Mrs. Patricia Thistlethwaite be made a Life Member of the Association.

2. It was moved and CARRIED unanimously that Mr. Alexander (Sandy) Bishop be made a Life Member of the Association.

Senior Vice President, W Roberts, presented Mrs. Thistlethwaite and Mr. Bishop with their Life Membership badges.

Other business by leave of the Chairman

There was no other business arising.

Closure

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1107 hours.

The next AGM will be held on a date to be confirmed but expected to be held at the Granville Veterans Support Centre in May 2025.

SIGNATORIES: W. Roberts OAM JP
Snr Vice President

R. O'Connor JP
Hon. Secretary



VVPPAA SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

Annual Review 2023

2021 Cohort

Scholar Updates and Thank You Notes

Jin Ju Redding — Bachelor of Nursing University of Tasmania

VVPPAA - Tim McCombe OAM SCHOLARSHIP

Course Completion: December 2023

Ms Jin Ju graduated with a Bachelor of Nursing in December 2023 and moved to Melbourne to take a position as a registered nurse. Jin Ju's scholarship has finished and she is now a member of the AVCAT ALUMNI Network.

2023 Annual Review: 2 High Distinctions; 1 Distinction

Previous Reviews:

2023 Mid-Year Review: 2 Distinctions; 1 Ungraded Pass

2022 Annual Review: 4 Distinctions; 1 Credit

2022 Mid-Year Review: 2 Distinctions; 1 Practical Outstanding due to COVID 2021 Annual Review: 2 High Distinctions; 1 Distinction

2021 Mid-Year Review: 2 High Distinctions; 1 Distinction

Thank You Note:

Dear VVPPAA and AVCAT,

Hope you have had a very jolly and relaxing holiday.

Guess what? Mission accomplished! One Bachelor of Nursing degree on its way to my inbox and one interstate registered nursing job in Melbourne ready to commence.

Since I last wrote to you, I had the opportunity to delve into the Intensive Care Unit world for my work placement. It was the most brain stimulating seven weeks that one could experience - from open abdomen wounds to life-critical to complex medical equipment. It was an experience that utilised every nursing skill and foundation that I had and is a field

of nursing that I aim for the near future.

The past three years have been transformative. Reflecting on these years, I am grateful for the myriad of experiences that have shaped me into the nurse I am today. The journey has been an amalgamation of beautiful and challenging encounters, each contributing to my growth and development. This growth, was enabled by the multiple and constant support of all my family, friends, precepting nurses, lecturers, and, undoubtedly, the support provided by you.

Your belief in my potential has allowed me to navigate the complexities of my academic journey and facilitated my clinical experience. Your investment has been the caffeine to my late-night study sessions, allowing me to focus on becoming the best nurse I can be.

As I approach graduation, I want to express my gratitude for your role in this journey. I can't wait to start making a positive impact on the healthcare scene.

Thank you for being the wind beneath my nursing wings!

Best wishes, Nurse Jin Ju.

Harrison Saunders — Bachelor of Philosophy, Politics & Economics

University of Western Australia

VVPPAA – Phil Thompson OAM SCHOLARSHIP

Course Completion: December 2023

Harrison graduated with a Bachelor of Philosophy, Politics and Economics in December 2023 and is now completing a Master of International Relations at the University of Western Australia.

Harrison's scholarship has finished and he is now a member of the AVCAT ALUMNI Network.

2023 Annual Review: 4 Credits

Previous Reviews:

2023 Mid-Year Review: 3 Distinctions; 1 Credit
 2022 Annual Review: 2 Distinctions; 2 Credits
 2022 Mid-Year Review: 2 Distinctions; 2 Credits
 2021 Annual Review: 3 Distinctions; 1 Pass
 2021 Mid-Year Review: 1 Distinction; 2 Credits; 1 Pass

Thank You Note:

Dear Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association

Thank you for the support over the last three years. I have finally graduated.

Your support has allowed me to move up to Perth and succeed in my education and personal life. Academically, I finished off my last semester - completing my hardest units yet. Personally, I have progressed even further in refereeing, as I was selected to referee a Perth Glory & Melbourne Victory friendly earlier in the year. Good stuff.

Next for me is to complete my Masters - as I have been accepted into a Master of International Relations at UWA.

Again, I'd like to thank everyone involved for the support I have received over the last three years. It has allowed me to establish myself in the city and allowed me to live knowing I had the support I needed.

As always, kind regards, Harry.

2022 Cohort

Scholar Updates and Thank You Notes

Nathan Miller — Bachelor of Social Work
 Flinders University

VVPPAA - Graham Walker AM Scholarship

Course Completion: December 2026

Nathan is passionate about his course not only passing his subjects but setting himself clear goals in the areas he wishes to work. His scholarship is not only providing financial support but motivation and connection with his Pop.

2023 Annual Review: 2 Credits; 1 Pass

Previous Reviews:

2023 Mid-Year Review: 2 Passes

2022 Annual Review: 2 Pass; 1 Fail Withdrawn

2022 Mid-Year Review: 2 Credits, 1 Pass, 1 Fail

Thank You Note:

Dear AVCAT,

To say I am grateful for my continuation of this scholarship would be an understatement as someone who has grown up with very little the extra support has meant more than anyone could know. I have been able to continue studying at a full time study load while keeping up with high car maintenance, rent, bills, relationships, and my own mental health.

Pop (Trevor) is very proud of me his way of helping out is buying me a beer and a meal at the pub as much as he can as he knows how much the cost of living affects me. Bless his soul. He has told me he is very proud of me and of the work I continue to do even when it gets to me.

