



# THE VIETNAM VETERANS' NEWSLETTER

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

DECEMBER 2024

## Merry Christmas

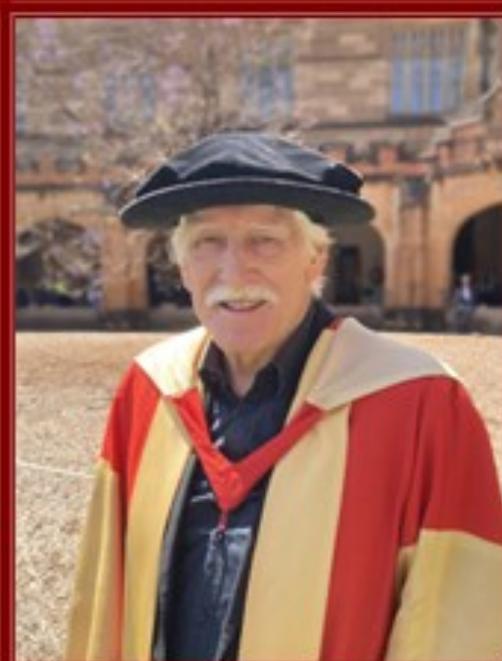


### Our Wish List to Santa

Help reduce Defence and Veteran suicide by:

- Seeing that the Government and DVA actually implement the excellent recommendations of the Suicide Royal Commission (not confident without your help).
- Seeing that DVA reduces the mountainous backlog of Veterans disability claims and stopping DVA denying the backlog exists.

WHO IS THIS DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC, DRESSED IN COLOURFUL ROBES?



AND WHY SHOULD VIETNAM VETERANS BE GRATEFUL TO HIM?

SEE INSIDE.

INSIDE

THIS ISSUE

- ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VETERANS SUICIDE FINAL REPORT
- THOSE CLAIMS BACKLOG FIGURES QUESTIONED EDITORIAL
- VETERANS STORIES AND MORE

Next issue  
April 2025

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## **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**



**NOW, LET'S SEND THAT STORY OFF TO THE EDITOR!**

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

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

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

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

Keep those stories coming..



**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**

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**MEMBERSHIP**

**Belonging  
Advocacy  
Success**

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

**M**embership 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 Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, Final Report. Some findings.**

The Department of Veterans Affairs attracted strong criticism from the Royal Commission. For instance, despite the government's promise that claims submitted under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act would be processed within ninety days, the Royal Commission reported that DVA's current performance target was to achieve that timeframe for just 50 per cent of claims. An admission of failure.

The Royal Commission reports on the poor handling of veterans' claims, with submissions to it describing the department's claims system as "impossible to navigate" and "overwhelming." The Royal Commission pointed out that veterans making claims often relied on support from volunteers such as ourselves but, as we have warned, that is an unsustainable situation given the ageing of that workforce. And not only is the claims assistance workforce of volunteers aging but we and others have been fighting a constant battle for financial help to do such a necessary task. The Royal Commission noted that annual grant funding to support ESO claims assistance and welfare work of just \$4.7 million was provided last financial year compared to \$4 million a decade ago. The government wants more from us with less and less financial assistance.

The Royal Commission identified a serious anomaly in DVA's care system. With no right to choose their own rehabilitation provider and less flexibility in paying for home assistance, DVA clients were worse off than clients of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. One example from our own experience is a severely disabled Vietnam veteran could get a visiting helper only three days a week through DVA whereas NDIS has sent the needed help every day. Surely veterans' care should lead the way.

And here's the knockout Royal Commission finding. "Based on the evidence we have heard throughout the Royal Commission, we do not believe that the DVA in its current form can deliver optimum wellbeing support to the veteran community and address the risks of suicide and suicidality. The scale of this task should not be underestimated. It cannot be delivered within DVA's existing resources, nor within its current skillset." It's a finding that validates much of our complaints against DVA over the years. The Royal Commission called for the creation of a new executive agency focused on veterans' wellbeing to ensure veterans received the help they needed when they needed it: "It should have distinctive branding from DVA and represent a fresh start to rebuilding trust with the veteran community."

We say 'hear, hear' to that.

*(The writer of this article relied on his own research and on an article by Mark Baker, publisher of Inside Story, a former Defence Correspondent and Asia Editor of the Age who reported extensively on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.)*

***See our National Presidents Report beginning on page 11....***



# NEWS HEADLINES

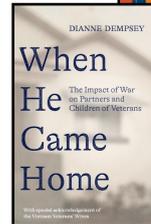
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*Being presented with the rarely awarded Doctor  
of Science at Sydney University*

*Brian O'Toole DSc MPH*



Brian O'Toole receiving his degree from the Senate Deputy President  
Thursday October 10, 2024

The University of Sydney has awarded a higher doctorate degree, a Doctor of Science (DSc), for a body of work in a thesis entitled “Studies in the Wake of Trauma” that included 40 papers published 1985-2022 in the field of psychological trauma. The bulk of these came from studies of the Vietnam veterans and their families.

On being advised of the award, Brian said, ‘I was humbly astonished at the kind words of the reviewers, and the praise for the body of work’.

Brian’s forty years of work has paved the way for the increasing recognition of the harm done to Vietnam veterans and their families by the trauma of war.

Read on.

*Brian wrote to us recently to alert the Vietnam veteran community of his most recent high honour, and we publish his letter below, along with an article, about Brian, we published in our July 18 edition., including a letter from then National president of the VVFA, Jim Wain OAM.*

---

Dear Bill & Graham,

Normally, I shrink from self-promotion, prefer to be the harmony singer rather than the lead, and generally abhor triumphalism and boasting. However, I am breaking this habit to crow.

The University of Sydney has notified me that I am to be awarded a higher doctorate degree, a Doctor of Science (DSc), for a body of work in a thesis entitled “Studies in the Wake of Trauma” that included 40 papers published 1985-2022 in the field of psychological trauma. The bulk of these came from my studies of the Vietnam veterans and their families.

I had expected a letter from the administration to begin with “...We regret to advise you that...” but instead it began with “Congratulations!” I was humbly astonished at the kind words of the reviewers, and the praise for the body of work.

So, in October I will get to prance about in a coloured academic gown and a silly mortar board and have the degree conferred in the Great Hall. I hope the organist plays Bach.

Alright, I’ll stop crowing now, and get back to my cave; Gollum will be wondering where I am.

Best wishes,

Brian O’Toole.

*Republished from our July 2018 Newsletter:*

## “They would have been like that anyway”

(The scientist who put that slur to bed  
once and for all)

October 1981 an enquiry into the Agent Orange issue was begun by the Senate Standing Committee on Science and the Environment.

Evidence was given at one of its hearings by Dr Sol Rose.

Dr Sol Rose had been, until late 1981, Director of DVA Medical Services in Victoria responsible for the training and oversight of medical officers who dealt with compensation applications by veterans claiming their disabilities and illnesses were war-

caused.

This was, in part, the evidence Dr Rose gave:

“I do not think that the nature of the war in Vietnam is any different is significant, because the service was not a long one in comparison to World War II; they were not debilitated anywhere near to the same as were the ...people coming back from long service in the tropics, particularly those from the New Guinea campaigns which were long and

*(Continued on page 8)*

arduous.”

Dr Rose’s evidence showed an alarming lack of understanding of the stresses of guerrilla and mine warfare. Indeed, evidence given by Brigadier Rogers, Director of Army Medical Services, who had served in Vietnam, differed markedly. He said:

“I did a little calculation once of the amount of stress put on a Vietnam soldier in comparison to the World War II soldier. The infantry soldiers – the combat soldiers – faced many times more stress.”

Vietnam veterans were not interested in an argument about whose war was the most debilitating, but they were interested in Dr Rose’s misconception of the Vietnam War.

Dr Rose, as we have said, was responsible for the training and oversight of DVA’s Victorian medical officers. Had his misconception corrupted the Victorian medical officers’ understanding of the Vietnam war? Would this influence the way they viewed Vietnam veterans’ compensation claims? Was it confined to the Victorian DVA or was it a misunderstanding rife Australia wide?

Did this explain, the veterans wondered, the oft expressed view inside DVA and Defence that those Vietnam veterans claiming compensation would probably be suffering psychological illness, alcohol abuse etc whether they had gone to war or not?

And whilst the Vietnam veteran community knew from their own experience that veterans’ psychiatric problems and, for that matter, the psychiatric problems of their families, were related to the veterans’ war trauma, scientific proof was necessary to move bureaucratic stubborn prejudice.

Enter Dr Brian O’Toole.

Previously, Dr O’Toole was the Clinical Senior Lecturer in Psychiatric Epidemiology and the Director, Vietnam Veterans Family Health Study at

the University of Sydney Brain & Mind Centre.

Dr O’Toole’s interest in the psychological consequences of fighting the Vietnam war began in the early 1980s.



Dr Brian O’Toole  
BSc PhD MPH

Until recently Director, Vietnam Veterans Family Health Study  
Psychiatry, Sydney Medical School  
Brain & Mind Research Institute

Back then, he too was aware that it was not unusual for Vietnam veterans suffering psychiatric problems to be dismissed by the remark, ‘they would have been like that anyway’. He was aware that some elements of DVA and Defence were included amongst those harbouring this reservation.

Brian O’Toole set out to scientifically test whether or not ‘they would have been like that anyway’.

In the process, he engineered studies to be published in international refereed scientific journals of the highest standard, thus ensuring them against government and bureaucratic dismissal and cover-up.

These studies included:

The first such study of ANY returned Australian servicemen ever conducted, with initial results published in the prestigious International Journal of Epidemiology - they published three papers in a set which indicated the international importance of the work.

Studies showing that the myth that "they would have been like that anyway" was completely false; it was combat stress and war service that is the culprit;

Studies showing the relationship between veteran combat, PTSD, depression etc., on the mental health of veterans' wives

Studies showing the relationship between war service, combat and PTSD on the physical as well as mental health of the veterans, with publication in the American Journal of Epidemiology;

Studies showing the effects of PTSD in particular on suicidality (thinking about, planning and attempting suicide) - not only in veterans but also in wives;

The first study of the sons and daughters of veterans ever done in Australia, and unique in the world, with early results accepted for publication, in the International Journal of Epidemiol.

A study showing that it is war service and combat that are implicated in veterans' failure to quit smoking, rather than PTSD or any mental illness - i.e., it's the traumatic stress itself rather than the post-stress disorder that is the culprit. This paper was in the prestigious journal Nicotine & Tobacco Research.

A study showing that PTSD in a veteran increases the risk of PTSD in his sons and daughters - i.e., intergenerational transmission of PTSD. The future work that is planned attempts to throw light on the mechanism of this transmission. With this evidence it is hoped that the government is stirred to provide better care for veterans' families particularly after combat experience and PTSD are involved.

- Studies which assisted the VVFA case in getting 'malevolent environment' included as a cause for PTSD rather than there having to be a traumatic 'event'. Wondering around minefields can be mighty stressful even if one doesn't blow up this time. This could be of benefit to some Vietnam veterans previously unsuccessful in having their PTSD accepted as war caused and will certainly be of substantial benefit to veterans of more recent and future wars.

- Most recently, studies confirming the prior paper on intergen transmission but also showing that a positive emotional climate while growing up acts to counter this further confirming the need to help veterans with PTSD while their families are growing up.

- And, contrary to some sceptics view that diggers "put it on" when applying for DVA benefits, reports of combat exposure can be very stable.

Dr Brian O'Toole's results from his studies have been vital in Vietnam veterans' ongoing struggle to have the traumatic effects of fighting the war officially acknowledged.

Special mention should be made of Dr O'Toole's work on veterans' families.

Since the early 80's it has been apparent that Vietnam veterans returning damaged by their war experience have caused family dysfunction leading to damage to the mental health of their spouses and children. There was reluctance by authorities to take substantial responsibility for these second wave casualties of war. Dr O'Toole's publications, especially his studies on 'suicidality' and the effects on the sons and daughters, have provided powerful evidence of this second wave effect, evidence which has contributed to the government acknowledging the issue and beginning to address it.

One of the most respected experts in the field, Professor AC 'Sandy' McFarlane AO, Director, Centre for Traumatic Stress Studies, Adelaide University, has this to say:

*(Continued on page 10)*

'I would like to highlight that the efforts and contribution that Dr O'Toole has made in the course of his career have been of substantial value to the Australian veterans' community and also to the broader scientific literature about the long-term costs and consequences of combat exposure in military service. He has shown an unusual dedication to following up a longitudinal cohort established in the 1990's.'

Valuable service to Vietnam veterans indeed.

In recognition of Dr O'Toole's contribution, he has been invited to become an Honorary Life Member of our Federation. ■

*(We wrote)*

Dr Brian O'Toole

Dear Brian,

At the National Executive meeting of the Vietnam Veteran's Federation of Australia Inc. in March 2018, it was unanimously agreed that you be made an Honorary Life Member of the Federation.

The Federation acknowledges and applauds the many years of research and personal contribution that you have dedicated to veterans and their families. Your research has not only added to the knowledge we have about the institution of the military, and its impact on its members, but has also given us the 'ammunition', and the confidence, to try to focus the attention of both the government, and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Where we have failed to get the outcomes we hoped for, it has never been for the lack of the scientific integrity of your research. We veterans are indebted to you..

...

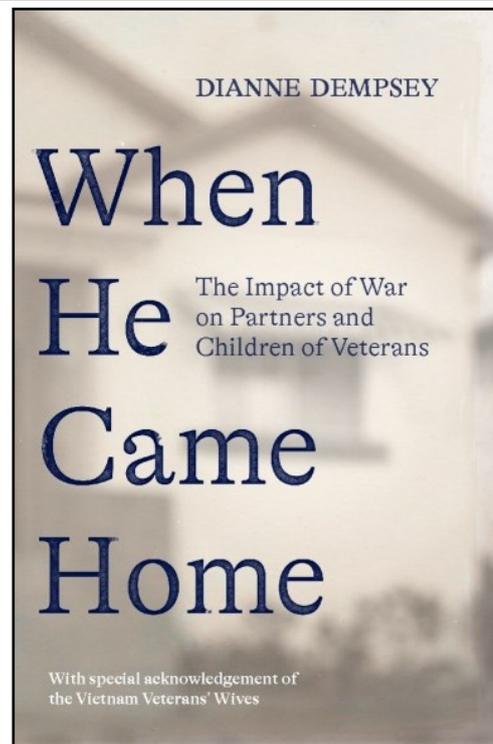
I add my personal gratitude for the support that you have given to veterans, and on behalf of all our members, I wish you well in your continuing interests.

Yours sincerely

MAJ James Wain OAM (Rtd)

## How did our families cope when we came home?

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



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## NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

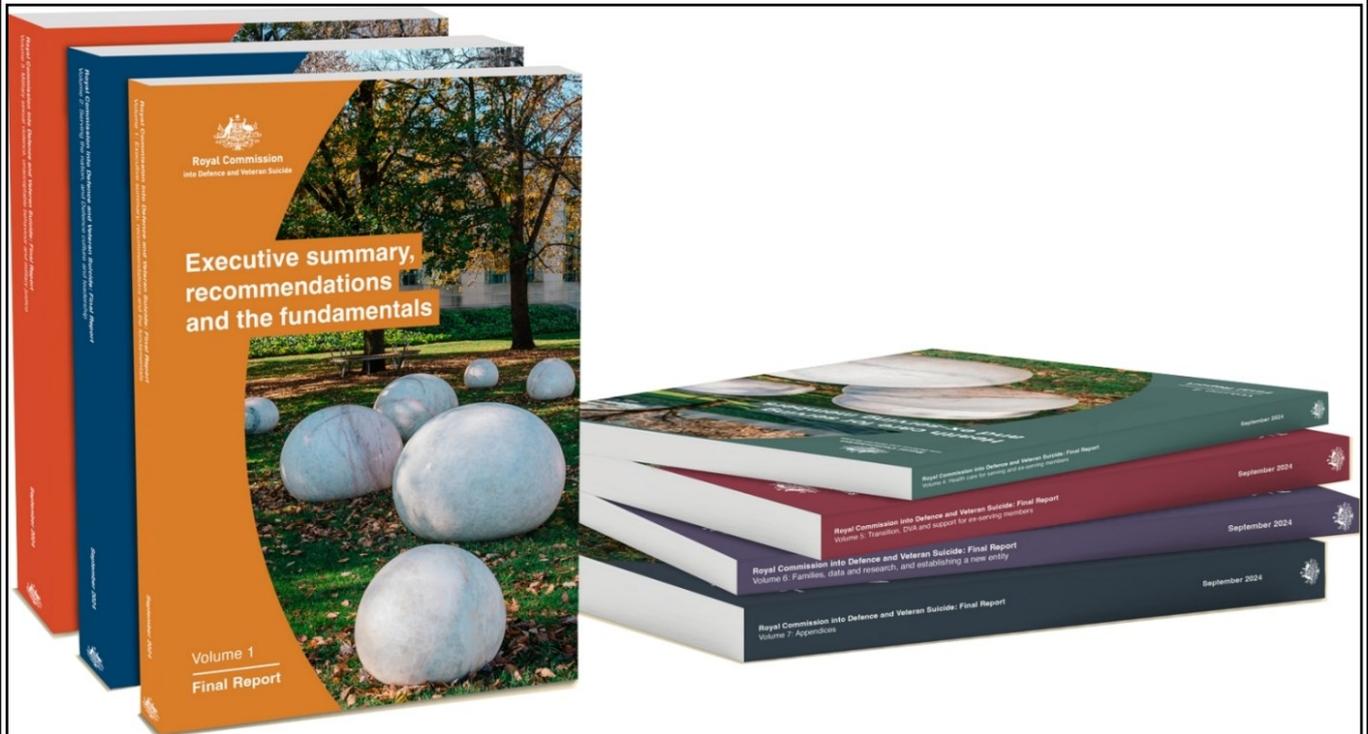
# BRIEF OVERVIEW - ROYAL COMMISSION INTO DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE – FINAL REPORT

As you would all be aware by now the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran suicide has been completed and its Final Report was tabled by the Australian Government in Parliament on 9 September 2024. Hard copies of the final report are available on Website: <https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>

The Royal Commission was formally established on 8 July 2021 and was conducted by three Commissioners, Mr Nick Kaldas APM – Chair, The Hon James Douglas KC and Dr Peggy Brown AO - both Commissioners, to look into suicides and suicidality of those former and serving ADF members, the systemic, structural and other cultural issues within the ADF which may or has likely contributed to the suicides or contemplated suicides that have occurred since about 2001, and to recommend the appropriate actions to be undertaken and implemented by Government, Defence and DVA to prevent the risk of further suicides, suicidality of our former and serving ADF members.

The Royal Commission undertook numerous public hearings, here's a brief summary:

- Held 12 public hearing, at least one hearing in each of the eight capital cities, and in the garrison towns of Wagga Wagga and Townsville – totalling more than 100 days
- Received oral evidence from more than 340 witnesses, including the most senior leaders of the ADF and Ministers for Defence and Veterans Affairs and more than 60 lived experience witnesses.
- Held 897 private sessions, sitting one-on-one with people with lived experience of suicide, suicidality or military service, and hearing their personal stories, experiences and perspectives.
- Received 5,865 submissions from serving and ex-serving ADF members, and their families, carers and advocates as well as organizations and institutions.
- Read and analysed documents received in response to more than 2,000 compulsory notices to give or produce.
- Held numerous roundtables and workshops with subject matter experts, senior ADF leaders and representatives from Defence and DVA.
- Undertook research and data analysis including internal qualitative research, quantitative research in partnership with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
- Commissioned nine external research projects from academics, universities and specialist research organisations, including a review of the most current academic literature on the risk factors, trends and evidence-based prevention strategies relevant to suicides and suicidality among serving and ex-serving ADF members.
- Conducted 26 visits to military bases across Australia and heard from current serving personnel about the challenges and opportunities of life in the ADF.



- Travelled to the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand and heard from approximately 300 key informants as part of a cross-jurisdictional comparison of how our Five Eyes partners are responding to the issues of suicide and suicidality in their own military communities.
- Released their interim report, and lived experience publication titled 'Shining a Light: Stories of Trauma & Tragedy, Hope and Healing'

The Final Report contains 3,000 pages and divided into seven (7) separate Volumes under relevant 'headings', that covers evidence, commentary and findings across the seven volumes, and provide further insights on all aspects of their inquiries, the information gleaned, how they arrived at their final recommendations and the reasons for these recommendations. And the expected outcome if and when these recommendations are implemented would address all the issues for which the Commission was established.

**Volume 1:** Executive Summary, recommendations and the fundamentals.

**Volume 2:** Serving the nation, and Defence Culture and Leadership.

**Volume 3:** Military sexual violence, unacceptable behaviour and military justice.

**Volume 4:** Health care for serving and ex-serving members.

**Volume 5:** Transition, DVA and support for ex-serving members.

**Volume 6:** Families, data and research, and establishing a new entity.

**Volume 7:** Appendices

I believe that the Royal Commission's Final Report has addressed nearly all the concerns that have been raised by former and serving ADF members, and some of their family members, and also other ex-services and Veterans organisations, over many years concerning Veterans Suicide, their welfare and wellbeing and other related issues of their military service that had culminated in the need for a Royal Commission. The Commission's recommendations appear to be well considered

*(Continued on page 13)*

and appropriate to allow changes to be implemented that would rid the ADF of the past toxic cultural, structural and systemic environment that had led, in most people's views, to the unacceptable rate of deaths by suicide of ADF Veterans.

For those who may not wish, or have the time to read all seven volumes, I would strongly recommend that you at least read the **Executive Summary (Volume 1)** which explains how the Royal Commission was conducted from its beginning to its finality, their methodology, the relevant information that had been gathered through their personal face to face inquiries, workshops and other methods and sources (research). The seven volume Final Report contains 122 recommendations to drive improved health and wellbeing outcomes for serving and ex-serving ADF members.

Many would appreciate and acknowledge that suicides/attempted suicides/self-harm has, and continues to occur in all societies throughout the world and also involves those who served or are serving in the military. The reasons for the taking of their own lives is not always clear, but could be related to family, social, environmental or military service-related issues. Unfortunately death by suicide would be difficult or near impossible to prevent in most societies despite measures that may have been put in place in the way of mental health assistance and to educate the general public on this subject, and reiterating the ongoing traumatic effect this 'action' would have on the families and friends left behind. In Australia we are fortunate to have a health system that allows us to seek help for mental health and other illnesses.

The Government has now been given the Final Report on Veterans Suicide in the ADF by the Royal Commission that encompasses 122 recommendations to implement appropriate and relevant changes within the ADF that would not only help to prevent the risk of further suicides and suicidality of former and serving members but would improve their welfare and wellbeing that would also reduce the risk. Whilst we are aware that the Government has implemented some of the recommendations already from the Interim Report, hopefully the Government/Defence/

DVA will continue to implement the other recommendations expediently. Once all the recommendations have been implemented there will no doubt be other issues brought up that have been overlooked and need to be raised and addressed.

Only time will tell how successful the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations will be in preventing further suicides and enhancing the welfare and wellbeing of our former and serving ADF members well into the future. With these changes we must remember there is still a need to continue to administer discipline within the military which the current and future ADF members will need to understand.

William (Bill) Roberts OAM JP  
National President – VVFA Inc



Commissioner Nick Kaldas

## ....AND, FOR OUR WIVES.....

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide presented its Final Report on 9 September.

The Final Report emphasises that families have a crucial role in the wellbeing and recovery of veterans and, while identifying some support available to them, found that families needs are often overlooked. So much so, the Royal Commission found, that families feel unsupported and struggle to navigate the complex systems in place to assist veterans.

We could not agree more. The esteemed veteran's wife Dr Gail MacDonell (PhD) has been pointing out for years that keeping a veteran healthy requires the support of a healthy family. But traumatized veterans can threaten the health of the families, so the families may need as much help as the veterans.

And families are indeed in need of help. Studies by luminary Dr Brian O'Toole, for instance, have found high rates of psychological distress including thoughts of suicide amongst the spouses and children of Vietnam veterans.

In our view, such families should be seen as much casualties of the war as the veterans with commensurate entitlements.

And it is not only those veterans with war trauma who need help and the support of their families. Some ADF serving members are harmed by their service, harm made worse by unsatisfactory arrangement for transitioning back into civilian life.

The unsatisfactory support for families affects veterans immensely. Many Vietnam veterans are now watching the declining physical and mental health of their partners knowing it is their war trauma that is partly to blame and feeling guilty that their wives are not getting the same support as they enjoy. Often financially stretched because of the veteran's disability, the spouse cannot afford private health cover thus having to do battle with the public health and hospital system. Sadly, the veteran realises that the family would be better off if he were dead because only then will his spouse receive his standard of health and hospital care including the Gold Card.

This situation is distressing to the veteran who may feel guilty at being alive.

It is, as the Royal Commission identified, a wholly unsatisfactory situation. We would add 'tragic'.

The Royal Commission recommended:

Enhancing support services for families, including counselling and mental health support.

Including families in the care plans and treatment processes of veterans to ensure a holistic approach to recovery.

Providing education and training for families to better understand and support their loved ones dealing with mental health issues.

We agree and would add urgently granting a Gold Card to the spouses of TPI and equivalent veterans. This one quick act would make a world of difference.

*Editorial comment.*

## NATIONAL PRESIDENT WRITES TO PROFESSOR JENNY FIRMAN AM

Professor Jenny Firman AM  
Chief Health Officer  
Department of Veterans Affairs

Dear Professor,

One of our members has written to us about his bad experiences coming off a long period of taking antidepressants.

He researched the issue and reports as follows:

'Dr Ben Weinstein, Psychiatry professor @ Baylor College said 'The controversy within the global medical community of the long term effects of over used and over prescribed antidepressants means it is essential to take these long term effects more seriously.'

'I will list some of the information I have gleaned:

- 2022 University of Bristol-- double the risk of heart disease.
- A study published in the Journal of clinical psychiatry 'at risk of developing type two diabetes'.
- Journal of clinical sleep medicine vol 17 issue 3 2021 , Medication induced central Sleep Apnoea.
- Yashoda hospital , higher doses of Fluoxetine can cause inflammation, cartilage reduction and bone erosion.
- Research Gate , inhibits bone healing , increased bone fragility. [ inhibits secretion of growth hormone]
- National academy of science USA, Blockage of 5HT<sub>2C</sub> serotonin receptors by fluoxetine.
- selective depletion of gut microbiota , lactobacilli and bifidobacterium. These are the mood enhancing bacterium. [ is this why meds become ineffective over time? self defeating]
- GERD and heartburn
- cognitive decline.'

We noted the Guardian article:

[https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/jul/31/australian-doctor-mark-horowitz-who-almost-died-writes-landmark-guidance-on-how-to-safely-stop-using-antidepressants?CMP=share\\_btn\\_url](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/jul/31/australian-doctor-mark-horowitz-who-almost-died-writes-landmark-guidance-on-how-to-safely-stop-using-antidepressants?CMP=share_btn_url)

It seems that coming off long term use of anti-depressants may require greater care than is presently prescribed.

Would you be kind enough to give us advice on the issue that we can publish in the December edition of our magazine, which closes in the first week of November for articles.

Kind Regards,  
Bill Roberts OAM  
National President  
Vietnam Veterans Federation

## PROFESSOR JENNY FIRMAN AM RESPONDS

**Professor Jenny Firman AM**  
**Chief Health Officer**  
 Department of Veterans' Affairs  
 tel 02 6289 6399 ext 616399  
 Jenny.Firman@dva.gov.au  
 www.dva.gov.au\_



**Dear Mr Roberts OAM JP,**

### **Stopping antidepressants- what should you know?**

The Australian institute of Health and Welfare reports that 45.6 million mental health medications were prescribed in Australia in 2022-2023. It is estimated that 1 in 7 Australians take antidepressants.

Depression is a chronic often lifelong illness with acute episodes that can be successfully treated. Treatment for depression may include antidepressant medication. How antidepressants work is not completely understood, but it can take several weeks for symptoms to improve after starting an antidepressant. It is important to give them time to take effect.

Over half of those who newly start antidepressants will have side effects and these commonly include insomnia, increased anxiety, nausea and/or diarrhoea. These will usually resolve after a few weeks of taking the drug. Other side effects such as sexual dysfunction may not resolve. Some reports suggest that taking antidepressants increases your risk of heart disease. This is not clear and may be related to the effects of depression e.g. excess weight, smoking and lack of physical activity, rather than the antidepressant. It is always important to weigh up the risks of not treating the depression against the potential side effects of treatment.

If your doctor has decided that it is time for the antidepressants to be stopped (either because you cannot tolerate the side effects or because you have recovered) or if you just do not want to take them anymore it is very important that you do not abruptly stop them. A sudden withdrawal can result in an *antidepressant discontinuation syndrome*. You are not addicted to antidepressants like a withdrawal from alcohol or cigarettes, but the sudden removal of the drug's effect can affect the brain. Some reports suggest that 1 in 6 or 7 people experience withdrawal symptoms when stopping antidepressants and severe discontinuation symptoms occurs in 1 in 30.

For most people the symptoms of a sudden withdrawal are usually mild and occur within 2-4 days after ceasing the drug and they can last from 1-2 weeks. Some can experience symptoms that last for weeks to months and in some the symptoms can be severe. *Antidepressant discontinuation syndrome* symptoms include flu like symptoms (lethargy, fatigue, headache, aching), insomnia with vivid dreams or nightmares, nausea, imbalance, burning or tingling sensations and hyperarousal (anxiety, irritability, agitation). If the same or similar antidepressant is reinstated the symptoms usually resolve within 1-3 days. It is not possible to predict who might be at greatest risk of developing these withdrawal effects. Symptoms may, however, be more common in those who have been on the antidepressants for a longer period of time.

When ceasing antidepressants for any reason it is very important to discuss this with your doctor. Your doctor will recommend a tapering of the drug dose (that can take weeks to months). This may include an increasingly smaller decrease in the dose as the dose gets smaller. This tapering of the dose gives the brain time to adjust to being without the antidepressant (just as you needed to give the brain time to adjust to the drug when you first started it). If you start to develop withdrawal symptoms your drug dose may need to be increased again, and the taper recommended more slowly. You should consult your doctor if this occurs.

Depression is a very common and antidepressants are a mainstay of treatment for many. Abruptly stopping your antidepressants for any reason is not recommended and cessation should be planned in conjunction with your doctor.

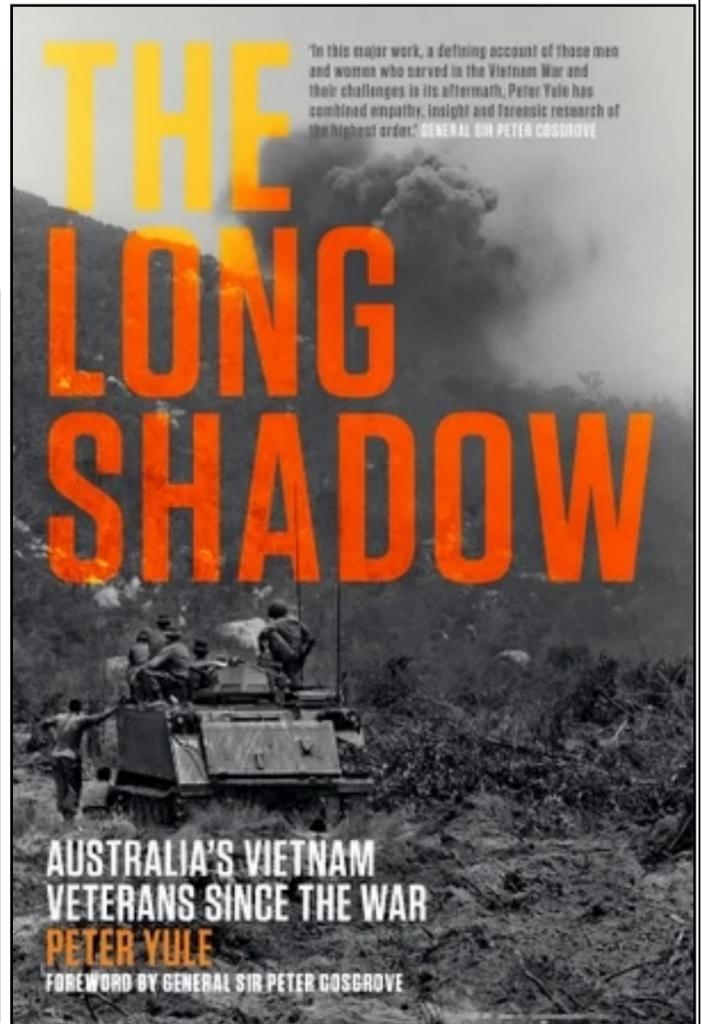
**Professor Jenny Firman AM**



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

## Extract

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



To get your copy simply ring the NSW  
Branch Granville Office on  
02 9682 1788 or contact on-line at  
[www.vvfagranville.org](http://www.vvfagranville.org)

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Plus postage

## **OUR LETTER TO THE MINISTER IN SUPPORT OF VVAA NATIONAL PRESIDENT MAX BALL**

The Hon Matt Keogh MP  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Dear Minister,

3 November 2024

### **Veterans' Legislation Reform – Presumptive Service Conditions – Effects of Agent Orange**

Mr Max Ball who is the National President of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Inc (VVAA), has given the Federation a copy of the letter that he sent to you, dated 27 September 2024, concerning the subject matter, copy attached. I believe that his letter would now be in your hands.

As you may already know VVAA/Federation campaigned strongly from the late 1970s and continued to do so for many more years thereafter to have exposure to Agent Orange accepted as contributing factor to number of medical conditions, diseases and cancers of those Australian military personnel who were suffering and continue to suffer from some of these medical conditions, and had served in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Our campaigns for this acceptance eventually led to the Government establishing a Royal Commission to look into the issues/matters raised in these campaigns.

The Commission found that there were two categories of cancer that could be attributed to exposure to Agent Orange at the standard of proof required for war veterans. At the higher civil court standard, the chemicals were exonerated. Subsequently, the list of cancers attributed to exposure to Agent Orange has increased and is now:

- Hodgkin Lymphoma
- Malignant Neoplasm of the Lung
- Myeloma
- Soft Tissue Sarcoma
- Malignant Neoplasm of the Larynx
- Malignant Neoplasm of the Prostate
- Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma

#### **SOP 27/2024 Refers**

Both our Federation (VVFA) and Mr Max Ball's Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA) are, and have been aware that there are many other medical conditions that can be linked to exposure to Agent Orange and we have in fact lodged a number of claims to DVA for some of the conditions listed in the attached letter to you from Mr Ball. Unfortunately these were subsequently rejected.

As Mr Ball has pointed out in his letter, the United States Veterans' Administration (VA) has adopted the Agent Orange Presumptive Service Conditions that he has listed. Having regard to, and in light of the proposed Legislative Reform, the Federation would strongly agree with Mr Ball's view that the additional medical conditions he has listed, which the United States VA has adopted, should be seriously considered and accepted by the RMA for those military personnel who have been exposed to/and or ingested Agent Orange through, various means, as Agent Orange Presumptive Service conditions.

*(Continued on page 20)*

Having regard to a large number of Vietnam Veterans who would be suffering from many of the additional conditions listed in Mr Ball's letter, and the likelihood that many of them will no doubt die from some of those conditions, it is imperative that these additional conditions be brought to the attention of the RMA as a matter of urgency with a view to acceptance, bearing in mind the current ages of Vietnam Veterans who would now be in their late 70s or older.

We note that Mr Ball has respectfully asked if you could take carriage of the administrative process, which no doubt would have been a slow process otherwise, by approaching the RMA on his issue, hopefully with a favourable outcome.

We noted Mr Ball has also made mention of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma (Reasonable Hypothesis – SOP 90/2018, Factor 9, Sub-clause (18)(c) particularly in regards to consumption of Potable Water, which in part states... 'for at least a period of 30 days'. In his submission to the Royal Commission on Defence and Veteran Suicide, Mr Ball had asked 'where is the sound medical evidence on which the requirement for a cumulative period of at least 30 days rule', was decided. The question remains unanswered. The Federation believes that it was a reasonable question.

The Federation is supportive of Mr Ball's letter and the views and requests contained therein. We are confident that the Minister will be able to assist and we thank you in anticipation.

Respectfully yours,  
 William (Bill) Roberts OAM JP  
 National President – VVFA, Inc

**VVAA NATIONAL PRESIDENT MAX BALL  
 LETTER TO THE MINISTER  
 (RE-PRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM MAX)**

The Hon Matt Keogh MP  
 Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
 Dear Minister,

27 September 2024

**Veterans' Legislation Reform – Presumptive Service Conditions – Effects of Agent Orange**

It was a pleasure to speak to you in Rockingham on Monday 16 September 2024.

Overall, we have been pleased with the Government's response to the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans' Suicide that one Act be adopted for military worker's compensation.

**Presumptive Service Conditions**

We are also pleased with the adoption of the concept of presumptive service conditions however, as mentioned to you at Rockingham, we are concerned that progress along that path will need to be energised by you, hence this letter.

Justice Evatt, head of the Royal Commission into Agent Orange, laid the blame for some veterans' problems on the "normal response to war – acute stress".

Despite that view the United States Veterans' Administration (VA) has adopted these Agent Orange Presumptive Conditions;

AL Amyloidosis	Bladder Cancer	Chronic B-cell Leukemias
Chloracne (or similar)	Diabetes	Mellitus Type 2
Hypertension	Hodgkinson's Disease	Hypothyroidism
Ischemic Heart Disease	Monoclonal Gammopathy of Undetermined Significance (MGUS)	
Multiple Myeloma	Non-Hodgkinson's Lymphoma	Parkinsonism
Parkinson's Disease	Peripheral Neuropathy, Early-Onset	
Porphyria Cutanea Tarda	Prostate Cancer	Respiratory Cancers
Soft Tissue Sarcomas		

(Source: US Veterans' Administration (VA) Newsletter 2024, copy enclosed, page 4 refers.)

To date, the Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA) has recognised only seven conditions;

Hodgkin Lymphoma	Malignant Neoplasm of the Larynx
Malignant Neoplasm of the Lung	Malignant neoplasm of the Prostate
Myeloma	Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma
Soft Tissue Sarcoma	

(SOP number 27, year 2024, refers.)

Minister, the ageing nature of the Vietnam veterans' cohort means that over the next several years many hundreds of our veterans will pass away each year.

It is beyond doubt that some will pass due to medical conditions that originated during their service in Vietnam but, in Australia, as compared to the United States, those conditions may not yet be recognised as such.

This means that there is a need to accelerate the process by which presumptive service conditions for Vietnam veterans are recognised.

We recommend to you that, as a matter of priority, you seek advice from the RMA as to why urgent attention should NOT be given by the RMA to expand promptly the above seven RMA recognised conditions to include all those additional conditions recognised by the United States Veterans' Administration listed above.

**SOP No 90 of 2018**

Of those seven conditions listed by the RMA we have been particularly concerned over SOP No 90, of 2018 concerning non-Hodgkin Lymphoma (Reasonable Hypothesis).

SOP No 90, Clause 9, **Factors that must exist**, sub-clause (18 (c), includes "being on board a vessel and consuming potable water supplied on that vessel, when the water supply had been produced by evaporative distillation of estuarine Vietnamese waters, for a cumulative period of at least 30 days, at least five years before the clinical onset of non-Hodgkin lymphoma."

In a VVAA submission (copy enclosed) to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide we asked several questions, including "where is the sound medical evidence "on which the requirement **"for a cumulative period of at least 30 days rule was decided?"**

This matter does not seem to have been addressed by the Royal Commission.

*(Continued on page 22)*

We recommend that you ask the RMA to make available to yourself, and publicly, the evidence on which this 30-day rule was determined.