The AVCAT scholarship has allowed me to know its okay to take a breather and take the time to study and work on assignments I was able to comfortably study a full time load and keep my life stable and steady, I was able to afford counselling which I couldn't do on my normal wage. As I continue my goals of becoming a respected Social Worker. I have many goals for my future work which include working with Veterans in a counselling space. Hearing of my pops own PTSD and how much counselling helps has motivated me to follow this path and love the Open Arms clients at my work!

Secondly, working in Child Sexual Abuse counselling is something that will take a toll but work that is very important and unfortunately in high demand for many vulnerable kids.

Thirdly, working as a Social Worker in the criminal justice setting, working with male perpetrators of domestic family violence behavior change work.

I am starting to see where my future is and I honestly couldn't have done it without your support so all I can say is THANK YOU, when I am helping a child reconnect with a family member or a client get back on their feet I will forever think back to you.

Thank you for believing in me although I won't be finishing until early 2026 this is much sooner than it would have been without your support. Your sponsorship has changed my life.

Thank you With Love,

Nathan Miller proud grandson of Trevor Miller

Invitation to TPIs



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Have your interests and welfare represented in Canberra.

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

.....

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

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

.....



**AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST**

AVCAT SCHOLARSHIPS

**Tertiary scholarships for children and grandchildren of
Australian ex-serving veterans**

\$4000—\$6000 a year, for 3 years

Eligibility: Australian residency or citizenship, child or grandchild of an Australian ex-serving veteran, full-time tertiary student in 2025 enrolled in a minimum one-year course at uni, TAFE or an RTO and in receipt of, or eligible to receive, a means-tested Commonwealth educational benefit - Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY, or Veterans' Children Education Scheme (VCES) or Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme (MRCAETS) in 2025.

Applications open Vietnam Veterans' Day

18 August 2024

And close midnight 31 October 2024

**Apply online at
avcat.org.au**

PSK FINANCIAL SERVICES ARTICLE

HOW TO BOOST YOUR RETIREMENT SAVINGS AS SUPER AND TAX LAWS CHANGE

If you're looking to maximise your superannuation in the lead-up to retirement, it's a good idea to be up to speed with any legal updates that could affect the super and tax landscape.

Super caps are going up

There are annual caps – or limits – on how much money you can contribute towards super, both in terms of pre-tax 'concessional' contributions and after-tax 'non-concessional' contributions.

Both these caps are going up, so if you have any spare funds you'll be able to move more of your money into super's low-tax environment.

The concessional cap is increasing from \$27,500 to \$30,000 a year.

The non-concessional cap is increasing from \$110,000 to \$120,000 a year.

Time to tweak your salary sacrifice plan

If you're a PAYG employee, your compulsory super guarantee (SG) payment will go up by half a percentage point to 11.5% from 1 July, 2024.

While the higher concessional cap will allow you to sacrifice more salary into super, the increased SG rate will reduce some of your extra capacity. So, it could be a good time to review any existing salary sacrifice arrangements you have with your employer.

How to play catch up with your super

There are special rules that allow you to pay even more into your super – useful if you're playing catch-up before retirement.

With concessional contributions if you have less than \$500,000 in your super on 30 June of the previous financial year, you can carry forward unused amounts from up to five previous years. So, if you didn't contribute the full amount in 2018-19,

this is your last chance to use any unused amounts from that financial year – the opportunity will expire on 30 June, 2024.

How to make large contributions to your super

With non-concessional contributions if you have less than \$1.66m in your super on 30 June 2024, you can bring forward three years of contributions up to \$360,000.

The rules can be a bit complex so if you come into a windfall from selling an asset or receiving an inheritance, it's worth chatting to us about the best way to increase your retirement savings.

Tax cuts are coming in

The Government's long-awaited 'stage 3' tax cuts are coming into effect on 1 July, 2024. While there have been well-publicised changes – lower income earners will receive a higher cut than originally proposed, while higher income earners will receive a lower cut – the bottom line is that all personal income taxpayers will pay less tax.

SEE TABLE AT RIGHT.....

So, **before 1 July 2024** when you're still paying a higher rate of tax, you might like to think about **bringing forward any tax deductions by:**

- Making personal deductible contributions to your super using any unused amounts from 2018/19.
- Prepaying any deductible expenses such as income protection premiums and investment loan interest where possible.

And **then after 1 July 2024** you'll be paying a lower rate of tax. So, you might like to think about **deferring any income from:**

- selling an asset that generates a capital gain
- receiving an employment termination payment or leave entitlement

Your tax cut from 1 July 2024

Source: <https://treasury.gov.au/tax-cuts/calculator>

Taxable income	Tax payable 2023/24	Tax payable 2024/25	Tax cut
\$40,000	\$4,367	\$3,713	\$654
\$60,000	\$11,067	\$9,888	\$1,179
\$80,000	\$18,067	\$16,388	\$1,679
\$100,000	\$24,967	\$22,788	\$2,179
\$120,000	\$31,867	\$29,188	\$2,679
\$140,000	\$39,667	\$35,938	\$3,729
\$150,000	\$43,567	\$39,838	\$3,729
\$160,000	\$47,467	\$43,738	\$3,729
\$180,000	\$55,267	\$51,538	\$3,729
\$190,000	\$59,967	\$55,438	\$4,529
\$200,000	\$64,667	\$60,138	\$4,529

- applying for a First Home Super Saver Scheme release
- making a taxable super withdrawal, such as total and permanent disability under age 60

We can help

The good news is that if you're a taxpayer you'll have more disposable income that will help soften some of the cost-of-living pressures we're facing.