**Conclusion**

Minister, as mentioned at Rockingham, our view is that the inclusion of presumptive service conditions in the legislation is a significant and progressive step forward for the administration of veterans' compensation legislation.

However, we are of the view that without some intervention by yourself in the administrative process the adoption of presumptive service conditions will be a slow process, while at the same time some Australian Vietnam veterans will die due to conditions recognised by the US VA but not by the Australian government

We suggest that a good first step forward would be for you to ask the RMA;

- Why a speedy move forward could NOT be made by the adoption by the RMA of all the Agent Orange Presumptive Service Conditions already adopted by the US Veterans' Administration? and
- To advise yourself and veterans as to the scientific basis of the 30-day consumption rule in SOP 90 of 2018.

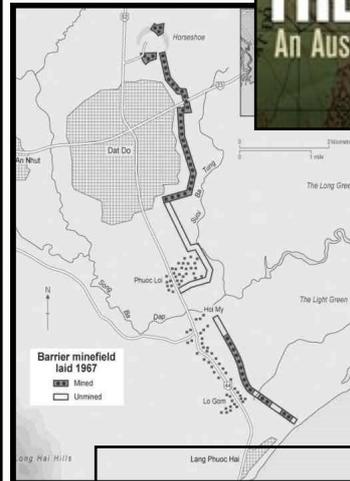
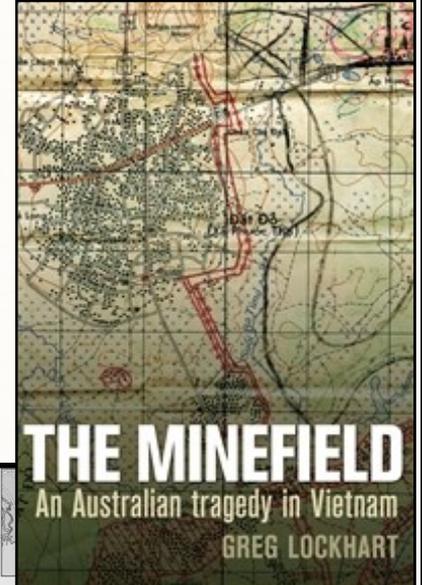
Yours faithfully,  
 Max Ball  
 National President  
 VVAA Inc.

*(The VVAA also included further enclosures)*  
 Encl:

- US VA Agent Orange Newsletter 2024.
- VVAA Submission to the Royal Commission- Drinking Water on HMAS Sydney and Other Ships.



# How could this disaster have happened?



To get your copy simply ring the NSW Branch Granville Office on 02 9682 1788 or order on-line at [www.vvafgranville.org](http://www.vvafgranville.org).



## FROM THE SECRETARY



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

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

\$2,000	Norman Taylor
\$1,000	Anonymous
\$500	Kevin Cox
\$300	Tania Edwards-Hackett
\$200	St Columba Anglican School, Port Macquarie
	Robert Doolan Harold Ford
	Leon Tranby

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

Vietnamese Invalid Veterans' Association of NSW  
 City of Bankstown RSL Sub-Branch  
 Petersham RSL Sub-Branch  
 Campsie RSL Club  
 Smithfield RTSL Sub-Branch  
 Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL  
 PayPal Giving Fund

Vietnam Veteran's Day acknowledgements:

We would also like to thank the following Clubs, Businesses and individuals who generously donated prizes towards our 2024 Vietnam Veterans' Day raffle. The raffle was a great success and all profits from it will be used to assist current and former ADF personnel and their families in time of need.

Mr & Mrs McKenzie

Paul Bryant

Bunnings Rydalmere

Bunnings Cross Roads

Bunnings Minchinbury

Bankstown RSL Club

Bankstown RSL Sub-Branch

Bankstown Sports Club

City of Fairfield RSL Club

Hornsby RSL Club

Cabra-Vale Diggers

Dooleys Catholic Club Lidcombe

Ingleburn RSL Club

Smithfield RSL Sub-Branch

Wenty Leagues Club

Merrylands RSL Club

Ron O'Connor JP

National Secretary

VVFA



## **2025 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE NOW DUE!!**

Dear Member

It is that time again when annual membership renewals are due.

Members of our various State Branches and sub branches should receive membership renewal notices from their respective organizations. NSW membership subscription renewal forms for 2025 have already been sent out to NSW Branch members under separate cover by the Granville office. In the event you do not receive a form in the mail you can use the Membership Renewal form included in this Newsletter or the one available on our web site at [www.vvfganville.org](http://www.vvfganville.org)

To renew your membership, just complete the membership form you receive and return it to your State Branch, Sub Branch or, for NSW Branch members, to the Granville office. Please check the Membership Application form to ensure your details are correct and amend any incorrect details so we can update our records.

Once again, all members of the NSW Branch, who renew by 30 January 2025, will have the chance to enter into the draw to win 1 of 3, \$100.00 gift vouchers from Bunnings Hardware.

In addition, NSW Branch Members who renew by as early as 31 December 2024, will also have the opportunity to go into the draw for a \$250.00 gift voucher.

So, NSW Branch members, get your application in quickly to Granville to ensure you don't miss out on both these great opportunities. Cheques and money orders from NSW Branch members can be made payable to VVPPAA NSW.

Your financial support in the past has been most appreciative and we hope you will continue to support the Association and therefore assist our fellow Veterans and Service members in need.

It is through our membership subscriptions, fund raising activities and the many kind donations we receive from members that we are able to meet our increasing welfare/pension workload. Should you be able to help with a donation in this regard it would be greatly appreciated.

We look forward to receiving your renewal for 2025 and thank you for your on-going support and patronage of the Federation.

Ron O'Connor JP  
Hon. Secretary  
VVFA



**V111**



**THE EIGHT BATTALION ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT  
(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, 26<sup>TH</sup> REGISTRATION 1400 -1700 hours

MEET & GREET 1800 – 2100 hours

THURSDAY, 27<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL AGM 1000 HOURS

COMPANY GET-TOGETHERS - ALL DAY

FRIDAY, 28<sup>TH</sup> 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](mailto:kevinsully1948@gmail.com)

Or NSW Branch President Mick Carter OAM on 0432 500 632 or [cartercm@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cartercm@optusnet.com.au)

Or NSW Branch Secretary Ron O'Connor on 0413 008 025 or [secretary@vfvfagranville.org](mailto:secretary@vfvfagranville.org)

And an information pack will be sent to you.



## THE BACKLOG AND MISLEADING NONSENSE

In its September 2024 monthly report (reports made at the insistence of the Defence and Veterans Suicide Royal Commission), DVA started by declaring:

‘The last of the unallocated claims backlogs (the permanent impairment backlog) was cleared at the end of February 2024, ahead of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide’s 31 March 2024 deadline.

‘Of the 41,799 backlog of claims, identified in the Royal Commission's interim report, as at 31 August 2024 almost 96 per cent have now been completed.’

This statement suggests that everything is under control. Veterans’ disability claims will be quickly finalised eliminating the agony of sick veterans waiting the best part of a year or more for a decision that will affect the rest of their lives.

It is not till later in the report that we learn that everything is far from ‘under control’ and that, in fact, the number of veterans’ disability claims received by DVA but not yet finalised, has lurched even higher to the astounding figure of over 79,000.

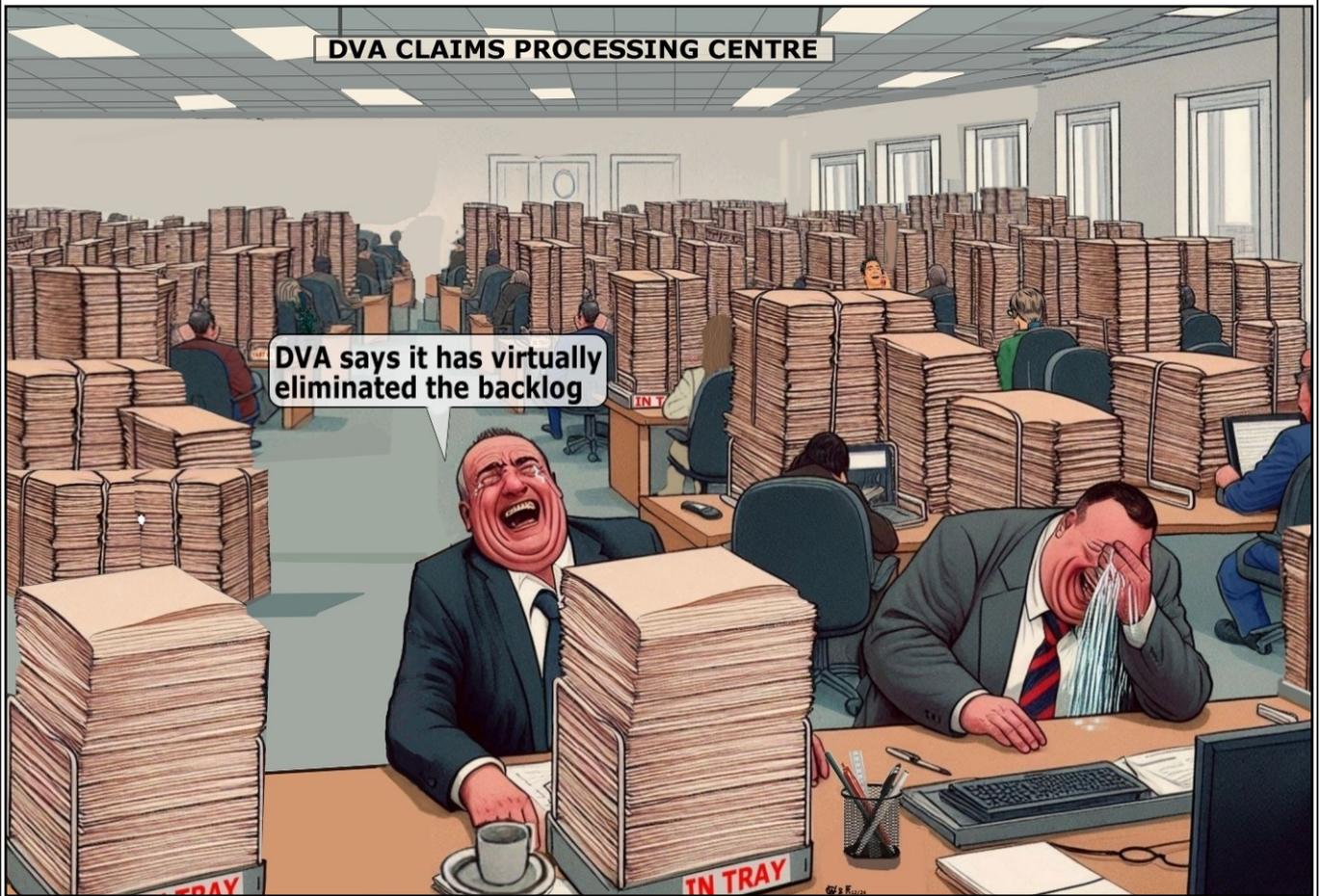
In its September monthly report, DVA makes much of its having reduced the time taken to process some claims, so that’s a relief, isn’t it?

Well no, it’s not much of a relief at all. Processing times remain ridiculously and dangerously high.

Here is the list of the number of days from DVA receiving claims to their finalisation for the various claim types as at September 2024. ( In the table at right).

The VVFA identified the problem and dangers of the backlog and began advocating for its clearance years ago.

Type of claim	Number of days between lodgement and the claim being decided
MRCA Initial Liability	306
DRCA Initial Liability	482
VEA Disability Compensation Payment	523
MRCA Permanent Impairment	222
DRCA Permanent Impairment	322
MRCA and DRCA Incapacity Payments	68
War widow(ers) pension	103



For instance, in the December 2019 edition of this magazine was an article ‘Current delays in DVA processing compensation claims is increasing suicide risk’. In the July 2020 edition was an article, ‘Unacceptable delays in DVA’s processing of compensation claims. Is this a factor in veterans’ suicide?’

This campaign failed to penetrate DVA’s deaf ears.

It seems the sharp prodding of a Royal Commission was needed to spur the dead weight of the DVA into effective action. Now DVA has seriously taken on the task of clearing the backlog, but the task has been made formidable by DVA’s years of neglect.

And a little honesty and straight talking from DVA would be appreciated.

### **How does DVA justify this craven misrepresentation of the situation?**

It is simple really. DVA has redefined the word ‘backlog’.

DVA says the backlog is the number of claims not being processed. It says a claim is being processed if it has been allocated to a determining officer team. The trouble is the number of claims with determining officer teams is nearly 80,000.

So the determining officer teams have in-trays with files a mile high nearly all of which are not what any normal person would say were being ‘processed’. Indeed most of those files will sit undisturbed for months.

It is crazy to say the claims process is complete when the claim finds its way to another in-tray. Completion of claims process should mean that a decision on a claim has been made and the veteran advised. And that is what completion should mean to DVA as well as everyone else in the literate universe.

The tragedy, in the real world, is that some of our Compensation Advocates have claims in ‘processing’ that date back as far as 2020. With the poor veteran and his/her family at the mercy of DVA’s super-power of changing the meaning of words.



***Lorraine Davison, one time volunteer at the Granville office, remembers Ray Fulton—see advert opposite page— and we pass on her comments to our readers.—Ed.***

Dear Editor

Please find attached some Memories I have of Ray Fulton while working as a volunteer for the organization known as VVAA NSW Branch, then.

Kind regards

Lorraine Davison



The Old Schoolhouse  
192 Taralga Rd  
Kenmore  
Via Goulburn  
NSW

I started volunteering at Granville, I think it was 1994(part time), So much of the organisation was in it's infancy then, without proper premises, we worked from the rear of a small room at rear of the old Granville RSL Hall although much appreciated at the time it was difficult as there was no privacy for the huge numbers of Veterans coming to seek help for afflictions they did not understand!

That was where I became acquainted with Ray Fulton, when I first met him I was terrified he always appeared to be so angry and of course as time moved on I understood his anger.

I can't remember when we acquired some money and I participated with Tim McCombe in purchasing the Mary Street Premises which made operating a very much easier task and as we grew we purchased the shop behind Mary street and joined the offices together and working then became more positive. This in no way negated the work put in by Ray Fulton, Tim McCombe, Terry Loftus, Les Bloc et al, Ray was absolutely (along with the others) totally dedicated to making sure that the veterans received first compensation and

justice for the time they spent away from home in an unpopular war, (many sick by this time and not understanding what was wrong)

I became treasurer for NSW and this involved many meetings and finance organising so that the service ran as smoothly as possible.

Ray was dedicated to making sure that as much as possible the VVAA supported the Veterans and an attempt was made by all involved to see that this occurred.

The admiration for Ray, Terry, Tim and others grew and grew and although it was sad that the organisation had to exist at all, we were all always jubilant when a positive result was achieved for a veteran.

Sadly Terry Loftus , Tim McCombe and Les Bloc and Ray Fulton along with others are no longer with us to receive the tributes they-richly deserve,-thank-goodness for Bill Roberts and many others who I no longer know but my admiration for Ray and all of the above-mentioned remains constant as many veterans who knew the team and benefitted by their dedication will attest.

Kind regards Lorraine Davison.

Dear Editor,

Thank you for a wonderful July (2024) edition, particularly the article on the harmonisation proposal, for combining all the Acts regarding veterans. A nightmare in the making, I believe.

At times I think the wives and partners of veterans, and those still serving, are overlooked a lot. I suppose the PVA—Partners of Veterans Associations, may have some influence, however, I think your Newsletter could well do to also include the plight of families of veterans, when age becomes a problem for most. Support from DVA is just not adequate.

Name withheld on request.

ANOTHER LETTER  
TO THE EDITOR, WE  
THOUGHT MERIT TO  
PUBLISH HERE AS AN  
ALERT FOR ALL  
ADVOCATES.



## RE: FAIR GO OR MUGS GAME

Dear Editor

I was recently given a July 2023 copy of your Journal and found the article “Fair Go or Mugs Game” very interesting.

I am a Level 4 Advocate working out of Gaythorne RSL IN Brisbane and presently have about 6 cases before the AAT. The main contentious point in the proceedings is what you mention re sending a veteran along mainly to a specialist to request a Specialist Report.

I had a win in this regard in early 2022 where I refused to have the veteran front up to a specialist for a report. As I refused this request from the legal firm representing DVA, they asked the AAT for a Direction Order giving them the authority to send a veteran to a specialist for a report.

To cut a long story short we fronted up for a Directions Hearing and the Decision was:

The AAT does not have the Authority to request anyone to go to a doctor. However, we cannot prevent the Respondent from seeking a Report on Papers from a specialist whom they choose.

DVA do not like this arrangement but it is good for the veterans defence that they had not had a physical appointment so the report can only be based on reems of evidence that DVA lawyers have read.’

I have said to the legal firms that I would not oppose an appointment with the veteran’s treating doctors but their excuse is, it’s not an Independent Medical Review.

I have requested the Briefing Letter to the specialist prior to the request but this has been denied but they do send the Briefing Letter with the Report as soon as it becomes available. This Briefing Letter has many “red herring” questions in it but at least these can be brought up on cross examination with the specialist on the Hearing Day.

I certainly agree with the author of this article re DVA hired lawyers. I have to deal with 5 legal firms who would be some of the top legal firms in in Australia, so I have been able to negate some of the Reports because they have not been able to examine the veteran physically.

I hope your advocates in their dealing with DVA hired lawyers are able to seek the same outcome that I have been able to accomplish.

Kind regards

Ken Cullen

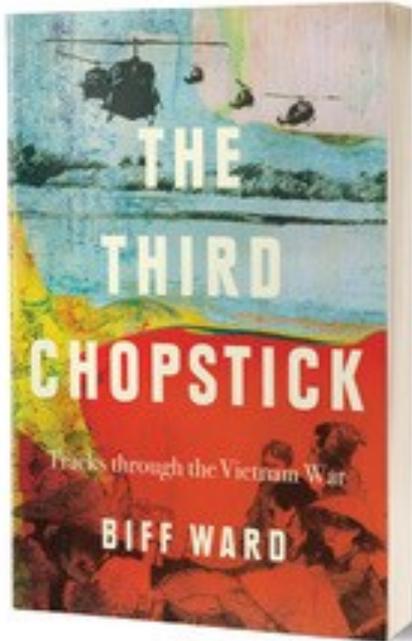
**Ken Cullen JP54987**

**Military Compensation Advocate Level 4**

**Veterans’ Advocacy and Support Centre**

**Date: 8 October 2024**

## 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. ■

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

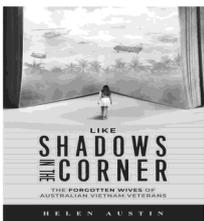
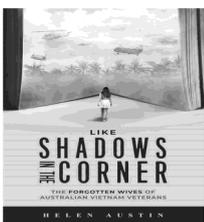
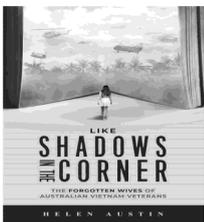
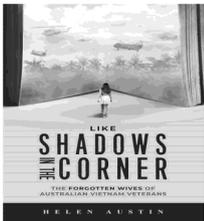
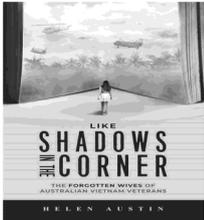
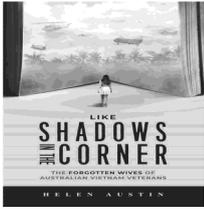
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## Stories needed for sequel to 'Like Shadows in the Corner'.

My book explores the experiences of wives/partners of soldiers who were deployed to the Vietnam War during the period they were away. We see a glimpse of how wives coped, how they were supported (or not supported), how their children also coped and what they experienced until their husband returned home.

My book, Like Shadows in the Corner has been an outstanding success with hundreds of copies sold to date.

Many people expressed to me that they would have liked the opportunity to contribute to the book and asked me if I would write a second book. I am more than happy to continue our story where we will be written into history.

## So, now it's time for the sequel.

I am the wife of a Vietnam Veteran, and my story is included in 'Like Shadows in the Corner' so I can relate to the stories I will receive. There are no restrictions on the length of your story and no restrictions on what you can write about in relation to the time your husband was away. You can use your real name or an alias if you choose. It's all up to you! Your story will be published just as you write it with no editing.

All contributors will receive a free copy of the book once published.

If you wish to contribute your story, can you email me at [helhilt@bigpond.com](mailto:helhilt@bigpond.com)

If you know the wife of a Vietnam Veteran, can you please make them aware of the pending sequel to my book as they may wish to contribute

Hoping to receive lots of stories!

Happy writing!

Helen Townsend-Austin



## **From the dusty archives**

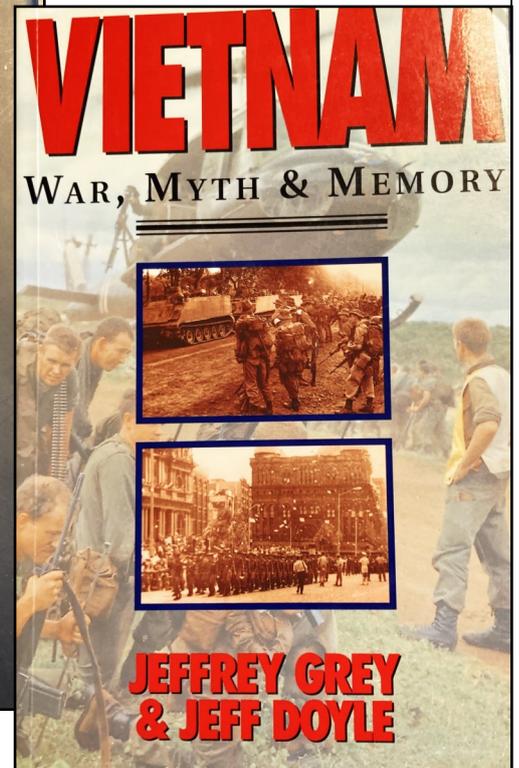
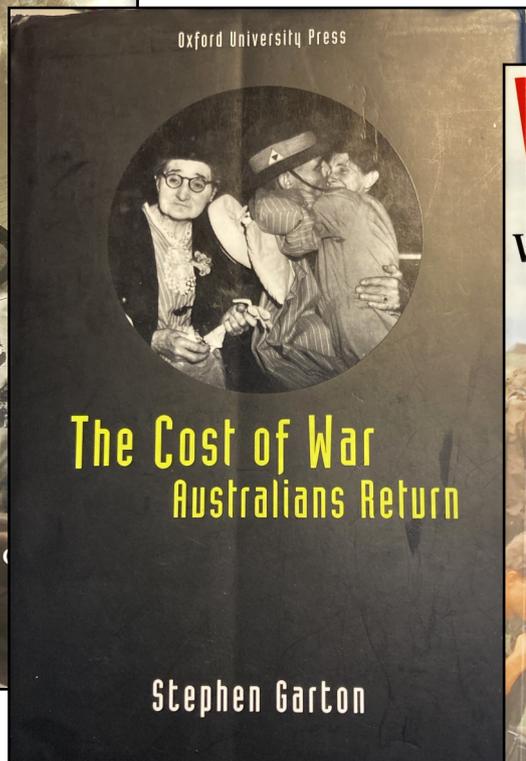
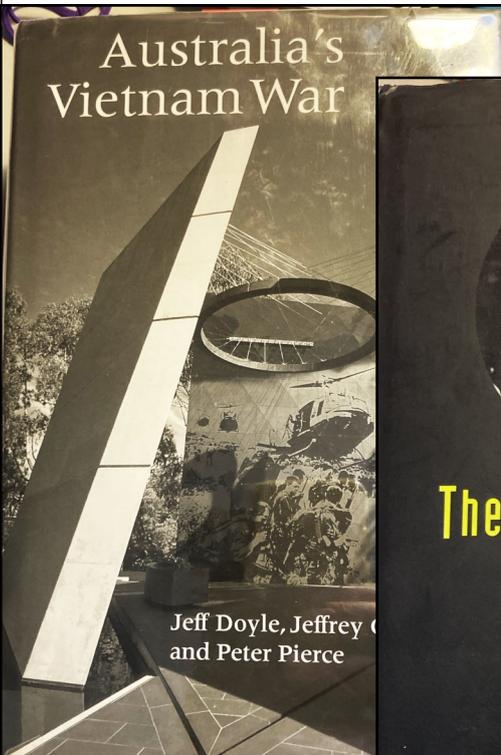
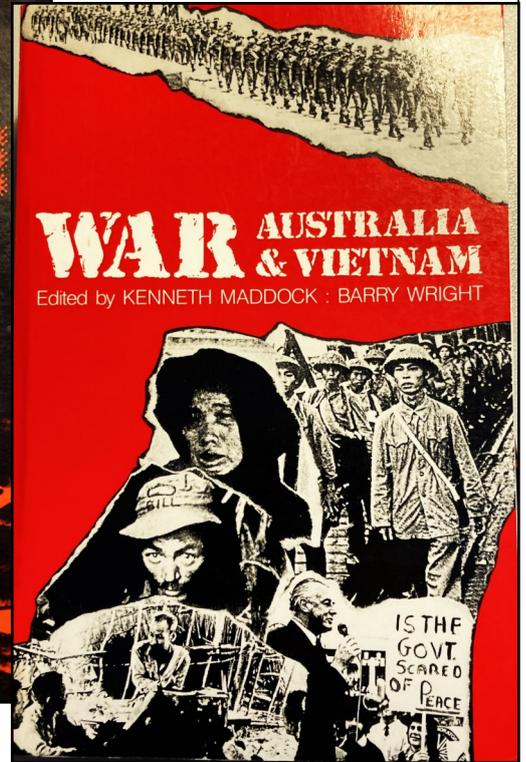
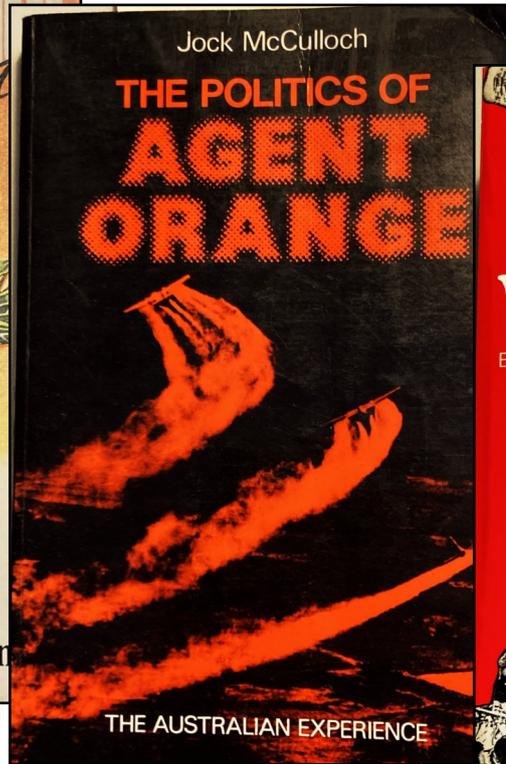
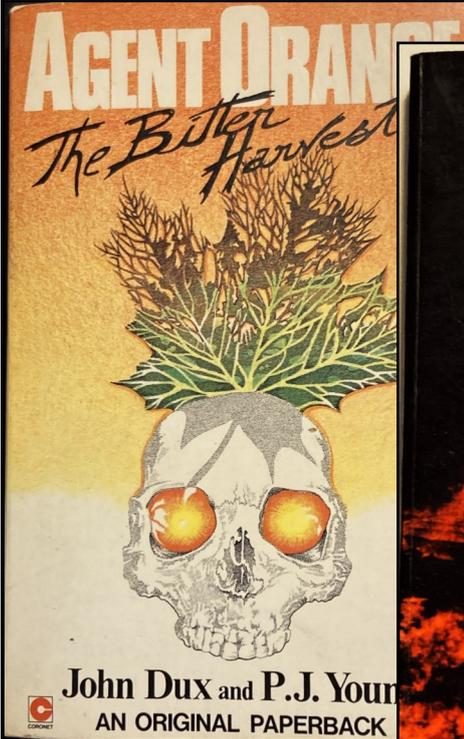
The story of the early days of the Vietnam veteran movement:

Who was involved and what happened

Next page



“Few if any of the commentaries encountered by the author rely on contemporaneous statements etc by the founding individuals about their reasons for establishing the organisation.”



# VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS

## Article 12

### Context Is Everything:

#### The reasons for early support of the Action Association – Part D.

This instalment concludes 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 History (ed. Craig Stockings, New South 2010).*

#### The Even Larger Context

There were larger external factors which contributed to societal anxiety at the close of the 1970s and which may further have prompted commitment to the Association. These factors were likely, in particular, to have affected those who'd not made good transitions to civilian life, were in unskilled employment, were unwell or had children with health problems. Not too much is made of these factors here, but the attention given to them in the media in the late 1970s would have added to the feelings of some veterans that the world was an increasingly uncertain place and that they needed to band together with those they could trust or whose experiences in important respects resembled their own.

The economic outlook at the end of the 1970s was not promising. The 1970s had been notable for two ‘oil shocks’ and for consequent stagflation (high rates of unemployment accompanied by inflation). One widely read commentator said in late 1979: “for the 400,000 unemployed at the end of the seventies, it was the desperate decade.” They were difficult years, too, for veterans working part-time or intermittently, without DVA support.

They were arguably even more difficult years for wives compelled to work, manage the home and deal with a troubled or unwell husband. However, they weren't easy years for the many veterans working full-time and dealing with constantly rising prices, either.

**Twenty-two chase every job offered**

From MICHELLE GRATTAN

CANBERRA — The job market remained stable last month — but according to CES figures there are now 22 people unemployed for every job vacancy.

The number of unemployed fell by 10,371 during May to 392,183 — 6.1 per cent of the total workforce, according to the Commonwealth Employment Service.

But 6286 of the fall were school leavers, and job vacancies tightened during May.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics monthly unemployment survey — taken in early May — found that the number unemployed and seeking full time work decreased by 3900 to 328,600. This was 6.1 per cent of the full time workforce.

Those seeking part time work fell by 4400 to 63,200 — 6.4 per cent of the part time workforce.

The total number out of work, according to the ABS figures, was 392,800.

The acting Minister for Employment, Mr. Fife, said the figures showed a “marginal” improvement, with their most pleasing aspect being the fall in unemployed school leavers.

But he said the small number of vacancies was “very disappointing”, and the Government regarded the general unemployment situation as “still unsatisfactory”.

The shadow Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Willis, said the figures were a direct contradiction of repeated Government claims that unemployment was falling.

“The CES figures show a rise in unemployment between May 1977 and May 1978 of 70,000 or 22 per cent. Compared with two years ago, the rise is 132,000 or 51 per cent,” Mr. Willis said.

“The figures of the ABS show a rise of 33,000 or 20 per cent over the same 12 months.”

This May’s 6.1 per cent out of work compares with unemployment level — measured by the CES — of 5 per cent a year ago (321,183), and 4.3 per cent (258,905) at end-May 1976.

The May fall of 10,371 in the CES figures is a drop of 2.6 per cent. In May last year the jobless fell by 2006 (0.6 per cent), in May 1976 by 8068 (3.4 per cent) and in May 1975 by about 17,000.

CES vacancies fell during the month by 694 or 3.6 per cent to 17,904.

The number of Victorians out of work fell by 2586 to 84,639. However the fall was more than accounted for by school leavers — adult unemployment in Victoria rose by 52.

Victorian vacancies fell by 182 to 5683; however, after seasonal adjustment they rose from 6007 in April to 6204 in May.

The number of Australians on unemployment benefits fell by 10,904 in May to 272,384. Victorians on unemployment benefits fell by 1556 to 65,121.

Seasonally adjusted overtime increased from 2.1 hours per employee in March to 2.4 hours in April.

The Premier, Mr. Hamer, said yesterday the statistics showed the number of jobs in Victoria had dropped for the fourth successive month.

Mr. Hamer said Victorian unemployment now stood at 3.45 per cent of the work force compared with 3.67 per cent at the end of May.

“This is once more the lowest level of any State in Australia and compares with an average of Australia of 6.3 per cent,” he said.

The ACTU secretary, Mr. Peter Nolan, said last night the figures showed once again the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the Government’s economic policies.

Mr. Nolan said both sets of figures released revealed a significant increase in the overall numbers of people looking for jobs if they were compared with last year’s May figures.

Wives warns on jobs — 8.

Keneth Davidson comment — 27.

**AGEgraph**

**UNEMPLOYMENT**

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12%. A newspaper article in mid-January 1980 noted small falls in unemployment in the previous year but the national rate had been 6.4% at the end of 1979, and the worst State rates at that time were those for WA (8.4%) and Tasmania (7.6%). Soon afterwards, The Bulletin noted that “The incidence of unemployment for people without trade or professional qualifications is about double the rate of joblessness of those with degrees, diplomas and trade certificates”. A late December 1979 article about Government employment forecasts foreshadowed continuing difficulties for unskilled and inexperienced workers in the time ahead. Although Ministers in the establishment period, with an election imminent, were ‘talking up’ the national employment outlook, expert commentators did not share their optimism.

Changes to unemployment benefit eligibility in the establishment period “requiring unemployed people to show proof of their search for jobs” signalled the tightening of access to welfare. This would have been troubling for unemployed veterans and those in intermittent employment who were not significantly assisted by DVA.

Community debate about the impact of technology on employment – which had, apparently, been heightened in the 1970s by the advent of microelectronics and by recessions in developed economies – resulted, in December 1978, in the establishment of two Federal Government inquiries. Reports on submissions to the more public of these exercises, undertaken by the Myer Committee, appeared in the media in mid-1979 and mostly continued the pre-inquiry predictions of major structural changes to come. The ALP’s Labor economists conference in mid-1979 was mostly devoted to the problem of supporting employment in the decade to come (with a matter-of-fact opening speech on the subject delivered by Opposition Leader Bill Hayden). Newspaper readers were reminded in the establishment period of the Myer Committee’s work and of the debate about the impact of technology on employment (with experts seeming to differ only on whether new ‘more skilled’ jobs would replace old ‘less skilled’ ones). Readers were reminded, too, of the march of technological change when, in the establishment period, bank workers took industrial action against the introduction of automatic telling machines and the Victorian Government

announced the purchase of railway ticket machines.

Concern about technology and unemployment were given end of decade impetus by reviews of books by Keith Windschuttle and Mick Young. In Canberra in the same period, Alf Clarke, the president of the ACT Branch of the RSL, referred to an unemployment “time bomb” being created by the silicon chip, stating that “unemployment is a greater threat to Western stability than the energy crisis.” Preceding Clarke’s remarks, but also in the establishment period, was a cover story in The Bulletin entitled “The 80s Usher In The Age of the Robot”. There were various relevant letters to newspapers in the establishment period, some in response to a TV documentary predicting the silicon chip’s disastrous effect on employment and others disputing expert economists’ views that the impact of technology on employment was not a cause for concern. The gathering apprehension about the future of employment evidenced in most of this reportage would have caused at least some veterans uneasiness, especially when the impact of technological change was predicted to affect not just labouring and manufacturing jobs, and when, just prior to the establishment period, the president of the ACTU was warning of “the vast and potentially devastating nature of” employment problems created by a mix of changes to come.

Apart from concerns about unemployment and ‘insecurity’ of employment at the turn of the decade, apprehensions about access to medical care would have been prompted by articles in the establishment period on likely changes to the Australian medical system. These changes would have been a cause of anxiety for veterans whose conditions were not repatriation-covered or who had ill children or children with surgically alterable birth defects. These systemic changes were ones requiring citizens to take out medical insurance if they were to access Government medical benefits. They replaced an arrangement which saw patients without private health insurance pay \$20 to see a GP, leaving the remainder of the doctor’s fee to be paid by the Government. The editor of The Canberra Times commented in mid-January 1980 that “bit by bit, Medibank has been gutted”. (It’s worth noting that veterans’ worries about their ability to meet family medical costs would have made one early Action Association aim – family members’ access to the repatriation system if their

illnesses were attributed to their father's war service – especially attractive.)

Societal changes, including changes in the role of women and declining respect in some quarters for traditional male virtues, may also have added to some veterans' apprehensions about the world they inhabited. These changes may have caused some veterans to seek refuge of sorts in the Action Association, notwithstanding the fact (noted earlier) that veterans' wives and mothers played important roles in some branches of the early organisation.

**A world controlled by women**

IS AUSTRALIA heading for a matriarchal society where women take over almost complete control of family life and finances? Will life for children become even tougher? Will the importance of being a father become virtually meaningless? Eminent medical authority Dr CLAIR ISBISTER explores the possibilities as we continue our investigation into the 80s.

**80s**

The turn of the century of the people met to make predictions for the next 50 years. Apart from a host of other things they missed predicting radio, television, aeroplanes and antibiotics.

The point was made by Dr Philip Rhodes, an obstetrician when he spoke in General's Hall at the 1931 centenary of the child in the world of tomorrow.

He spoke of the mother as the child, really while in the uterus, and determining the child's mental, physical, moral and much more structure.

However, there can be no doubt from the vast mass of literature on the nature of the child to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner.

Child's best basic unit comprises a male and female parent who love each other and the child, and who have undertaken a long term commitment to the family.

The father provides the and a vital factor in its environment.

But technology has transformed the whole environment. Radio and television have completely changed home life and leisure and reduced communication brought into the home of the outside world, as well as a fantasy world.

Aeroplane have taken people to every corner of the earth, and suddenly have kept alive the age and the mentality, ready to prevent families and society with unforeseen stresses.

If these technological change was not anticipated, what of the social change that has occurred in less than 10 years?

In Australia, 1971 recorded 13,002 divorces, 1976 had 43,287 and the next year saw 45,026. The marriage frequency fell by 14,000 a year for six years and de facto and casual sex relationships increased - no marriages, no divorce!

Births dropped from 20.82 per thousand in 1972 and 1978, bringing the average family makeup to two parents and two children.

live, while stable, married couples wait seven years to... it is a basic rule in child discipline that, unacceptable behavior should not be... the accepted rule for the Department of Social Security. A pragmatic, liberalised female in the low income range can easily... As a supporting mother she... for each supporting child... and she can earn \$24 a week more if she works 32 quiet and gets it in cash.

This is boosted further if the father and mother directly continue their relationship. The father can obtain at least \$150 in unemployment relief to add to his...

The mother has the custody of the child, not only to continue their relationship, but health benefits, child care available, help from charities and much more. If she is married the more everything.

The last concession for her to stay at home is assured if they get only \$36.50 - a drop of \$20 on what an unemployed mother would get if her unemployed husband is not considered for unemployment benefits to the "family". And the husband can walk out custody of the child and marry her partner to reduce the tax liability and ensure woman for choosing to keep her independence.

For the next 10 years, the woman as the head of the household will increasingly less responsible for the family. Women will limit the family to two children because they can manage them well while help from their friends and a lot of help from Government benefits.

The Department of Social Security has been told to demand an account to funds given to the mother, not even making it depend on the mother's income. Some education in child care and home management.

Women who can earn 200% more than the man in the two-income family had often, reluctantly, handing their children over to the care of others.

In 1977, 25.5 per cent of the workforce were married, two thirds of them married. 41 per cent of families were two income families and 36 per cent one income.

But hundreds of thousands of children have not got stable homes and thousands go home from school in empty houses because both their parents are on the one that they live with, work.

Some idea of the financial cost the single parent causes the country can be gleaned from the Department of Social Security's 1978-80 budget.

It accounts for \$204 million of which \$50 million is for widows, deserted wives and single mothers. There has been a sharp increase in the number of women entitled to receive benefits.

There were 26,386 supported mothers in 1974. The figure jumped to 37,087 by 1978, and this year's budget is estimated to provide for 48,000.

And the increased number of deserted wives swelled the widow's rolls to 38,000 by June 1978.