Current as at Apr 2024

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

Paul Messerschmidt (Partner) MFinPlan

PSK Private Wealth

0414 811 777

(02) 8365 8333

paulm@psk.com.au

Paul Messerschmidt of PSK Financial Services Group Pty Ltd trading as PSK Private Wealth ABN 24 134 987 205 is an Authorised Representative of PSK Advisory Services Pty Ltd - AFSL 234656. Any advice included in this document has been prepared without taking into account your objectives, financial situation or needs. Before acting on the advice, you should consider whether it's appropriate to you, in light of your objectives, financial situation or needs.

ONE MANS LIFE—A JOURNEY THROUGH SERVICE

Book Review

From Boy Scout to Battlefield and Beyond

By Vietnam veteran Ray Carlin

This is a book full of stories and generously illustrated by original photographs.

The stories about Ray's experiences with 102 and 104 Field Batteries in Vietnam will bring on that feeling of recognition, sometimes even nostalgia, for many readers.

Here's an example:

On the taxiway [at Ton Son Nhut] I could see a non-stop line of aircraft waiting to take off...

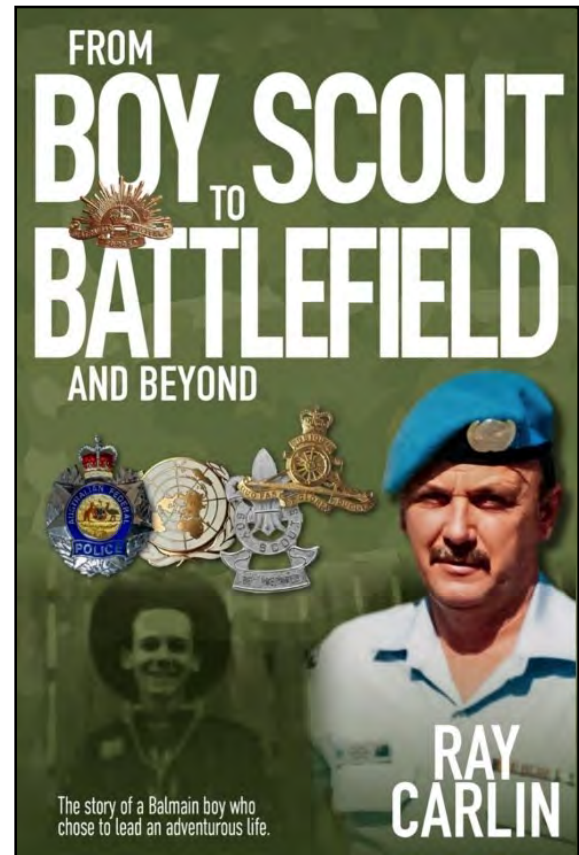
Like Singapore, the temperature was in the high 90s and being the monsoon season, it didn't take long for the humidity to saturate our uniforms.

The bus finally arrived at our destination where we were told that an aircraft would arrive 'soon' to take us all to Nui Dat. An RAAF NCO then handed out RAAF meal packs to us and we settled down to eat lunch.

As we did so a US ambulance went past, there were six or eight sets of boots hanging out the open rear door of the vehicle.

It wasn't just that the ambulance was full of dead bodies that was disturbing, it was the fact that the bodies had been stacked on top of each other like firewood.

Dick and I looked at each other and I'm sure that he, like me, was starting to



wonder if coming to Vietnam was such a good idea after all.

Here's another example; a great description of a personal reaction to fear in combat.

,,,I felt a sudden adrenaline rush with the fear that the enemy had actually breached our defences.

My heart was pounding in my chest, and my hair was standing on end, and I was to experience a very strange sensation when my hands acted independently of my brain's thought processes.

It was like my brain was processing information a fraction of a second slower than my hands were in fact acting, my training had

kicked in.
 When the claymore mines failed to detonate, I instantly thought the nogs had cut the wires leading to the detonators. My mind raced as I thought what to do next, instinctively I grabbed the 40mm M79 Grenade Launcher and fired a round in the direction of the two figures. AS I did so, Gunner Sund opened up with his M60 which jammed after firing a few rounds. He called out '****I've got a stoppage.' Realising it would take too long to reload the grenade launcher while Rick cleared the stoppage in the machine gun, I became aware that my hands were already reaching for my rifle. I then emptied a full magazine in the direction of the figures on the wire, firstly to deter them and secondly to alert everyone else to the possible penetration of our defences. As I was reloading another magazine into my rifle the rest of the gun detachment appeared from their pits and took up fire positions...and we explained the situation to them. One of them commented sarcastically 'f*** me, I've been in country nine months and haven't fired an M79, you've been here since 'breakfast time' and have fired it already.

And so it goes, story after story and not only about

Ray's time in Vietnam.

He tells of his life leading up to joining the army and after.

His post army career (or should I say 'careers') in various police forces in Australia, Cyprus and Haiti as well as his time as a private investigator spawned a multitude of intriguing and entertaining stories.

This is a book to be read and enjoyed.

This is the story of a bountiful life, well worth reading.