Last year, Social Security accounted for 38.8 per cent of the Budget in contrast to 1977's 11.2 per cent and Defence's 9.6 per cent.

As a matriarchal and a working wife who has always supported the woman's cause, I am working in the market of the community, concerned about their sick and disturbed children.

I do not like what I see happening to our children and their families. I sometimes despair at the powers that be in government. Are they trying to destroy the traditional family?

I know girls aged 14 and 15, below the age of consent, who are paid \$140 a week to take home their fatherless children and ruin both their

circumstances; (b) on the extent to which they were financially and emotionally supported by DVA, by their extended families and by their communities; and (c) on their resilience and how positive they were about their capacity to muddle along. Some veterans in discussion with the author indicated that they were acutely conscious of (and affected by) the societal factors outlined above, while other veterans didn't recall being aware of (or in the least affected by) them.

The factors prompting active membership discussed in the previous instalment, including those admitted by the author to be somewhat speculative, would be relevant to later active members to differing extents. Some of the factors discussed would also be relevant to inactive members i.e., those who, because of circumstances or inclination, didn't support the Association beyond the payment of their membership fees in order to access their branch newsletter (and, later, to receive "Debrief").

Other Commentators and Their Rationales for the Existence of the Association

Academic and other commentaries on the post-war history of Vietnam veterans explain the establishment of the Association either explicitly or by implication while serving different purposes, catering to different audiences, covering different time periods and evidencing differing proximity to veterans and relevant events. (Material on these commentaries can be found in an appendix to this article, available from the author).

The employment, economic and medical factors mentioned above doubtless played a part in gloomy "turn of the decade" opinion poll results which revealed widespread pessimism about the future ... and doubtless encouraged further pessimism. In the same way, widely published turn of the decade articles about the book "Poor Little Rich Country", in which journalist Max Walsh prophesied that the Australian rich would get richer "and the poor more numerous and poorer", would also have prompted gloom about the future among some less well-off Vietnam veterans.

These causes of concern would have had, it's conceded, a greater impact on some Vietnam veterans than others, depending (a) on their financial, employment and family health

Few if any of the commentaries encountered by the author rely on contemporaneous statements etc by the founding individuals about their reasons for establishing the organisation.

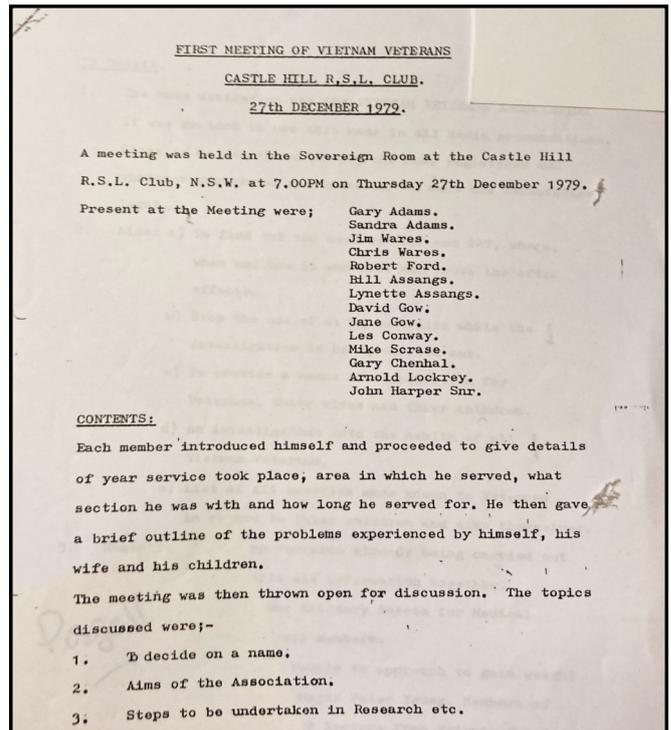
Holt McMinn's initial explanation for the Association, detailed in The Age on 20 December 1979, was clear: that "the World War II veterans who ran the RSL were not interested in the men who fought in Vietnam and were siding with the Government's decision not to hold an inquiry into the effects of the defoliant called agent orange." He referred to "general apathy in the community and also in the RSL towards Vietnam veterans", before remarking on the RSL's rejection of Vietnam veterans and saying that the new organisation would fight for a Government

defoliant investigation. In The Australian on the same day, he spoke of the need for veterans exposed to Agent Orange to join forces “to confront the Department of Veterans Affairs” and its “abusive doctors” in an attempt to get better repatriation support for incapacity.

Bernie Szapiel was reported on the same day in The Advertiser as specifying more detailed goals for the new organisation: pressing the Government to hold an inquiry, recognise the (chemical) sickness and increase (sufferers’) war service pensions. Jim Wares in The Australian on 26 December echoed the inquiry goal for the Association, but called for a scientific inquiry to, by implication, establish whether chemicals were responsible for the deformities in veterans’ children – a matter which John Harper had cited on 18 December as justifying lobbying activity by a new veterans’ organisation.

The first branch of the Association to form, the NSW one (in late December 1979), settled on a slightly different set of goals at its inaugural meeting. It wanted an investigation “into the health of all Vietnam veterans”, a halt to the use of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D “while the investigation is being carried out” and “a means of compensation for Veterans,

their wives and their children”. Their two other aims appear to be actions to be taken, rather than goals: “To find out the uses of 245D and 24T (sic), where, when and how it was used and prove the after effects” and “List (sic) of all benefits made known to Veterans in regard to their children and also themselves.” These aims, generously interpreted, expand the requirement for an investigation into the health of chemically affected veterans into an investigation into the health of all Vietnam veterans, expand the expectation of compensation to include a special compensation mechanism for veterans, wives and children; and require a temporary cessation to the domestic use of the defoliant chemicals. They do this, having prejudged the chemical harm issue and while embracing the ambitious task of proving that Agent Orange chemicals were responsible for the illnesses experienced by veterans and their families: a kind of parallel inquiry.



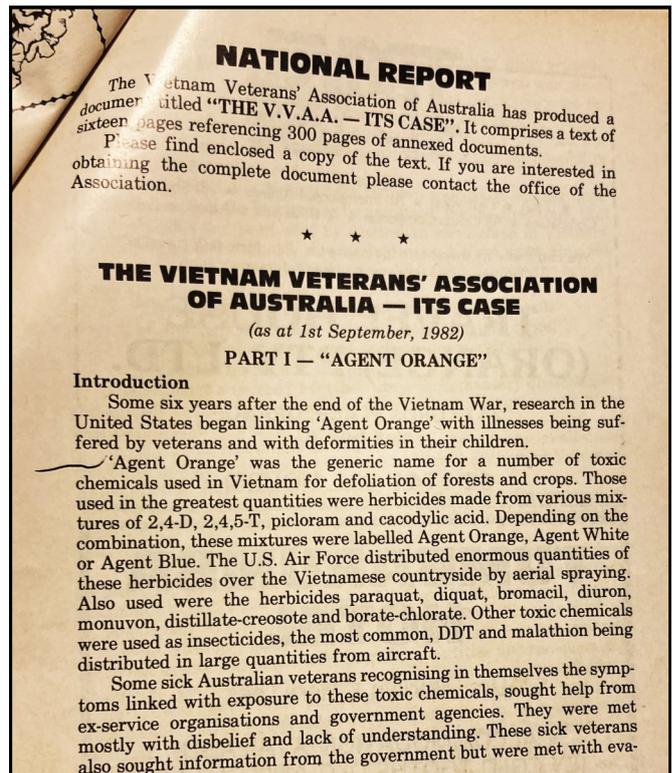
It seems that the various December 1979 goals had only two things in common: the requirement for an inquiry and for compensation, although all of the veterans involved would doubtless have supported the better treatment of their colleagues suffering from defoliant-related illness (through McMinn’s reining in of disagreeable DVA doctors and Szapiel’s increasing of the service pensions of sufferers). Likewise, they would, inevitably, have

supported compensation for affected wives and children. They would probably have agreed, too, with McMinn's claim that the public and the RSL were disinterested in Vietnam veterans.

The difficulty of extrapolating a clear, consistent rationale from the 1979 pronouncements (other than the need for compensation and an inquiry) might have explained why none of the subsequent commentaries encountered by the author, other than F E Smith's, makes any reference to statements made at the Association's very beginning. However, the failure to refer to the founders' remarks is more obviously the result of the various authors' failure to track down these statements and, more generally, to attach any significance to the sequence of founding events. This failure can be attributed to the commentators' lack of interest in the first generation of key figures (most of whom were no longer involved in the Association after the end of 1982 to assert their own significance), to commentators' greater interest in later events and figures, and to the attractiveness of 'big picture' explanations (a matter amplified below).

In some cases, though, it's likely that the failure to find and attach significance to the founders' goals was the result of the availability of a ready-made, 'Association authorised' explanation for the organisation's establishment: one contained in the October 1982 edition of "Debrief" and found serviceable by Association figures in following years. This explanation was the earliest part of the text introducing "The VVAA – Its Case": a remarkable collection of documents relating to the Association's struggle for recognition of chemical harms. The initial pages of the narrative brought together a number of impetuses for the establishment of the Association (based on events concluding at the time of publication); it referred to the failure of "ex-service organisations and government agencies" to respond to sick veterans' requests for help, to the failure of the Government to provide information (on chemical exposure and its consequences), to the consequent isolation and frustration of those veterans and "an apparent lack of sympathy on all sides".

The better part of this explanation, however encountered by commentators, seems to have become the accepted veterans' explanation for the



Association's existence – the commentators needed to look no further – despite the fact that it was more about the initial year or years of the organisation, and despite the fact that it wasn't entirely consistent with Gary Adams' readily located mid-1980 insider's explanation for the organisation's formation (with its emphasis on the human cost of DVA's unsympathetic treatment of veterans).

And the 1982 account, consistent with much media coverage of Vietnam veterans, was accepted, despite the absence of the founders' raft of goals from the included formative factors. There was no mention of the founders' core demand for a judicial inquiry, of the concern of Jim Wares and others for deformed children (and compensation for veterans' children and wives), of the early NSW concern for domestic use of 2,4,5-T and 24D etc. Also, the function of the October 1982 article – as a highly readable introduction to an impressive number and range of documents – didn't provide opportunities for self-congratulation and, thereby, for mention of an undeniably important factor in the establishment of the organisation: the courage, drive and self-reliance of the earliest figures.

The founding factors mentioned in the 1982 article – again, however encountered – have constituted

(Continued on page 39)

rich pickings for commentators, even when the factors haven't been extracted (as they would often later be) from their late 70s and early 80s setting. Academics have found much to analyse and respond to in the isolation of Vietnam veterans, apathy on all sides (aka the indifference of the Australian public), and the failure of the two organisations thought to be charged with the unconditional care of veterans – DVA and the RSL – to do the right thing. The 1982 founding factors would prove to be a useful launching point for a host of academic forays, even when the validity of the factors was contested ie even when 'isolation, neglect and apathy' over whatever time period were judged to be without foundation, were thought not to be applicable just to Vietnam veterans or were believed to be only applicable to a small proportion of those veterans. Commentators would, in particular, find in the 'isolation, neglect and apathy' explanation the impetus to explore the place of Vietnam veterans in Australian society, to explore the place of those veterans in the ANZAC tradition and to speculate on why Vietnam veterans (to the extent that they were different to their predecessors) weren't the same.

Points made about the establishment of the Association in the many commentaries are numerous and, notwithstanding the lack of awareness of founders' stated motives, occasionally insightful. Some commentators' musings noted establishment triggers (eg McMinn's exasperated reaction to the RSL President's delayed late-1979 contact with the scientist, John Evans (something noted by Dux and Young) or the decision by the US president to investigate the long-term health effects of Vietnam defoliant exposure (noted by F E Smith).

Other commentators mentioned preconditions (eg suggesting that Australian Agent Orange related events were derived from US events (argued by Ross); that US events created a conviction that defoliants were responsible for Australian veterans' problems (argued by Garton); and that feelings of disaffection with the RSL "provided the groundwork for breakaway organisations ... for Vietnam veterans" and prompted the need for those veterans "to make a place for themselves in the wider veteran community" (Hiddlestone, quoting a veteran's view.) Also of interest were the characteristics of key players (eg that they were all

suffering from physical disorders and that many had family problems caused by the health difficulties of the veteran or of his children (McCulloch); that they shared a history of problems (Garton) or shared the conviction that defoliants were responsible for veterans' problems (Garton, again) Of further interest were the characteristics of Vietnam veterans more generally (eg identification of a multi-part sense of betrayal (Ross) and a traditional self-distancing of Australian veterans from the home front (Garton).

In the author's view, the most interesting things about the various commentaries are:

- a) additional causal factors for the Association (beyond public apathy, DVA/RSL neglect and isolation driven by public ingratitude);
- b) the disputed legitimacy of those three factors ie arguments that there weren't good reasons for veterans' perceptions of isolation, apathy and neglect; and
- c) alternative explanations for veterans' alienation ie alternatives to community ingratitude.

The first and third of these – additional establishment causes and alternative explanations for veterans' isolation – are summarised below, principally to demonstrate the depth of thinking on these matters. The second, the disputed validity of the three key perceptions – isolation, apathy and neglect – isn't here explored because of the complexity of the arguments, because the existence of the perceptions (whether validly held by veterans or not) is the important thing and because the evidence often used by commentators to invalidate the perceptions typically comes from periods ending after 1980 ...and thus has little bearing on the validity of the factors at the time the Association was established.

Additional factors advanced by commentators for the establishment of the Association (some already mentioned, some implied and some included here regardless of the larger cohorts and longer time periods they are derived from) include:

- Vietnam veterans’ dissatisfaction with the repatriation claiming system;
  - the commitment of early key individuals;
  - the ending of isolation implicit in the establishment of the Association (all from McCulloch);
  - veterans’ feeling of betrayal, hostility towards civilians and cynicism towards authority figures and politicians;
  - “a sense of isolation, almost of paranoia” in the Association leadership group, paired with “a very strong and sincere desire to help other veterans” (both from Ross);
  - a feeling among veterans that they had been poorly treated relative to other returned cohorts (Grey, 1991);
  - repatriation bureaucracy on top of an unsatisfactory reception on returning home (Grey 1992);
  - “lack of information from Government on the impact of chemical exposure (Walker 1994);
  - the attractiveness of chemical harm stories to journalists and their publics;
  - the appeal of the chemical explanation for health problems (both from Smith);
  - the emergence of the US veterans’ movement;
  - a US-derived conviction among Association founders that health problems were a result of chemical exposure (both from Garton);
  - the development of a more combative attitude by veterans; and
  - a recognition that self-help was necessary (both from Hiddlestone).
- Explanations for isolation other than community ingratitude include ones about the community distancing itself from veterans and, still more interestingly, veterans distancing themselves from the community. These explanations include:
- “latent hostility” on the part of the community and the RSL;
  - a social and political climate that did not encourage veterans to talk about the war;
  - the generation gap’s discouragement of amity between earlier cohorts of diggers (all McCulloch);
  - veterans’ sense of betrayal resulting in cynicism regarding authority figures and in hostility towards those who’d not shared their experiences or who didn’t share their views about veterans’ problems (Ross);
  - a feeling among veterans that, for various reasons, “they were not the true heirs of the Anzacs” (echoing McCulloch’s comment that Vietnam veterans were without a tradition) (Ross);
  - veterans’ difficulty in moving into the RSL, echoing McCulloch’s remark that Vietnam veterans were without a community (Ross);
  - a feeling among a significant minority of Vietnam veterans that they had been poorly looked after, compared to other returned servicemen (Grey, 1991);
  - the influence on veterans and society of US views depicting Vietnam veterans as poorly treated and isolated (Grey, 1991);
  - veterans’ discontent with the behaviour of elements of the population during the war (Grey 1991);
  - a US-derived belief in the lack of discipline, drugtaking and general lawlessness of Vietnam veterans (Grey 1991);
  - veterans’ view that their war experience

*(Continued on page 41)*

had been “uniquely awful” (Grey 1991);

- veterans’ belief, derived from the US and shared with the broader population, that the community had ignored them and was even hostile (Smith);
- traditional tensions between the front line and the home front (Garton) and a (related) culture of soldiering “that found its own definition in opposition to home (Garton, again);
- the abruptness of national servicemen’s isolation from the military, from members of their units and from support systems (Hiddlestone);
- veterans’ isolation from other veterans once discharged – a result of the small number of veterans as a proportion of the population and of their own reintegration efforts - and the fact that many still served after Vietnam;
- the silence about Vietnam service that characterised the 1970s and the inability of some veterans to articulate their experiences;
- various impediments to settling in, including important recollections of anti-war protests (all Yule).

Readers should have little difficulty in finding something objectionable in such wide-ranging lists of additional reasons for the founding of the Association and for the isolation of many veterans in the post-war years. The authors own angst is reserved for a suggestion hinted at in some of the examined articles (and still entertained in some parts of the ex-service community) that Vietnam veterans, in founding an organisation to agitate for chemical compensation, were merely copying their US counterparts.

### **The US Influence**

It’s true that the announcement of the founding of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association in mid-

December 1979 followed hard on the heels of new media stories about legal and other action by US veterans. It’s true too, that Bernie Szapiel stated on multiple occasions in December 1979 that reports on US servicemen’s action had forged the connection for him between chemical exposure and his own symptoms. It’s further true that US veterans’ actions would to some extent energise the Association in the years ahead and be a model for various initiatives, including the VVCS. However, none of these facts gives credence to the view that Szapiel, McMinn and others, in urging the establishment of an Association were, like those who answered their call, merely copying US veterans (not that copying, in the worrying circumstances existent in early 1980, was anything to be ashamed of).

Indeed, there had been a string of media reports of legal action by US veterans in the year before the establishment period and none of these stories had resulted in Australian veterans lodging large numbers of repatriation claims, organising themselves or exploring options for legal action (noting that class actions weren’t permissible in Australia at that time).

Even if it was the case that the steps taken by US veterans seemed significant enough by December 1979 for the Australians to emulate, it was Szapiel and McMinn’s nominating of achievable action and key goals (at a time of year when news-starved media would happily pick-up their ‘message’) that made things different in the closing days of 1979. At best, actions by US veterans were additional encouragement for Australian veterans to attribute their/family health problems to wartime chemical exposure and to agitate for investigation, compensation and treatment.

The announcement of the Association’s birth by McMinn and Szapiel provided a clear course of action for others who’d previously been at a loss as to the steps they could take, recalling earlier unheeded statements by veterans to the effect that ‘the Government ought to do something’. Establishing a local branch of the

Association was also a practical path for those who shared Szapiel and McMinn's desperation, after the traditional veterans' methods of seeking help had failed. Both the bewildered and the desperate would bring to the new organisation a pent-up desire for action.

**It can't be stressed enough that the mid-December announcement by Szapiel and McMinn provided a plan that, by not being dependent in the first instance on action by either the RSL or the Federal Government, was able to be readily implemented by already aggrieved veterans and by their colleagues concerned about future health issues.**

In summary, rather than US legal action being the impetus for Australian veterans to organise, **the Australian veterans' movement was kicked off by McMinn and Szapiel's advancing of 'doable' actions – organising in pursuit of straightforward, reasonable goals – to a receptive sub-group of veterans via media organs eager for stories about chemical harms.** A blueprint thereby existed for tangible actions by those who became active supporters of the soon-to-follow State organisations.

### Conclusion

The commitment of the earliest active supporters of the Association was understandable, bearing in mind the context in which decisions to become involved were made viz. the extraordinary range of pointers to the likelihood of Vietnam chemical harms, the tradition of ex-servicemen organising, the perceived need for a Vietnam-specific organisation and the anticipated benefits of involvement.

Just as importantly, decisions to commit were rational, taking into account the circumstances of many of the actively involved. The Australian economy, like other Western economies had endured the consequences of two oil shocks (including the twin evils of high unemployment and inflation), technology was predicted to increase already high levels of unemployment and medical care was about to be considerably more expensive.

An extraordinary range and number of factors disposed active members to serve the new organisation and would, in different combinations in the years to come, continue to encourage

commitment.

The next article in this series will review events in 1980, the first year of the Association's existence.



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

The aim of "VVAA History Drafts" is to inform readers about progress made with the Association's history and encourage people who have relevant additional information to contact the writer. Readers with extra information or who would like a copy of the article with sources cited, can contact Kel at [vvhistory99@gmail.com](mailto: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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## THEO THROWS DOWN THE CHALLENGE!



My Name is Theo Kuiters a 75 years young Vietnam Veteran and this year RSL NSW invited ADF current and former members represent the ADF community in the City to Surf 2024

Having always wanting to enter but never thought I would be able to do it I started to train a few months ago. I am happy to report that I completed the event in 2 hours 3 minutes but it was a thoroughly enjoyed event and would recommend it to other members for next year If I can do it then a lot of other veterans maybe able to do it too. Cheers and many thanks for a great magazine.



**Australian Veterans'  
Children Assistance Trust**

## VVPPAA NSW SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

### Mid-Year Review 2024

This report has been reviewed and is available for VVPPAA to publish within their Newsletter



2022 Cohort

Scholar Updates and Thank You Notes

**Nathan Miller — Bachelor of Social Work  
Flinders University**

**Graham Walker AM Scholarship**

Nathan continues to progress through his degree and will be starting 500 hours of social work placement this semester. He is grateful for the support of his scholarship which inspires him to succeed academically and support and encourage others in their educational goals.

Thank You Note:

Dear AVCAT Scholarship,

I am writing to express my deep gratitude for the invaluable support your scholarship has provided me throughout my academic journey. Your generous assistance has not only alleviated financial burdens but has also been crucial in helping me manage challenges related to my health.

With the financial stability and support from VVPPAA and AVCAT, I have been able to focus more on my studies. Your scholarship has truly been a beacon of hope during difficult times, allowing me to achieve academic success that I once thought was out of reach.

I am pleased to share that I have found great success in my academic pursuits with social work. The financial support from AVCAT has motivated me to excel, and as a result, I am planning to undertake an overload of courses next semester, aiming to complete four topics and begin my placement in October and has been approved by the Uni. This decision reflects my commitment to finishing my degree as soon as possible and making my family proud. Semester 2, 2024 will be my biggest semester ever doing a full-time load of topics and starting my 500-hour social work placement.

Beyond my personal goals, I am eager to give back to my community and I wish to mentor other students through AVCAT once I complete my degree. This scholarship has inspired me to not only succeed academically but also to support and encourage others in their educational goals.

I am attaching a photo of myself with my Pop from Anzac Day, which captures a meaningful moment. My grandparents have been a constant source of encouragement, and I am thankful for their unwavering support throughout my education.

In summary, I want to thank VVPPAA and AVCAT for believing in my potential and supporting me in my academic endeavours. Your generosity has profoundly impacted my life, and I am hopeful for your continued sponsorship to navigate through what will be my most challenging semester yet.

Thank you once again.

Warm regards,  
Nathan Miller.



(Continued on page 45)

2024 Cohort

Scholar Updates and Thank You Notes

**Erin Eagles — Bachelor of Arts**

**Deakin University**

**Tim McCombe OAM Scholarship**

Erin has achieved mixed results this semester. Reflecting on this, she has put plans in place to improve her referencing and use of academic sources. A highlight of her last semester was attending a summer study program in London at the University of Roehampton. The Tim McCombe OAM Scholarship has made a profound difference in her life, and she is incredibly grateful for your support.

Thank You Note:

Dear Members of the VVPPAA Scholarship Committee,

I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for being selected as the recipient of the Tim McCombe OAM Scholarship for 2024. I am honoured and deeply appreciative of your generous support.

This scholarship has provided significant assistance in easing my financial burden, allowing me to fully immerse myself in my studies and extracurricular activities at Deakin University. As a final-year student majoring in both Public Relations and English Literature, this financial support has been instrumental in helping me pursue my academic and career goals without the added stress of financial constraints.

One of the most impactful opportunities this scholarship has afforded me is the ability to attend a summer study program in London at the University of Roehampton. This experience has been invaluable, allowing me to expand my academic horizons, engage with diverse cultures, and gain insights that have enriched my education in ways I had never imagined. Unfortunately, this also meant I was unable to attend the scholarship presentation in person. Please accept my apologies for my absence; I was deeply honoured to receive the scholarship and regret that I could not express my gratitude in person.

With the assistance of this scholarship, I have been able to make significant academic and personal progress. One notable achievement this past term was a High Distinction for my 'Ethics, Persuasion

and Society' public relations unit, with my highest-ever mark for an assessment at 92.5%, which would not have been possible without your support. Additionally, the scholarship has allowed me to access essential resources and materials necessary for my coursework, further enhancing my learning experience.

Looking forward, I aim to continue improving in areas such as my referencing and use of academic sources which is what has unfortunately resulted in my failing of the English unit 'Nature, Climate, Transformation' which I will be retaking over trimester 3. I am committed to making the most of this opportunity by dedicating myself to academic excellence and contributing positively to the university community. Your generosity has assisted me more than you could know, especially due to circumstances regarding my health and well-being. Once again, thank you for your investment in my future. The Tim McCombe OAM Scholarship is making a profound difference in my life, and I am incredibly grateful for your support.

Kind regards,

Erin Eagles

PS. Please enjoy the picture from my summer study program in London!



2024 Cohort

Scholar Updates and Thank You Notes

**Amara May Wright — Bachelor of Criminal Justice**

**Charles Sturt University**

**Phil Thompson OAM Scholarship**

Amara has achieved very good results this semester.

Her scholarship has significantly reduced her financial stress assisting her to adjust to university life and become increasingly independent. Amara is committed and motivated to continue her studies and pursue her goal of becoming a criminal detective.

Thank You Note:

To VVPPAA,

As a Charles Sturt University student studying a Bachelor of Criminal Justice in the first year, I would like to thank you for providing me with a scholarship as it significantly reduces the financial stress and burden of my education. It allows me to focus on my studies without the constant worry of finance. The support you have given me plays a crucial role in helping me achieve my dreams and goals.

I have passed all of my semester one subjects, receiving one pass, two credits, and one distinction, but I intend to improve my results as I now know what university life is like. Since being at university, I have become a more independent individual and I am learning how to function as an adult. I am learning how to manage my time and intend to use it more productively heading into the second semester.

This scholarship will help me achieve dreams that I have always thought were out of reach. My goal is to become a criminal detective and work on murder cases. I am committed to making the most out of my studies and this scholarship so I can positively contribute to my community and future profession.

Thank you for your belief in my potential. I am inspired by your commitment to supporting children like myself and I one day hope to give back to others in the same way.

Warmest regards,  
Amara Wright.

THE PANACEA  
(IN THE AFTERMATH OF VIETNAM)

you did not see us on our return,  
Aged by a conflict, unsolicited,  
knowing only what we didn't know  
during that brief year we were away,  
that time, at war, out of this place  
was bound to have its toll.

Perhaps it was those sepia newsreels  
of other men,  
from earlier times;  
embraced in thanks  
that calcified our hopes,  
that Efforts, no matter what!  
need to be hugged: to rest;  
before they evolve into disillusionments  
that takes a lifetime to resolve.

for, in the absence of Welcome,  
'Hollowness' abounded,  
as too, did broken loves and disabilities:  
Unmasked and Unwelcomed;  
that filled dreams,  
with a stench of destruction,  
so indelible  
that no escapism could erase one jot.

Yet today  
the laughter of older men,  
once Soldiers,  
sharing Commemorative Times  
and thoughts of mates;  
watched by younger folk,  
with Real curiosity,  
provides the type of panacea,  
that colours, Somewhat!  
'sepia' indelibility.

By Graeme Foley  
B Coy, 3 RAR  
First tour 67/68

## 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](mailto:office@tpinsw.org.au)).

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

.....



## A WILL TO GIVE

**As baby boomers shift into retirement, Australia is on the brink of the nation's biggest ever intergenerational wealth transfer. Yet estate or inheritance planning is rarely discussed by families.**

Talking openly about how you want your assets to be passed on can help avoid family disputes that take a toll both financially and emotionally. It provides a certain peace of mind for you – that your intentions will be met – and for your family and friends.

Certainly, the stakes have never been higher, with growing house prices and healthy superannuation balances contributing to a considerable increase in the wealth of many older Australians in the past two decades.

Around \$1.5 trillion was transferred in gifts or inheritances between 2002 and 2018. In 2018 alone, some \$107 billion dollars was inherited while \$14 billion was handed out in gifts.<sup>1</sup>

### **The importance of planning**

With so much at stake, having an estate plan in place helps to protect the interests of those you care about and to fulfil your wishes. It takes careful thought and professional advice, but that is no excuse for putting the task aside for later. If something happens to you in the meantime, your assets may not be distributed as you would like and there could be tax implications for your beneficiaries.

An estate plan includes a Will and, in some cases, funeral arrangements and instructions for the care of children and animals. Without a Will, your assets will be distributed according to state inheritance laws which may not be what you intended.

A plan may also include instructions for a testamentary trust to hold assets that are then distributed in a tax-effective way to your beneficiaries. And don't forget your 'digital will', a list of any online accounts and passwords that may be important.

Meanwhile, to protect your interests in case you are incapacitated in some way, an enduring power of attorney and a medical power of attorney nominate the people you would like to handle your affairs until you are better.

### **Complex families**

Estate planning is even more important in the case of blended families or for those with complex family relationships, especially where the emotional issue of the family home is concerned.

Disputes often centre around who gets the house when there are children from a previous marriage, but your new

spouse is living in the family home. You could allocate other assets to the children and leave the home to your spouse or require that the house be sold and the proceeds distributed to all. Alternatively, your Will could grant lifetime tenure in the home for your spouse with it passing to your children after your spouse dies. Having conversations early about your intentions, can help alleviate possible conflict.

If you are concerned about protecting the interests of a family member with mental health or addiction issues, a testamentary trust can help to look after your assets and distribute funds in a controlled way. A testamentary trust is also often used to provide for young children, holding the assets until they reach adulthood.

### **Dividing it up**

When it comes to deciding how best to allocate assets among children, some prefer to hand out equal shares no matter their individual financial circumstances, while others prefer to give extra to one who may be struggling. Given that Wills are frequently challenged by family members or others who believe they are owed a share or an even bigger share, it's wise to make your intentions clear in your Will including reasons and documentation.

While people who receive inheritances are usually well into middle age - on average 50-years-old<sup>2</sup> - and perhaps comfortably well-off, you could choose to bypass the next generation. Instead, you might consider leaving your estate to grandchildren, to help set them up with a deposit for a home or covering school fees.

Another option is to begin distributing your estate while you are alive and can share the enjoyment of the benefits the extra financial help might bring.

### **What's not covered?**

It is important to note that some assets are not covered by your Will. These include assets jointly held with someone else (such as a bank account or a house), super benefits and life insurance.

In the case of jointly held assets, ownership generally passes to the surviving partner and life insurance is paid to the beneficiary named in the policy.

For super, it's vital to complete a binding death benefit nomination to ensure the funds are paid to the person you choose. It's also worth considering certain strategies that can reduce or eliminate the tax payable by beneficiaries.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/wealth-transfers>

<sup>2</sup> Wealth Transfers and their Economic Effects - Commission Research Paper - Productivity Commission (pc.gov.au)

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

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PSK Private Wealth  
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## NEWS FROM SA STATE BRANCH

### CAMP ANDREW RUSSELL UPGRADE

In June 2023 the telephone in the VVFSa office rings and it's the DVA Grants hub in Canberra looking for the President, Mal Thiele. DVA were asking if VVFSa would be interested in a special "one off" grant opportunity, only open to selected organizations

Never one to pass on a grant opportunity, what evolved was we had been specially selected as one of 24 organizations nationally to apply for a special wellness grant. In our case to upgrade our bush retreat, Camp Andrew Russell (CAR), located at Alawoona 35 Km from Loxton and 250km from Adelaide. CAR started more than 20 years ago and is for Veterans and their families who just need to get away. It was a very basic BYO camp. Two showers, toilets and a small septic system, bore water and solar and generated power. No mains power no rubbish collection and no mail. Just peace and quiet.

After signaling we were interested in upgrading the camp, the frequent users of the camp were canvassed, for their wish list, Quotations were obtained for what we needed using local "tradies" and suppliers where available. A grant application of nearly 100 pages was submitted and nothing was heard for a month or two. It was now October 2023 and we were informed we had been successful with the grant application, the Minister For DVA who was having a good day approved \$697,000, which was all we asked for. Please don't ask the VVFSa for a donation as after the audit just completed, and a 37cent correction, have spent it all along with \$35,000 of our own money to cover price rises in steel timber and hardware in nearly every quote.

Once the grant was approved, we were informed all funds and work had to be completed by 1 July 2024 or we will forfeit all non-expended funds.

We said OK and set to work planning and building with the coordination of "tradies", suppliers and the weather, a big thank you to Bob Haslett our onsite coordinator and his team, it shows older Vets can still get it done ,along with the extended Xmas break. The longest part of the build was with the building permits which took just over 4 months from application to approval. In these times trades won't build unless approval is in hand, this obviously slowed up the project.

How do you spend all this money? What follows is a list of projects without individual costs,

- Buy licence for water bore.
- Level water tank installation area,
- Purchase and install 34,000l water tank, filled with water required by drillers
- Drill water bore to 92 meters
- Install water pump powered by single use solar panel @ 72m
- Drill for water, available at 43m.
- Remove the old ablution block and level the ground for installation of 3 demountable buildings.
- Design order construct deliver and install, 1x Male and 1x Female, shower and toilet blocks with 3 of everything inside and 1x discreet handicap ablution block
- Connect ablutions to camp kitchen with wheelchair friendly cement ramp.

- Install electricity, water and new cement septic system for 40 people to the ablution blocks.
- Purchase construct and power 20 meter shed (Workshop) with cement floor and 5 roller doors , the blacksmith part of the workshop is already in use with their first projects already completed.
- Construct and cement floors for four carports.
- Fire proof and insulate the Bunk/Swag House.
- Remove and install the uneven floor in the Kitchen, remove the windows and purchase and install new double-glazed windows and security shutters, upgrade power and lights.
- Upgrade 16 solar panels and 16kw storage battery.
- Plan design build and install new 20x12metre building complete with ramps and power for wellness center.
- Cement 10 cement pads for caravan sites along with miscellaneous other cement paths.

The upgrade is now complete and the official opening was on Saturday 3 August 2024. A more user-friendly camp is now available for all to enjoy, so, don't be a stranger and come see what we have achieved and enjoy your stay.

**Bob Ellis & Don Cochrane.**  
**SA State Branch**

**From the air**



**The signage**



**The mens' shed**



# VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDAL CONTROVERSY-PART 1

## Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

By Richard Barry OAM

Since 1996 I have been lobbying successive governments to have a large cohort of Vietnam veterans fully recognised for their valiant and lawful service.



Over the years I succeeded in securing support letters from several ex-Prime Ministers, ex-Deputy Prime Ministers, former Governor-General, retired senior Vietnam veterans (all have the RVCN some with two tours), several ex-servicemen's associations including branches of the RSL plus the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia and the National Servicemen's Association of Australia, Vietnamese Community and Vietnamese veterans (ARVN & Rangers) plus politicians from all sides of parliament – the full list fills twelve A4 typed pages. Yes, there have been a few naysayers but to be fair they have not read my appeal submission containing undisputed facts. They are in the minority, and I'll never be able to convince them otherwise.

My campaign was on the way for approval when the then Coalition Minister for Veterans' Affairs gave it a green tick for the then Minister for Defence to take it to Cabinet. Many senior Labor shadow ministers wrote letters to the government saying, "get it done". Unfortunately, the May 2022 election intervened and I had to start all over again. In October 2023 the Minister for Veterans' Affairs decided NOT to make a decision because he felt it was unlawful for him to do so.

The campaign continues. In the meantime, I happened across a recommendation made by Honours and Awards in 2022 regarding a fresh interpretation of the eligibility criteria for the RVCN. The Tribunal submitted the recommendation to the Minister who in turn refused to approve it but was subsequently overruled by the Australian Government Solicitor. To my mind this was an opportunity too good to ignore.

Over the years at my request, I have received in excess of 200 testimonials from Vietnam veterans and their families – some are horrendous to say the

least. So, because I had their email addresses I alerted them to the Tribunal decision. These men had served more than 60 but less than 181 days in South Vietnam. Through no fault of their own many were sent home having completed their national service obligations or were sent home suffering from accidents and/or terrible diseases. None had been 'thanked' by the former Vietnamese government by way of the RVCN.

Since November 2023 I have assisted 65 Vietnam veterans lodge their applications for the RVCN and so far, 18 have received the medal in the mail. I am helping 15 widows and children as well because many veterans have since passed away. The children and/or grandchildren want to march on Anzac Day proudly wearing the full complement of their hero's medals. Who could blame them? The most encouraging aspect of my campaign is the huge number of veterans, who have the RVCN, being so supportive. That gives me heart to push forward.

Many of these men have been called "short-timers" or "second-class veterans" by their comrades and because of this irresponsible name calling have refused to march on Anzac Day. This should not be happening in 2024. There are no 'diplomatic sensitivities' because the Vietnamese government ceased to exist in 1975 and our government has since approved the issue and wearing of foreign (Vietnamese) awards like the recent Republic of Vietnam Unit Citation.

So, if you or the families of the deceased would like to pursue this matter, I invite you to contact me anytime ([richyvon47@hotmail.com](mailto:richyvon47@hotmail.com)) and I will assist you with the very easy application process. All this work is done on a voluntary basis and I have been awarded the RVCN.

*In our July 2024 issue we included an article from Bert Hoebee in support of Richard Barry, which we have reprinted excerpts from below. Printed overleaf on page 48, we draw your attention to an article from Malcolm Whitney addressing concern and opposition to the campaign for awarding of the RVCN to those who missed out, and invite your comment.*

## NEVER LEAVE A MATE BEHIND

Military ethos (In Part).

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 (RVCN).

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 RVCN 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 RVCN. 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 (RVCNWPUC). That is rather incongruous since both awards have similar intent: either for recognition of individual 'meritorious service' (RVCN), or for 'noteworthy achievements along with noble sacrifices' for 1 ATF units and their members (RVCNWPUC).

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.

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. 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.

## VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDAL CONTROVERSY-PART 2

In August 2024 Malcolm Whitney wrote:

The Editor

The Vietnam Veterans' Newsletter

I refer to the article on the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal by Richard Barry in the July 2024 issue of the Vietnam Veterans' Newsletter.

Like the majority of Vietnam Veterans, I find it disappointing that Richard Barry and a small group of Veterans are unwilling to accept the umpire's decision on the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. Vietnam Veterans had the opportunity to submit their case to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal before it handed down its "Report of the Inquiry into Eligibility for the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal" in March 2014. Despite that decision Richard Barry has continued to raise the case for those Nasho's who didn't receive the medal because they served less than 181 days in Vietnam. This has just caused a lot of anguish for those Veterans who received the medal based on the criteria set by the South Vietnamese Government at the time.

I recently communicated with the Hon Senator Paul Scarr on the subject, and he mentioned that the Australian Government should have raised the six month issue with the Government of the Republic of Vietnam at the time, but how do we know they didn't. The reality is that the medal was awarded by the Republic of Vietnam Government who no longer exist, so how can you justify changing the criteria and not upsetting those who received the medal based on their 181 days service in the country. I commend Sen Paul Scarr for his detailed response to my letter, however, I found it interesting that my same letter was sent by my local member to The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, Shadow Minister for Veteran Affairs on 22 June 2024 and as at 7 August 2024 I have not received a response from Barnaby.

Richard Barry also raised the same issue in December 2021, and I wrote at the time to the Hon Andrew Gee MP who was the Minister for Veterans Affairs, expressing my concern over the issue. Andrew Gee like subsequent Veteran Affairs Ministers agreed that it would be wrong to change the criteria of an award set by a foreign country who no longer exist.