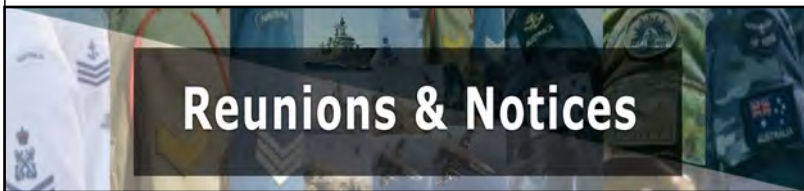
Bob Freshfield OAM
 Editor

The book has 379 pages and over 100 photographs most in colour.

It will retail for \$45 plus \$10 postage within in Australia.

Anyone wishing to order the book can do so by contacting the author, Ray CARLIN, on mobile 0408422762 or email raycarlin@bigpond.com.





B Company 2RAR Veterans, 2nd tour 1970-71

Date: 16 Aug 2024

Location: Rainbow Bay, Gold Coast, QLD

16-21 August 2024. All veterans and partners of Bravo Company are invited to attend.

Contact details

Name: Philip Burke

Phone: 0412 739 435

reunion24@familia.com.au

85 Transport Platoon Vietnam

Date: 16 - 20 August 2024. A meet and greet will be held on Friday

16th at Darwin Free Spirit Resort.

Various activities including

Darwin War Tour, Adelaide River

Day Tour, Veteran Veteran's Day

Function and Farewell Dinner. All

85 Transport Platoon Vietnam veterans and partners are invited.

Location: Darwin, NT

Contact details

Name: Malcolm Calvett

Phone: 0407 886 927

Email: rondomal@hotmail.com

21 Engineer Support Troop Vietnam Nui Dat 1966-1972

Date: 9 - 13 September 2024. All members and partners are

welcome. Please join with your

brothers in arms and enjoy - meet

and greet, whale watching, formal

dinner, commemorative service,

plus much more in this weeklong adventure.

Location: Hervey Bay, QLD

Contact details

Name: Johnny Pole

Phone: 0409 324 626

0457 500 142

Email: vpole@bigpond.net.au

AIRBORNE PLATOON ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT REUNION

Date: 20-21 September 2024.

Many soldiers kept the airborne esprit de corps alive from early 1950 to mid 1974. The precursor of D Coy 6RAR Parachute Group & 3RAR Parachute Battalion. We intend to have an informal gathering on the 20th, followed by the reunion dinner on the 21st.

Location: Twin Towns Services Club, QLD

Contact details

Name: Robert Brandt

Phone: 0407 216 516

Email: brickrjc@outlook.com

RAAOC SVN

Date: 11 Oct 2024

Some fellow veterans and I are intending to arrange a reunion.

Please make contact if you would like to attend.

Location: Albury Wodonga

Contact details

Name: Rob Patterson

Phone: 0417 278 470

robpatterson60@yahoo.com.au

All Navy Reunion

Date: 18-20 October 2024.

Visit the website for all the details.

Location: Maroochydore, QLD

Contact details

Name: Bill Hayward

Phone: 0411 024 985

Website: [http://](http://www.allnavyreunion.com)

www.allnavyreunion.com

Headquarters 1st Australian Task Force and D&E Platoon

Date: 21-25 November 2024. \

A Commemorative Lunch will be held on the 23rd at the Training Depot, Torrens Parade Ground. The lunch will be preceded by a Dedication Service at the Pathway of Honour, (Adelaide War Memorial) where our own Memorial will be unveiled. After lunch, our Commemorative Service will be held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Torrens Parade Ground, Adelaide. Both the Dedication Service and the Commemorative Service will be open to the public.

Reunion details

Location: Adelaide, SA

Contact details

Name: John Verhelst

Phone: 0437 212 121

jeverhelst@gmail.com

www.hq1atf.org

See our ad on page 66

1st Armoured Regiment Association Reunion

Date: 21 - 24 November 2024.

Location: Adelaide, SA

All 1st Armoured Regiment veterans are invited to attend, and march with, the Regiment on the Cambrai Day Parade on Friday 22nd. Interested veterans and all former members of the Regiment, as well as other 'black hats', are very welcome to attend any of the reunion events and you do not need to be a member of the Association.

Contact details

Name: Russ James

Phone: 0419 331 401

secretary@paratus.org.au

www.paratus.org.au

LOOKING FOR

4721037 Gunner Steve Morier (Jock)

Jock and I did recruit training in Puckapunyal 1969, A Company 5 Platoon 3rd intake. Last had contact when he with 123 Training Battalion, 8 Med. Regiment, prior to going to Vietnam.

Name: John Perry

Phone: 477 866 7540

moc.liamg@4562.yemme

ABSN Derek Jefferson

Seeking to contact former shipmate who was at HMAS Coonawarra in 1976/. Derek was from Sydney.

Name: Phillip Smith

Phone: 0438 542 892

PhillipSmith2020@hotmail.com

2781660 Richard Douglas Lewis

First intake National Service 30 June 1965 19 Pl D Coy Puckapunyal.

Name: Glenn Daly

Phone: 0429 127 486

coledaly@bigpond.com



V111



THE EIGHT BATTALION ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT NSW BRANCH

2025 NATIONAL REUNION
26TH, 27TH, 28TH FEBRUARY 2025

BANKSTOWN SPORTS CLUB
8 Greenfield Parade, Bankstown NSW 2200

All official activities will be held within the Bankstown Sports Club premises.