The important medal for all Vietnam Veterans is the "Vietnam Medal" and we should wear it with pride. I served 341 days as a Nasho with the 110 Signal Squadron in Vietnam (28/04/1967 – 2/4/1968), but those who served in some of the major battles no doubt deserved the medal more than I did, but everyone needs to just accept the criteria set for each award. The war was sixty years ago so let's move on and think of how we can help Vietnam Veterans suffering health issues as well as those veterans who served in more recent conflicts like Afghanistan, Iraq, and other conflicts.

Kind Regards

Malcolm Whitney

Lance- Corporal, 110 Signal Squadron, 1967 - 68 .

### HAVE YOUR SAY!

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

**PREFERENCE IS FOR EMAILED AND/OR ATTACHED WORD.**

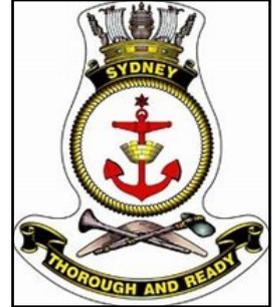
**DOCUMENT BE SENT TO**

**[bobf@vfvagranville.org](mailto:bobf@vfvagranville.org)**

# Vietnam Veterans' Stories

From letters diaries and memories

## HMAS SYDNEY:



### The bloody “American War” 1966-67

Part 10 of the story of HMAS Sydney, told by one of the crew, John Ingram., beginning with an encounter with the four star commander of US Forces in Vietnam (1964-68), General W C Westmoreland.

On one memorable occasion the four-star Commander of US Operations in Vietnam (1964-68) General W.C. Westmoreland, landed onboard in his flight of Iroquois “gunships” for discussions with our command team. This was a singular honour and Captain Synnot invited the general to stay for lunch. This went down extremely well with Westmoreland questioning where we’d sourced such fine steak (fillet nonetheless) and fresh, crisp salad vegetables. It was explained to the general, very proudly I might add, RAN ships didn’t stock “3-way beef” (variants of fatty minced meat) as was the case in the USN and all vegetables and fruits were fresh. Highly perishable items such as lettuce were individually wrapped in paper to extend their life. Hence, we could operate independently for up to 30 days without replenishment. The general was very impressed, especially with the steak, exclaiming it “was the finest of meals”.



General Westmoreland onboard SYDNEY 4 May 1966



Captain Synnot welcoming the General onboard

I examined the general's flight of 5 Huey "helos" while onboard noting the number and locations of bullet and shrapnel hits. How these "choppers" were deemed airworthy amazed me. To the Americans each hit was a "battle honour" to be borne with pride. In the ADF such damage would be repaired quickly, the asset tested for safety and airworthiness before being returned to fight another day. The comparison between the US and ADF forces was further highlighted by the fact we repatriated to Australia all damaged assets that couldn't be repaired in Vietnam or Thailand, including damaged Caribou, APCs, trucks and so forth.

As the Deputy Supply Officer, I was also the "Naval Stores" Officer, responsible for the inventory management of 24,000 "line items" of spare parts and consumables stowed in 40 store-rooms and stowages in the ship. In those pre-digital days this was a manual system and spares included everything from gear boxes and rotor blades for Wessex helicopters to toilet rolls. Lo behold if a ship ran out of loo paper!

On one occasion we did back-to-back deployments of embarked battalions. To give the Navy civilian stores support organisation adequate time to meet our requirements all orders were signalled once we departed Vietnamese waters. The signal was **four metres in length and took all night to type and transmit**. The Communications Officer was not amused. The support we received in Sydney during that frantic turnaround time was commendable. We sailed from Sydney operationally ready to return to South Vietnam.

I'd requested approval for several large storerooms sited below the waterline to be equipped with alarms should they flood. My request was denied. Ironically the absence of alarms was to have subsequent serious consequences. One Sunday afternoon, with SYDNEY alongside at Garden Island, one of these bulk storage spaces flooded whilst embarking fresh water into the ship's tanks. Unfortunately, the storeroom contained an entire semi-trailer load of packets of cereals which collapsed into one giant soggy mass. This mush had to be shovelled into garbage bins and dumped over the side after sailing for South Vietnam the next day. Hence a conga-line of sailors manhandling the waste

and scrubbing out the compartment. Days of needless effort and cost. I had visions of well-fed marine creatures off the North Coast of NSW as they gorged themselves on Kellogg's Weeties and Corn Flakes. However, the issues of flooding did not end there!

On this next occasion we were at sea and a routine inspection of the bulk medical store confirmed flooding was well underway as a result of a burst fire-main pump (salt water). The Damage Control Party lowered a pump into the space to commence the pump-out of the tens of thousands of litres of water involved. By now the water was three metres deep. Unfortunately, a drum of liquid detergent had not had the lid secured properly and the chemical negated the ability of the submersible pump to retain suction. This situation became quite comical as thousands of condoms in their little sealed packages floated to the surface together with the full gamut of expensive medical stores. Of course, it was once again a bucket brigade of men moving contaminated water, extracting solids and disposing of in the best ways possible.

The condoms weren't wasted. Hundreds were filled by the Meteorology sailor using compressed helium reserved for weather balloons. The inflated condoms were attached to fishing line and fed into the ship's wake. Each afternoon soldiers would lie on shock mats on the flight deck transom and shoot the condoms as they bounced around hundreds of metres astern.

This practice was not restricted to condoms. There was a genuine need to reduce the ship's displacement as more Army equipment needed to be embarked. Even claw-footed enamelled baths from the officers' bathrooms were lowered over the side. Once at some distance, soldiers engaged with machine gun fire, not ceasing until these items of a bygone and more gentlemanly British era, had sunk without trace.

Storing (and de-storing) an aircraft carrier at Garden Island had always been a hugely manpower intensive evolution. The Navy saw the wisdom of a Bailey Bridge arrangement which would enable vehicles to drive onto the flight deck and descend into the ship via the two aircraft lifts fitted amidships. This changed the

*(Continued on page 57)*

dynamics immensely and enabled rapid loading to be conducted 24/7 in all weather conditions. In terms of bulk goods especially it was a “game changer” as the volumes and numbers were substantial.



Note destroyer escort patrolling astern.

Each deployment involved convoys of trucks arriving dockside loaded and covered (discreetly in the case of Foster’s Lager in 26 oz cans) while Naval Stores trucks would deliver materials essential to wage war. Only then could the Army vehicles and **appurtenances** of military operations be embarked, fuelled to 90% capacity, and tightly secured to ring bolts in the enclosed hangars and on the exposed flight deck. Every item had to be weighed and assigned a specific location according to the stability sensitive Cargo Plan.

In the heat and humidity of a non-airconditioned ship in the tropics shaving caused skin rash, an excuse to grow a beard. However, beards were not encouraged as it was difficult to guarantee an air tight fit when wearing a gas mask. Irrespective of rank the approval of the “Old Man”, the CO had to be obtained.

The most irritating noise emanated from the several hundred electric fan motors installed throughout the ship which provided ventilation to spaces and compartments. These large fan motors frequently overheated and a strong smell of burning rubber cable would affect the immediate area necessitating a crash shutdown plunging cabins, offices, store-rooms and compartments into total darkness until safe to restore power.

The direction and intensity of the forced air trunking system could be controlled by a brass “punkah” louvre, a 150 mm hemisphere which, when rotated, directed air via an aperture which, when opened or closed, adjusted velocity. The large intakes for the ventilation network were located on the outer hull at near flight deck level. Those aft of the funnel ingested fumes comprising carbon monoxide and dioxide as well as sulphur gases. Every hour our huge boilers burnt many tonnes of heavy furnace oil the consistency of treacle. At night the boiler tubes had to be cleansed (“blown”). This required the ship to turn cross wind and belch clouds of smoke and ash particles. Inevitably, fumes and ash particles would find their way into the ventilation system and be trunked around the ship. This was the air we breathed day and night as in an aircraft carrier its very design means personnel are confined within the hull.

Oftentimes sleeping below decks was impossible due the heat and humidity. When approved to do so, men slept on camp stretchers on the upper deck or in gun sponsons.

On one occasion I visited VAMPIRE, one of our escorts at her mooring in Vung Tau Harbour: the air-conditioning was such a relief when compared with the primitive conditions onboard SYDNEY where heat, humidity, stale air, congestion and noise were the “norm”.

In the Tropics fuel spills from vehicles were an everyday event and constituted a threat to ship and personal safety. An Army vehicle, such as an APC loaded in Sydney, for example, would be fuelled to around 90% capacity but by the time the ship entered the Tropics the tank would be at 100% and venting vapours. Whenever a spill was reported to DCHQ (Damage Control Headquarters) a distinctive bell would toll throughout the ship and the Fire and Emergency Damage Control Party ordered to the location to clean up, reduce the fuel load, ventilate vapours and render the area safe.

(Continued on page 58)



APCs secured on flight deck aft



Assorted wheeled vehicles

In the 1960s cigarette smoking was especially commonplace. While sailors were conscious of the need to exercise fire precautions, this was not necessarily the case with soldiers who often smoked to relieve boredom or stress, unaware of the inherent dangers of fire aboard a warship.

On passage to South Vietnam tension onboard was palpable, especially the process of conditioning the embarked battalion of 600 soldiers for combat. Apart from the daily military routines, classes would be held to brief soldiers on the Vietnamese language, customs and so forth additional to intelligence briefings relating to the progress of the war. Weapons and uniforms, vehicles and equipment would all have to be checked and maintained. Physical exercise groups would use the gym equipment set up in “C” hangar to help acclimatise bodies to tropical conditions. At other times one would encounter soldiers playing cards, writing up diaries, reading and relaxing as best they could in the crowded spaces onboard.

A boxing ring had been set up in “C” hangar for those who wished to demonstrate their physical abilities in this contact sport. On one memorable occasion

SYDNEY’s “XO” (Executive Officer and No.2 in command), asked a young Private if he “fancied himself as a fighter”. The lad responded in the affirmative and quite brazenly challenged the XO to enter the ring. I didn’t witness the fight but a few hours later I was in the Wardroom when the XO entered the Mess sporting a very conspicuous black eye. Not a good look for the President of the Mess who clearly had an inflated opinion of his physical abilities in the ring. Decades later I can admit most of his subordinate officers felt he deserved the belting he received for he was inclined to bullying tactics and got his just desserts on this occasion. There were no repercussions!



VAMPIRE’s fast RAS approach on SYDNEY while RFA GOLD RANGER kept our boilers alight



On the return home leg of a deployment the ship’s company would do all possible to make “our” soldiers feel welcomed. This would include “Crossing the Line” ceremonies with King Neptune and his Mermaids, race meetings with wooden horse profiles, concerts with “female” entertainers and so on.



Soldiers relaxing on the flight deck (note fuselage of repatriated RAAF Caribou)



Placing bets trackside on (horse) race day



King Neptune & his maidens

Whenever safe to do so taking into consideration operational factors, a beer issue would be authorised for all personnel not required to keep watch that night. A 26 oz (750 ml) can of cold beer did much to maintain good morale. For 20 cents a can “opened” (could not be stowed away for binge purposes) a sailor or soldier could unwind and socialise. Unlike the US Navy or Marine Corps, we in the RAN didn’t have an illicit substance problem in our ships at the time.

**NEXT ISSUE JOHNS STORY WILL CONTINUE WITH SOLDIERS EMBARKING FROM SOUTH VIETNAM WITH THEIR MINDS, AND THE SAILORS, OBLIVIOUS TO THE DANGERS OF POTABLE WATER ABOARD HMAS SYDNEY.**



“Folies Bergere” performance



# PORKY'S PEOPLE

**An Illustrated History of the Seventh Battalion**

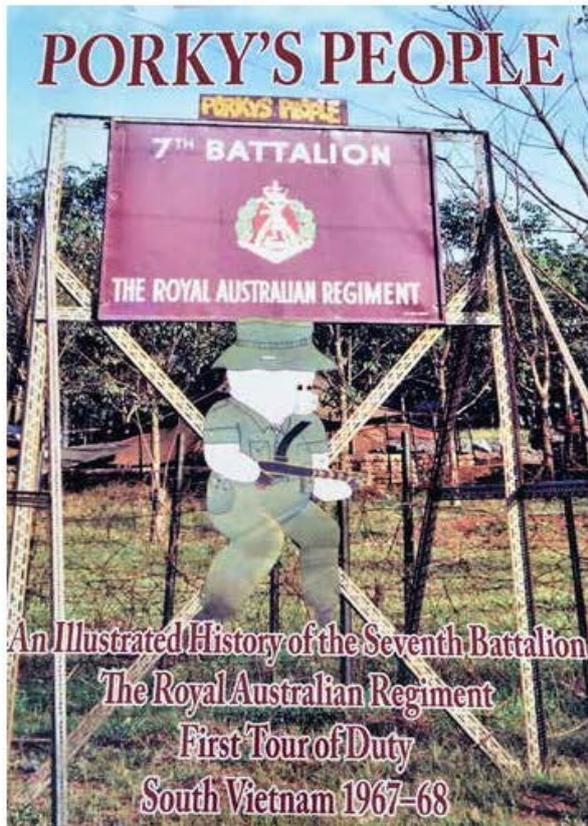
**The Royal Australian Regiment**

**First Tour of Duty**

**South Vietnam 1967-68**

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**tkeech38@gmail.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

## VIETNAM VETERANS STORIES

### **Memories of a Nasho - Part 2** **Infantry Corp Traing & first RAR Posting** By Ted 'OKA' Davies OAM AFSM

In mid-May 1968, I arrived by train to Central Station, Sydney to commence my Infantry Corps training after having completed Recruit Training at 1RTB, Kapooka. I was picked up by army bus and transported to the Infantry Training Centre at Ingleburn on the outskirts of the city. My training course was not yet ready to start, so I was put into tents at the back of the camp. Whilst I was waiting to start my course, I was tasked to act as enemy for the current infantry course. The enemy force – around 8 of us were commanded by a wily older Sergeant who trucked us up to the back of Mittagong to the exercise area in the Blue Mountains. We camped with this sergeant and harassed the trainees. We set up tin cans on strings on one side of their camp and whilst one of us would pull the strings to rattle the cans, others would sneak in and pinch the trainees' things on the other side. It was getting pretty cool up in the mountains at night and each evening our sergeant issued us with tots of rum which he said would put "Lead in our pencil" and "Hair on our chest" and other bawdy comments.

My infantry training course commenced in June 1968 under our platoon commander Lt Robert Convery who was later killed in Vietnam by a rogue soldier. We had very experienced corporal instructors who had mostly served in Malaya. They took us on through all the basic subjects that we needed to be taught. We spent a lot of time with weapons handling and time on both the 25 metre range and the longer distance ranges too. Again and again, we learnt to strip our weapons down and reassemble them blindfolded. We learnt how to clear stoppages and the reasons for them. We walked through live firing ranges with pop-up targets which recorded the number of hits.

We were taught about how APC's (Armoured Personnel Carriers) and how they are used to insert,

extract and transport soldiers into and out of danger areas. We learnt how to mount up and debus from these machines and about the danger of mines. We learnt about the variety of weapons they could carry and their method of control and operation.

We went on exercises up in the mountains where my knowledge of the "enemy" came to the fore and I was able to safeguard our gear from my friend the wily old enemy sergeant. We were taught navigation skills, how to read a map, how to do a resection and find our position on the map and how to move on a compass bearing. One of the major lessons we learned was what to do when coming under fire. We were taught the basics of "Fire and Movement". That is, whilst one group fires at the enemy, the other group moves and then vice versa. We practiced this action again and again under different scenarios until it became automatic.

Finally, we were introduced to the workhorse of Vietnam, the Iriquois Huey helicopter. We received basic instruction in how to approach and mount up in this chopper. It seemed like a magic moment when we finally mounted up and the helicopter took off for a short ride around the base before coming into land and we dismounted. It is to be noted that in Australia, we flew with the sliding doors both closed whilst in Vietnam doors were not used because the door gunners were sitting in the rear corner seats manning their M60 machine guns.

Our Infantry Corps training culminated in a major exercise up in the Blue Mountains. We were dropped off in sections of 10 men with full combat gear and rations on a fire trail in a remote location. We had to navigate to another remote pick-up point in three days' time. To get to the pick-up point, we had to cross mountain valleys and streams/small rivers in the middle of winter.



We quickly realised that the water was freezing and the best way to get across was to strip totally naked. We would put all our clothes in our hootchie and swim across the river with our pack and clothes wrapped up in the hootchie. This way, we could build a small fire and dry off before putting on our dry clothes. The mountains were very steep and we had to find our best way by examining the contour lines on the map.

Whilst at Ingleburn, we had to take our turn at Guard Duty. There were no private security contractors back then, which shamefully we have now. Sometimes, guard duty resulted from some misdemeanour but mostly one was just rostered to do a turn. Guard duty then involved arriving for duty at 1800 hrs and turning out on parade for inspection by the guard commander. Then the night roster was handed out and basically it was patrol the perimeter of the camp or man the gates for a number of hours and then changeover and sleep for a number of hours and so on for the night. We patrolled the camp boundaries in pairs with pick-axe handles for weapons. At 0600 hrs next morning, we once again paraded and were dismissed as the day shift came on duty.

To our surprise and relief, we hardly did any parade ground drill. All our time was spent learning about the infantry weapons and tactics we would need to know if posted overseas.

On a lighter note, someone stole my “hootchie”. When I went to the Q Store to get another one, I explained what had happened to the Staff Sergeant who “owned” the store. He turned to another soldier waiting and said to that man – “You need a new hootchie don’t you”? The other fellow was quite confused and before he could reply, the Staff Sgt said to him “Sign Here”. The Staff Sgt then issued a new hootchie to the other man and immediately ripped it in half giving me one half and the other man the other half. Now he said to me, “I can give you a new hootchie for that damaged one you have” and to the other man he said “I can take that damaged hootchie in place of the new one I have just issued you and all my books will be square”.

One night whilst at Ingleburn, a few of us decided to go and check out the Cross – that is Kings Cross of sex and adult show fame. The place was chock full of Yank servicemen who were in Sydney on R & R from Vietnam or from visiting US ships. They had heaps of money with girls hanging around them in droves. Everywhere, there were places and signs welcoming them. The “Beefsteak and Bourbon” and the “Texas Steakhouse” were a couple, but there were lots of others too. Late in the evening, after working our way along the Cross strip, we decided that it was too late to get back to

*(Continued on page 63)*

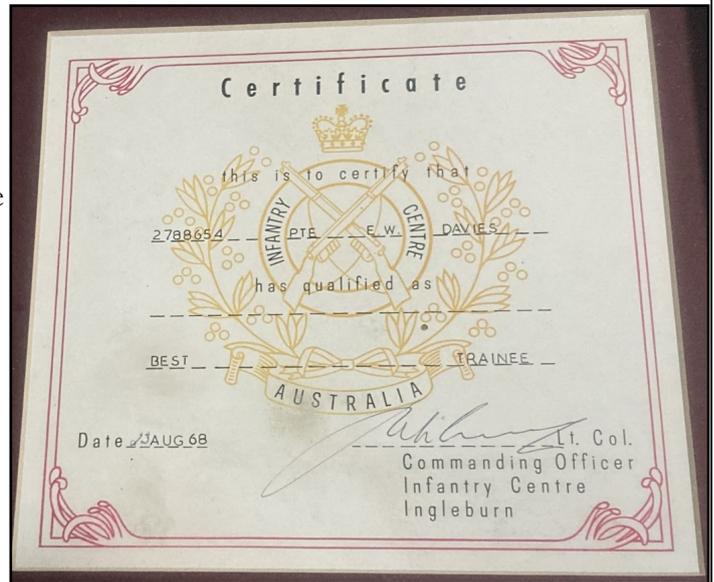
our barracks. So, we made our way to the Seamen's Mission in the Rocks around from Circular Quay. We booked in to sleep for the night. However, by 2.00am or 3.00am, the farting, snoring, spitting, nightmares and the stink drove us out. We pooled our money and got a taxi back to our own digs at Ingleburn.