Accommodation is available in the Mercure Hotel attached to the Sports Club

Please register your attendance with the NSW Branch President Mick Carter OAM on

0432 500 632 or cartercm@optusnet.com.au and an information pack will be sent to you

**FULL ITININARY AND DETAILS
ON PAGE 19 OF THIS ISSUE**

VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

FULL STATE AND SUB-BRANCH LISTING

NATIONAL HEAD OFFICE (VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE)

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

NEW SOUTH WALES**VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE**

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

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

CENTRAL COAST

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

CENTRAL WEST

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

CLARENCE VALLEY

PO Box 137
 Grafton 2460
 Ph: (02) 6649 4186
 President: Ron Shoebridge
 Secretary: Lorraine Burt OAM
newsouthwalespva@gmail.com
 Hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1700
 Mob 0419 201 788
helen_kop@bigpond.com

EUROBODALLA

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

GREAT LAKES

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

HASTINGS MANNING MACLEAY

PO Box 5330
 Port Macquarie 2444
 Office at Wauchope RSL Sub-Branch
 Office Ph: (02) 6581 5230
 Advocate only: (02) 6581 5509
Vets614@gmail.com
 President: Bill Wagner
 Secretary: Jill Opie
 Hours: 1000-1330 Tue, Wed, Fri.

ILLAWARRA

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

MUDGEE & DISTRICTS

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

NEWCASTLE & HUNTER

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

RIVERINA

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

SHOALHAVEN

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

SOUTH WEST SLOPES**VIETNAM VETERANS INC.**

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

TAYLORS ARM

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

WENTWORTH-COOMEALLA**Ramon Deed Veterans Retreat**

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

VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

FULL STATE AND SUB-BRANCH LISTING

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

Bega RSL SB

Ph: 6493 0449

Mob 0409 888 248

gandsberman@bigpond.com

VICTORIA**VVF Victorian Branch Inc**

ALL MAIL TO: P.O. Box 167

Newcomb Vic 3219

3 Hewat Drive

Highton Vic 3216

President: **John Arnold OAM**

johnarnold@iinet.net.au

Secretary: **Iris Cargill JP**

Mob 0488 053 973

ritscargill@yahoo.com

Mon - Wed 0900 -1400

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

0438 722 144

Grampians: Ron Jensen

0409 023 487

Respite Housing For Veterans in need

Bowder Veterans Housing

160 Coppards Rd Whittington 3219.

03 5248 0996

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

9 Burkitt Street, Page. 2614

Veterans Support Centre Belconnen

Ph: 02 6255 1599

office@vscact.org.au

www.vvfact.org.au

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

18 Leagues Club Drive

PO Box 2817

Nerang Business Centre

Nerang Qld 4211

Ph: 07 5578 2233

Fax: 07 5578 2822

State President: **Peter Handy JP**

Mob 0448 195 020

president@vvfqld.com

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

Mob 0408 276 044

treasurer@vvfqld.com

www.vvfqld.com

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

18 Leagues Club Drive

PO Box 368

Nerang Qld 4211

Ph: 07 5502 2836

admin@vietnamveterans.net.au

President: **Andy Bryson**

Mob 0424 476 027

Secretary/Treasurer: **Peter Cameron OAM**

Mob 0408 276 044

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

PO Box 280, Garbutt East

JC Butler Bldg

1 Charters Towers Rd

Townsville, 4814

Ph: 07 4772 4655

secretary@vsctsv.org.au

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

The Yerbury Centre

Unit 1, 31-39 Norfolk Rd

Marion SA 5043

Ph: 08 8296 2411

Mon – Thur 1000 – 1500hrs

vvfsa@tpg.com.au

http://vvfsa.org.au

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

M: 0412 458 054

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

Mobs 0448 994 561/0428 377 287

Ph: 08 8853 4379

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

30 Cornish Ave

Woodvale WA 6026

President: **Milton Kirk JP**

Ph 08 9409 6682

vvfawabbranch@gmail.com

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

Mr Dennis Hanmer OAM on 02 9682 1788

Currently in the ADF, Transitioning, a younger Veteran?

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

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

REUNION: 21-25 November 2024

HEADQUARTERS 1st AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE AND D&E Platoon

Discovery Hahndorf Resort, Hahndorf, SA.

Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war from 1965 – 1972 has had a lasting impact on all the servicemen and women who served. HQ1ATF and its sub-unit Defence and Employment (D&E) Platoon, the longest continually serving Infantry Platoon in South Vietnam, served from 1966 – 1972 and encountered much enemy action during those years.

Each two years HQ1ATF Association holds a reunion and 2024 will remember 53 years since we closed the gates of Nui Dat. This four day event is an important part of the Association's efforts in the healing process which is achieved through the continual networking of members and also importantly their partners and carers. With objectives to improve health and well-being and to reduce social isolation, the biennial reunion plays a significant role.

The Commemorative Lunch will be held on Saturday 23 November 2024 at the Training Depot, Torrens Parade Ground. **The lunch will be preceded by a Dedication Service at the Pathway of Honour, (Adelaide War Memorial) where our own Memorial will be unveiled. After the Commemorative lunch, our Commemorative service will be held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Torrens Parade Ground, Adelaide...**

Both the Dedication Service and the Commemorative service will be open to the public.

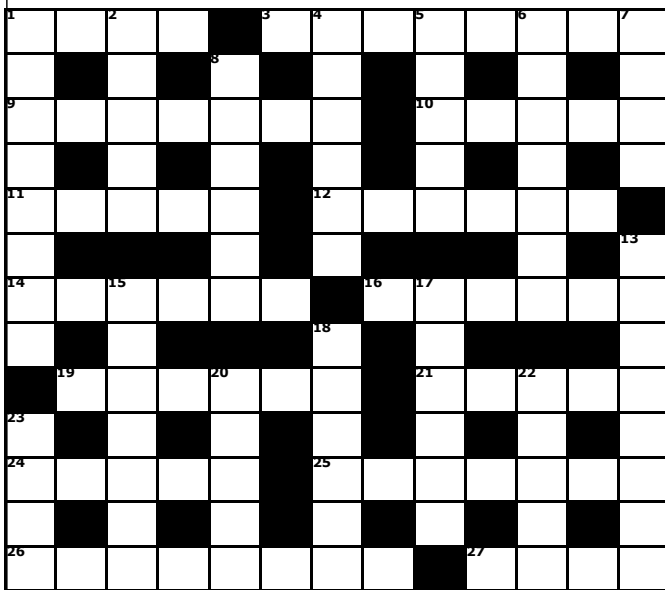
For details contact:

John Verhelst: 0437212121 or jeverhelst@gmail.com

www.hq1atf.org



CROSSWORD CORNER



ACROSS

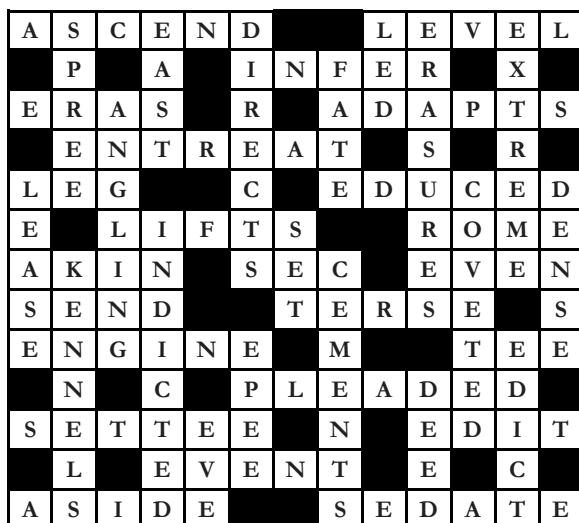
1. Boxing match
3. Window covers
9. Strew
10. Turn of phrase
11. Forward thrust
12. Confer holy orders
14. Hitting water sound
16. Bleach
19. Cleaning tool
21. Curtain, hang loose
24. Violinist, Rieu
25. take for granted
26. Field bundle
27. Seepage

DOWN

1. Groundless
2. Jamaican sprinter
4. Terror
5. Bronze position
6. Social climber
7. Japanese sport
8. Capital of Greece
13. Reflex action
15. Wash-house
17. Concealed
18. Capricorn or Cancer
20. Robbery
22. Sharp
23. Walkway

Solution next issue

MARCH 2024 SOLUTION



THE UNKNOWN COMIC

When it's sunny I think, "Beer garden."

When it rains I usually go to the pub for a while. When it's snowing I like to sit in front of the TV with a case of beer.

I'm starting to think I have a problem with the weather.

A wife got so mad at her husband she packed his bags and told him to get out. As he walked to the door she yelled, "I hope you die a long, slow, painful death."

He turned around and said, "So, you want me to stay?"

I went to Bunnings the other day to buy some hooks to hang some plants up. I looked around but could only see 2 in the antique gold I needed, so I approached a likely looking assistant who suggested that the bronze ones looked very similar, were cheaper, and there were dozens of them. I thought about it for a second then said, "You're not married are you?"

The Proper way to call someone a Bastard

A guy was getting ready to tee off on the first hole when a second golfer approached and asked if he could join him. The first agreed to the twosome. They were even after the first few holes. The second guy said, "We're about evenly matched, how about playing for five bucks a hole?"

The first guy begrudgingly agreed to the terms. The second guy won the remaining sixteen holes with ease. As they were walking off the eighteenth, the second guy was busy counting his \$80.00. He confessed that he was the pro at a neighboring course and liked to pick on suckers.

The first fellow then revealed that he was the Parish Priest. The pro was flustered and apologetic, offering to return the money. The Priest said, "You won fair and square and I was foolish to bet with you. You keep your winnings." The pro said, "Is there anything I can do to make it up to you?"

The Priest said, "Well, you could come to Mass on Sunday and make a donation. And, if you want to bring your Mother and Father along, I'll marry them."

The Dogs Of war

For centuries now, the battlefields they roam
 Fighting the enemy and never alone.
 They served their country in war and peace
 Through the valleys of death to say the least.

“Manic” was one of those dogs of war
 With his handler they would be battle raw.
 Day after day he showed his skills
 Trained by his handler through many drills.

After months of training his time had come
 Service to his country was there to be done.
 The journey to war commenced without delay
 Time for his training to be on display.

As a team together in war torn places
 They encountered danger on a continuous
 basis.

Operations in the desert under a scorching sun
 Or trekking in the mountains had to be done.

With trust and understanding on display
 Seeking out the enemy day after day.
 Op after op with courage abound
 Working with troops on the ground.

Weeks and months now in a war zone
 Manic and his handler were a long way from home.
 Operations continued and were never ending
 In the villages and towns always defending.

Battle weary and wounds abound
 Manic lay exhausted on the ground.
 Duty first he gets up again
 Ongoing patrols with more brave men.

The time had come for Manic’s handler to be home
 His tour complete but he is not alone.
 Manic is there by his side
 The team together for the final ride.

Enjoy your life you dog of war
 No more trauma from what you saw.
 At home with family and friends
 Their bond of friendship will never end.

Two brave heroes from a protracted war
 Thanks for your service from us all.

“A dog’s loyalty is never in question.”

Paul Hugo Zaat
8 RAR 69-70



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

Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.

1 JAN—31 DEC

Website: www.vvfagranville.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

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

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

SURNAME

FIRST NAME

SECOND NAME

--	--	--

OLD DETAILS [*PRINT CLEARLY*]

OLD ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

NEW DETAILS [*PRINT CLEARLY*]

NEW ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

EMAIL ADDRESS [*PRINT CLEARLY*]

--

YOUR SIGNATURE

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

Complete all sections and post to:

The Secretary
VVPAA NSW
PO Box 170
Granville
NSW 2142

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

VETERANS MORTALITY REPORT

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

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

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

Please print clearly

VETERANS DETAILS

SURNAME

FIRST NAME

SERVICE NUMBER

--	--	--

SVN UNIT/S

TOUR DATES

--	--

CAUSE OF DEATH (If known)

--

SR Service Related

UNK Unknown

S Suicide

O Other)

DATE OF DEATH (If known)

LOCATION AT TIME OF DEATH

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

YOUR NAME

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

SIGNATURE

--	--	--

RETURN FORM TO: The Welfare Officer

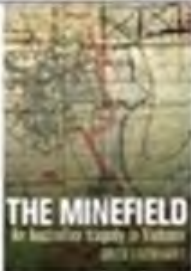
VVPPAA NSW Branch
PO Box 170
Granville NSW 2142

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

MERCHANDISE LIST

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	PRICE\$		ITEM	DESCRIPTION	PRICE\$
1101	NSW PLAQUE	50.00		1403	LAPEL PIN ARMY	8.00
1103	NSW BADGE	10.00		1405	LAPEL PIN RAAF	8.00
1105	NSW STICKER	6.00		1406	LAPEL PIN CROSS	8.00
1106	NSW PEN	7.00		1500	STICKER TWIN SET REG	7.00
1107	RED PEN VVFA	8.00		1501	STICKER REGULAR	7.00
1108	NSW STUBBY HOLDER	8.00		1502	STICKER NASHO	7.00
1109	STUBBY HOLDER TRICOLOR	10.00		1503	STICKER DAMN PROUD	5.00
1111	VVFA GREEN CAP	22.00		1504	STICKER LOVE or LEAVE	5.00
1112	VVFA BLUE CAP	22.00		1505	STICKER PROUDLY	5.00
1113	VVFA WHITE CAP	22.00		1506	STICKER SUPPORT	7.00
1114	VVFA BLACK CAP	22.00		1507	STICKER TWIN SET NASHO	7.00
1116	PLATE SURROUND SML	12.50		1508	STICKER SUPPORT NAVY	7.00
1120	RED Mr GADGET	8.00		1509	STICKER NAVY VETERAN	7.00
1121	RED NOTEBOOK/PEN	8.00		1510	STICKER SUPPORT ARMY	7.00
1122	RED COOLER TOTE	14.00		1511	STICKER ARMY VETERAN	7.00
1125	KEYRING NAVY	8.00		1512	STICKER SUPPORT RAAF	7.00
1126	KEYRING ARMY	8.00		1513	STICKER RAAF VETERAN	7.00
1127	KEYRING RAR	10.00		1514	STICKER AFGHAN VETERAN	5.00
1128	KEYRING AIRFORCE	8.00		1515	STICKER IRAQ VETERAN	5.00
1129	KEYRING VVFA	9.00		1516	STICKER SOMALIA VETERAN	5.00
1130	LANYARD	10.00		1517	STICKER TIMOR VETERAN	5.00
1201	THE MINEFIELD BOOK	45.00		1518	STICKER SUPPORT/THANK	5.00
1308,9,12	ALL BUCKLES as shown	35.00		BOOKS	ON SALE ON LINE & AT THE	OFFICE
1401	LAPEL PIN RAN	5.00		3440	HOW TO RESEARCH AND HONOUR RETURNED	39.00
1402	LAPEL PIN ENSIGN	5.00		3442	THE THIRD CHOPSTICK	35.00

MERCHANDISE IMAGES

 1101	 1103	 1105	 1106	 1107	 1201		
 1108	 1109						
 1111	 1112	 1113	 1114		 1116		
 1120	 1121	 1122	 1125	 1126	 1127	 1128	
 1129	 1130	 1308	 1309		 1312		
 1401	 1402	 1403	 1405	 1406	 1411	 3440	 3442
 1500	 1501	 1507	 1502		 1503		
 1504	 1505	 1506	 1508		 1509		
 1510	 1511	 1512	 1513				
 1515	 1516	 1517	 1518				

**BUY AS A SET
THE RED TREBLE!**

FOR A SHORT TIME ONLY



1120



1121



1122

\$25.00

MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

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

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



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

JUST CALL 1800 011 046

If overseas call +61 8 8241 4546

Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service

FORMERLY KNOWN AS



**Call
24/7**

A service founded by Vietnam veterans

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

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

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

THAT IS A RATE OF 490 VETERANS PER YEAR

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

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



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

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

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

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

**SHOW THEM YOU
CARE. SHOW THEM
VETERANS MATTER**

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

Please consider leaving a bequest in your will

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

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

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

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

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

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

Operation Life



Register Now!!

CALL **1800 011 046**



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

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

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

FORMERLY

Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service





Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
R63043	AMW	P	RUHL	RAN HELICOPTER FLT VN	25/2/24	21/9/48
R57385	AS	R	FILMER	HMAS VENDETTA/PERTH	12/23	29/4/39
R104017	AS	WL	SMITH	HMAS TORRENS	27/1/24	23/4/52
R53545	AS	G	NORLEY	HMAS MELBOURNE (3)	1/11/23	8/7/40
1202692	CPL	PC	SCHULTE	AATTV	10/5/24	1/12/50
29066	CAPT	KH	JACKSON	VISIT/1 ARU		
	AKA		CAMERON	JACKSON	18/12/23	23/1/37
2789462	PTE	BT	BETTS	86 TRANS PLT RAASC	18/2/24	3/2/47
214006	PTE	GP	JENEY	21 SUPP PLT RAASC	3/4/24	1/7/37
214483	SGT	DM	DRAY	DET 176 AIR DISP COY	14/5/24	28/7/43
3411914	PTE	PC	JAMES	2AOD	7/4/24	7/2/49
1410990	LCPL	RR	TILBURY	2COD	3/4/24	17/10/47
53942	LT	AV	LAMOTTE	2COD	24/3/24	21/10/31
217057	CPL	TA	DAWSON	2COD/2AOD/35WTS	17/2/24	23/11/46
242839	WO2	CFP	CONNOR	1ATFHQ LAD	1/12/23	26/1/39
5715087	SPR	TL	GILCHRIST	32 SMALL SHIPS (2)	3/4/24	13/10/45
2796495	SIG	PS	DASS	104 SIG SQD	16/1/24	9/8/50
2795993	SIG	DA	HARRIS	104 SIG SQD	15/3/24	27/4/50
214471	CPL	AG	LIMN	17 CONST SQD/2COD	29/1/24	24/11/40
5713635	GNR	RK	EGGLESTON	1 FD REGT	16/2/24	28/3/45
216550	GNR	DJ	GILMER	4 FD REGT	10/4/24	30/8/46



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
54327	SGT	CD	STIDWORTHY	1 RAR/ DET 5 ASCO	29/4/24	5/12/38
2785370	PTE	JH	SCHUBERT	1 RAR	19/10/23	8/3/45
213548	LCPL	TWJ	LUPTON	1 RAR	10/2/23	28/3/43
2785617	PTE	FWL	SKINNER	2 RAR	28/5/24	30/6/46
2217256	CAPT	TDA	O'BRIEN	2B NSWCMF DET 5RAR	1/4/24	27/1/37
3794120	PTE	TP	MARTIN	6 RAR	2/7/23	3/1/48
2785478	PTE	RWA	MYERS	7 RAR	5/5/24	18/4/46
3795694	PTE	GR	MONK	1ARU/5RAR/8RAR	21/3/24	17/4/48
2789199	CPL	GL	COUSINS	9 RAR	18/3/24	14/4/47
A223175	LAC	WAD	TROW	BS UBON	8/4/24	28/8/37
A222927	LAC	JM	DOWNES	BS FLT UBON	26/4/24	5/3/34
A220831	SGT	JE	CHALKER	BS FLIGHT	28/12/23	28/6/39
A224215	LAC	SJ	SOUNNESS	HQAFV RAAF/ 1 OPSU	24/10/23	16/10/49
A44207	CPL	GA	GLASSON	No.9 SQD	30/7/23	22/7/46



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
VOLUNTEER/FRIEND/SPONSOR OF VVFA						
61057		JR	BROWN		8/4/24	NA
2782829		BS	WANE		18/3/24	NA
2791085		WC	GRANT	5 RAR	15/5/24	NA
2267007		GH	FISHER		17/1/24	NA

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

PLEASE NOTE

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

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

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

MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICES

CARNEEDS Pty Ltd

152 Parramatta Rd

STANMORE

Prptr: Robert Stenta

Ph: 9519 1441

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On mechanical repairs

& competitive prices on tyres and batteries.

To all Vietnam Veterans

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NEW CARS

carhelper.com.au

New car buyer's advocate

Buy a discounted new car over the phone and have it home-delivered

No salesmen, just independent advice from a Wheels magazine car reviewer

Contact James Whitbourn
Motoring journalist & new car buyer's advocate
james@carhelper.com.au
0403 892 897

Service cost of \$165 reduced to \$110 for members

MOTOR CYCLE ACCESSORIES

Motor Cycle Accessories

Supermarket

Head Office.

321 Parramatta Rd

Auburn NSW

(02) 9648 1400

www.mcas.com.au

CITY: 9261 5182.

LIVERPOOL: 9601 8276.

CARINGBAH 9574 5100

PENRITH 4737 6100

10% Discount except

helmets and tyres

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Ads placed in this section are free

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For advice

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SOLAR POWER

INVERTERS

GENERATORS

Motor Cycle battery specialists

Russell is offering 15% discount to VVF Members on Batteries . 5% on Solar products,

Inverters & Chargers 10%

3/3 Sovereign Pl

South Windsor

Ph: (02) 4577 7761

Fax: (02) 4577 7768

Ashfield Battery Centre
110 FREDERICK STREET

ASHFIELD, NSW, 2131

02 9798-6166

GEORGE KAWAUCHI (owner)

We sell:

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OPEN SAT FROM: 9.30am- 3.30pm

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Wreck-A-Mended

Smash Repairs

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Ingleburn NSW

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Waratah Floor Coverings

473 Burwood Rd

BELMORE

Ph: (02) 9759 6511

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Motor Inn Ltd

Ph: 1800 023 966

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