At some stage, during our Corps training, we received leave and I flew home because in a family photograph, I am in Battle Dress, our winter uniform. My mother in particular was pleased to see me and made such a fuss about having me home, if only for a few days.

Smoking was becoming more universal with the end of each training session announcement – "Time to break for a smoke". We were even taught to rub the cigarette ash on our clothes and put the extinguished butts into our pocket so as to not leave a trace of how many there were in our group. Right throughout my training and service, smoking became more addictive. In Vietnam, we even had cigarettes issued as part of our ration resupply packs.

Centre – Australia

I received notice that my next posting was to 2 RAR based at Enoggera on the outskirts of Brisbane QLD.



To my great surprise, I was awarded "Best Trainee" of the Infantry Centre. At our passing our parade I was presented with the award. The award consisted of an ashtray engraved with the words – "Best Trainee - 1Platoon - Battle Wing - My name and Number – Infantry Centre Aug 68" and features the Crossed Rifles Badge with the words Infantry

When my posting came from Infantry Corps training to 2RAR at Enoggera on the outskirts of Brisbane Qld, one of my fellow platoon members owned an old Fiat sedan. He suggested that we could share the petrol expenses and drive from Sydney to our new posting. Being a mate, I readily agreed and after packing our kit, we set off. As we had a couple of days before we had to report, we decided to visit a friend who owned a terrace house in Paddington, Sydney. This friend put on a party to celebrate our completing the Infantry Course. We had a great time at the party drinking our new friend's grog and making friends with the girls who seemed to just love us "Bronzed Aussie Soldiers".

Sadly, we had to leave all our new friends and report for duty at Enoggera. Off we went in the old Fiat. Not sparing the horses, the old car did a head gasket somewhere around Ballina. Not to be stopped, I had heard about a chemical additive called "Chemiweld". So, procuring a bottle of this magic ingredient, we poured it into the radiator and brought it up to running temperature. Lo and behold it worked sort-of. It stopped most of the water leaks and we were able to limp to the army base at Enoggera where 2RAR was based.

We managed to source another head gasket and being mechanically inclined, I was able to replace it and thus, we had wheels.

When we arrived at our new posting – 2RAR, we discovered that the unit had only just returned from a tour of Vietnam. Many in the Battalion were National Servicemen and their two years required service was up and they would be going back to civilian life. All others were on extended leave and the camp was almost deserted. The new brick accommodation blocks had not long been completed and after my time at “Silver City” at Kapooka, followed by living in a tent at Ingleburn, the new digs were positively 6 star. The warmer weather was very pleasant after winter in Sydney. Mostly we were able to wear the long army shorts when not on formal duty.

As there were only very few personnel at the Enoggera base, the daily duties were shared among these few. Guard and mess duty were our main roles because there were very few other activities. We did have funeral Honour Guard duty from time to time for those killed in Vietnam and this duty brought home to us the realisation of the reality of war and death. At the time I was based at Enoggera, we had an American Army General visit and we were tasked with providing the Honour Guard. A part of the visit was an inspection of the troops by the visiting General. Whilst training for this visit, we were practising a special drill called “Open Order Review” in which the front rank of the guard march forward 15 paces and halts. At the same time, the middle rank of the guard march forward 7 paces and halts. The rear rank of the guard does not move but remain in place. This order allows for the visiting dignitary to move up and down between the rows so as to inspect the honour guard. However, when the order is given as in ‘By the Centre, Open Order Review, Quick March’, instead of taking an immediate step, there is a wait time of 6 beats on the drum. So, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom and step off on the next beat. Well, I had been half asleep whilst the RSM droned on about something or other when I heard the order – Quick March. I was in the front row, so immediately my left foot shot out and I was off before I realised my mistake. Well, I was committed now and I had to continue. The RSM spotted my error from a distance and down he marched. The RSM was a thin wizened up sort

of man and of shorter stature. I am a bit over 6 feet. Up marches the RSM, and standing directly in front of me he looks up at me bellowing “You horrible little man”. I have got to say that whilst externally I stood rigidly to attention, internally I was thinking something else.

There was not a lot to do at Enoggera with duty really only from 0900 hrs to 1700 hrs. With my mate having wheels, we were able to cruise around with our new found freedom. We discovered that there was a small WRAAC base in Brisbane and decided to go and check out our female counterparts. As luck would have it, we met two young ladies who were identical twins and they delighted in fooling us by swapping places with each other. Their commanding officer, a Major, was a stout buxom older woman. But, I have to admit, she zealously guarded her girls and their honour and warned us of the dire consequences if we sinned with her ladies. There was also a hotel in the city called the Land Office Hotel with very friendly barmaids that we used to frequent when in the city. I was quite fascinated with the electric trolley buses that operated at the time. They were able to drive in different lanes whilst still connected to the overhead wires by long flexible poles. We had a great time in Brisbane even visiting the Gold Coast.

On one occasion whilst based at Enoggera, the Red Cross came visiting the base promoting and seeking blood donations. The Red Cross nurse who addressed our parade was most attractive with a deep V-necked bosom revealing uniform. When volunteers were called for every last man took an immediate step forward to donate blood. It was quite amazing how patriotic and generous of spirit we all were!

Included in the building program at Enoggera was not only the accommodation blocks but also a new mess hall and kitchen block too. Whilst based there, on occasions, I was rostered for mess duty. I was amazed at some of the new kitchen innovations which included a potato peeling machine that could take a whole large jute bag of spuds at a time. This machine had an abrasive spinning disk at the bottom which wore off the peel as the potatoes tumbled around inside.

*(Continued on page 65)*

There was also a conveyor type dish washer in which plates and dishes were loaded at one end. They then passed in under the hood of the machine and on through a dryer and arrived cleaned and dried ready for stacking away at the other end.

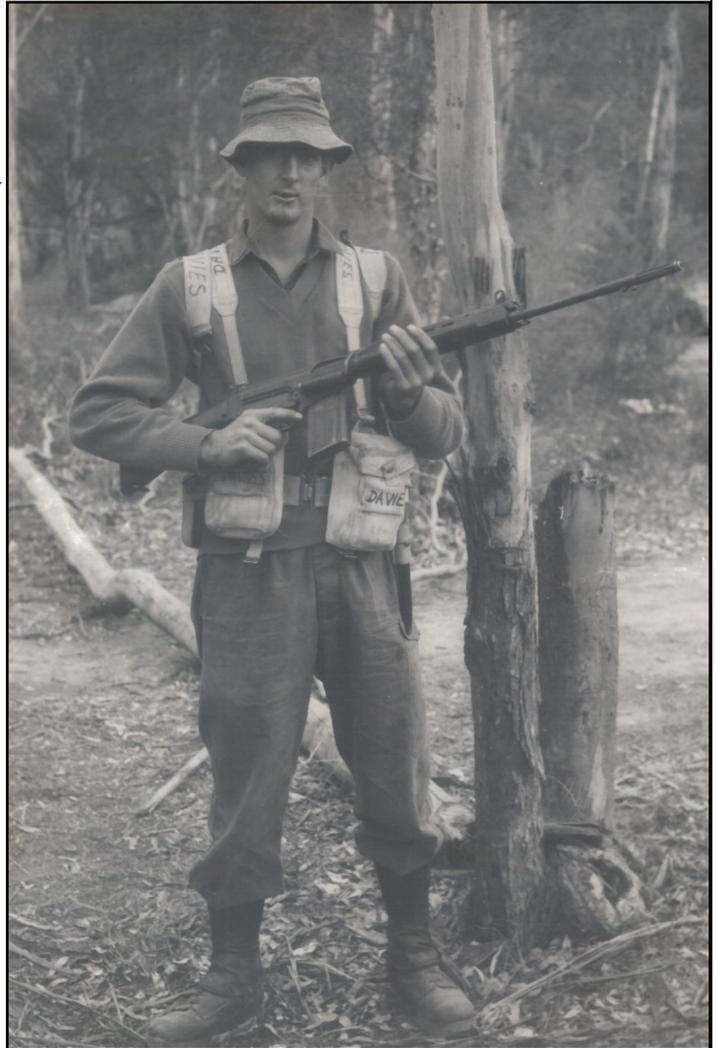
At some stage in my training, we had a financial officer speak to us. He not only explained the principles of the DFRB Fund (Defence Forces Retirement Benefits), but also advocated the advantages of drawing only a small amount of our pay and having the balance diverted to an investment or savings account. He explained that all our everyday living expenses, our army clothing and our medical expenses were all covered by the Army and that we really only needed a small amount for any extra costs we might have. I took the officer's advice and managed to not only have enough to buy a brand-new Holden HT utility when I finished my National Service but was also able to purchase a very high quality AKAI HiFi stereo amplifier, tape deck and large Pioneer speakers whilst on R&R in Hong Kong.

As a young man who was from the bush and been called up to serve his country, being in a unit that had just returned from Vietnam was never going to cut the mustard. Some other fellows I had known, were posted to 9RAR who were being sent overseas to Vietnam later in the year. So, I applied for a transfer to 9RAR and as a result was interviewed by the CO. He asked me for my reasons for requesting the transfer and told me that whilst he would like me to stay with 2RAR, he understood the reason for my actions and approved my transfer.

It took some time for all the paperwork to go through the various channels. While I was waiting for this to happen, some courses came up for application. One of them was a radio operator's course. I had been raised in remote Australia where we did not have a telephone and used radio to communicate and was thus familiar with radios. I applied and was accepted for this course and also the associated code course which was conducted in conjunction with it. I passed both courses and qualified as an infantry signaler.

This action was to play a major role in my later service in Vietnam. At that time, we also got a very small increase in wages for the extra qualification.

Finally, my transfer came through and I left 2RAR for the next stage of my National Service.



**IN OUR NEXT ISSUE TED'S ADVENTURES AS A NATIONAL SERVICEMAN, WILL CONTINUE WITH HIS POSTING TO SOUTH VIETNAM AS AN INFANTRY/SIGNALER, TO THE AUSTRALIAN REINFORCEMENT UNIT AT NUI DAT.**



## Reunions & Notices

### **HMAS LEEUWIN (JRTE) 50th Intake - Marks/Morrow/ Howden**

Date: 7 Feb 2025  
7-8 February 2025. We are excited to extend a warm invitation to all members, their partners and training staff to join us in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the mighty JRTE 50th Intake. Please make contact via Facebook or email to express interest.  
Location: Adelaide. SA  
Contact details  
Name: Max Cook  
marksmorrowhowden@gmail.com  
Website: Facebook: Marks  
Morrow Howden 50th intake  
H.M.A.S. LEEUWIN JRTE

### **30th Intake Army Apprentices 50th reunion 1975 - 2025**

Date: 8 Feb 2025  
Planning is in progress for the reunion of our intake. All members and partners are welcome. Details can be found on the 30th Intake Army Apprentices Facebook page or by contacting the organising Chair.  
Reunion details  
Location: Maroochy RSL, QLD  
Contact details  
Name: Colin Ferguson  
cfs.sailing247@gmail.com

### **HMAS Sydney IV Commissioning Crew 42nd Reunion**

Date: 21 Feb 2025  
All Commissioning Crew members and their partners are encouraged to attend.  
Reunion details  
Location: Fremantle, WA  
Contact details  
Name: Derek Leecroft  
Phone: 0409 632 961  
magpielxii@gmail.com

### **RAAF 17th Apprentice Intake (Lizards) - 60 Year Graduation**

Date: 18 Mar 2025  
18 - 20 March 2025. A reunion to celebrate 60 years since the graduation from Wagga Wagga in 1965. There will be a welcome function, a reunion dinner and a farewell breakfast. Registrations will be sent late 2024. Please make contact if you are not on the Lizards mailing list.  
Nelson Bay Bowling Club,  
Contact details  
Name: Leigh (Stretch) Marshall  
Phone: 0438 110 451  
stretchlizard@gmail.com

### **RAN Servicewomen Reunion**

Date: 14 Mar 2025  
14 - 16 March 2025. All current and ex serving ladies are invited to attend. Afternoon Tea - Friday, Reunion Dinner - Saturday and Richmond Day Trip  
Location: Hobart, TAS  
Contact details  
Name: Cindy Gallahar  
Phone: 0416 086 080  
nwtas25@gmail.com

### **HMAS Leeuwin 83rd intake**

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

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

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

### **6 RAR Association Reunion**

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

**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 was 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



**"I tell ya mate, one day we'll all be laughin' at this flamin' cockup at some bloody reunion"**



**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](mailto: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@vvfagranville.org](mailto:billr@vvfagranville.org)  
 PO Box 170, (8 Mary St.) National Secretary: **Ron O'Connor JP** Email: [secretary@vvfagranville.org](mailto:secretary@vvfagranville.org) Granville,  
 NSW 2142 Tel: 02 9682 1788 Fax: 02 9682 6134 Web: <http://www.vvfa.org.au>

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VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE  
 VVPPAA NSW Inc.  
 8 Mary St PO Box 170  
 Granville NSW 2142  
 Ph: (02) 9682 1788  
 Fax: (02) 9682 6134  
[www.vvfagranville.org](http://www.vvfagranville.org)  
[secretary@vvfagranville.org](mailto:secretary@vvfagranville.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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:newsouthwalespva@gmail.com)  
 Hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1700

**EUROBODALLA**

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

**GREAT LAKES**

Unit 3, 80-82 Kularoo Drive  
 Forster, 2428  
 Office: 0480 283 744  
[vvaglforster@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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@vvfamudgee.org](mailto:secretary@vvfamudgee.org)  
 President: **Ken Atkinson**  
 Mob 0428 246 147  
 Secretary: TBA  
 Hours: Mon, Tue, Wed 9:30-3:30

**NEWCASTLE & HUNTER**

17 Tyrrell St., PO Box 288  
 Wallsend 2287  
 Ph: (02) 4951 2666  
[nclvets@bigpond.net.au](mailto:nclvets@bigpond.net.au)  
 President: **Michael Frost**  
 Secretary: **Dave Hansen**  
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**RIVERINA**

PO Box 7120  
 Wagga Wagga NSW 2650  
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 Ph. (02) 6922 9766  
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 Mb: 0457 258 891  
 Email: [ralph todd@bigpond.com](mailto:ralph todd@bigpond.com)

**SHOALHAVEN**

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 Mob 0412 642 848  
 Secretary: **Carl Robinson**  
[shoalhaven.vietvets1@gmail.com](mailto:shoalhaven.vietvets1@gmail.com)

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 Mob 0408 296 765  
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 Secretary: **Barbara Curtis**

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798 North Bank Rd  
 Taylors Arm 2447  
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 Ph: 02 6564 2153  
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 Email: [cvpb16@hotmail.com](mailto:cvpb16@hotmail.com)

**WENTWORTH-COOMEALLA**

**Ramon Deed Veterans Retreat**

PO Box 397  
 Dareton NSW 2717  
 Ph: 03 5027 4447  
[rdveteransretreat@iinet.net.au](mailto:rdveteransretreat@iinet.net.au)  
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 Mob 0481 306 854  
 Secretary: **Geoff Forde**  
 Mob 0419 114853

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Bega RSL SB

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gandsberman@bigpond.com

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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

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Fax: 07 5578 2822

State President: **Peter Handy JP**

Mob 0448 195 020

president@vfvqld.com

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

Mob 0408 276 044

treasurer@vfvqld.com

www.vfvqld.com

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

18 Leagues Club Drive

PO Box 368

Nerang Qld 4211

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admin@vietnamveterans.net.au

President: **Andy Bryson**

Mob 0424 476 027

Secretary/Treasurer: **Peter Cameron OAM**

Mob 0408 276 044

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

PO Box 280, Garbutt East

JC Butler Bldg

1 Charters Towers Rd

Townsville, 4814

Ph: 07 4772 4655

secretary@vsctsv.org.au

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

The Yerbury Centre

Unit 1, 31-39 Norfolk Rd

Marion SA 5043

Ph: 08 8296 2411

Mon – Thur 1000 – 1500hrs

vvfsa@tpg.com.au

http://vvfsa.org.au

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

M: 0412 458 054

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

Mobs 0448 994 561/0428 377 287

Ph: 08 8853 4379

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

30 Cornish Ave

Woodvale WA 6026

President: **Milton Kirk JP**

Ph 08 9409 6682

vvfawabranch@gmail.com

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

**Mr Dennis Hanmer OAM on 02 9682 1788**

**Currently in the ADF, Transitioning, a younger Veteran?**

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

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

## Please consider leaving a bequest in your will

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Operation Life



## Register Now!!

CALL **1800 011 046**



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

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

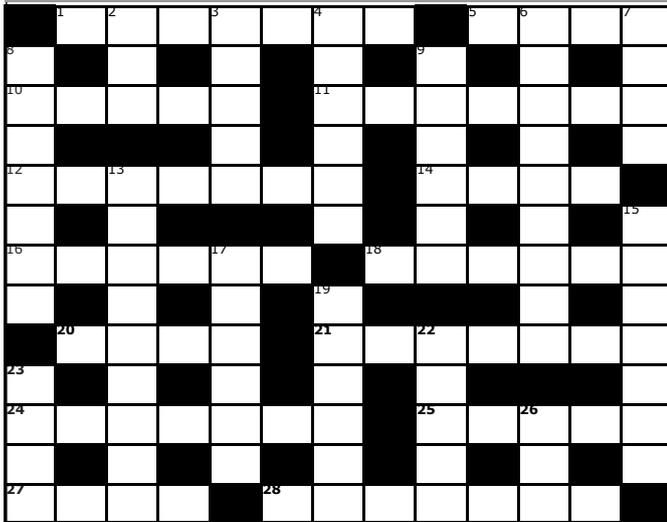
Workshops are open to anyone concerned about veterans, their family, friends and mates in the service and veteran community. Welfare, Compensation Advocates and other helpers from ESO's are welcome and encouraged to attend.

FORMERLY

Veterans and Veterans Families  
Counselling Service



# CROSSWORD CORNER



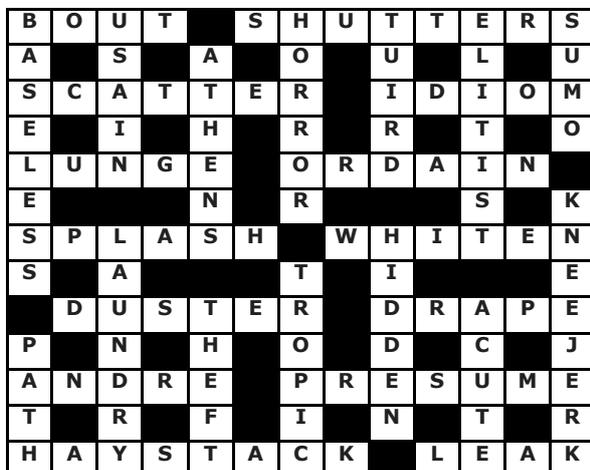
**ACROSS**

**DOWN**

- 1. Brings in goods
- 5. Monarch in Russia
- 10. US symbol
- 11. Less senior
- 12. Crook
- 14. Bound
- 16. Wick burner
- 18. Dwell in
- 20. Largest continent
- 21. Join
- 24. Find size
- 25. Sunny
- 27. Fastened
- 28. Type of polish
- 2. Large cup
- 3. Singing drama
- 4. Attempting
- 6. Autograph
- 7. Seldom
- 8. The military
- 9. General people
- 13. Countryside view
- 15. Enigma
- 17. NRL rugby
- 19. Plot
- 22. Part of bottle
- 23. Leave out
- 26. Period

*Solution next issue*

**JULY 2024 SOLUTION**



# THE UNKNOWN COMIC

An elderly guy is walking down the road and two doctors are watching him. The first doctor says to the other “Looking at his walk, I’m pretty sure he has haemorrhoids”.

The second doctor argues “No way, it’s an enlarged prostate.”

The old guy gets a bit closer and the doctors approach him and one says “My colleague and I are discussing what might ail you. I think it’s haemorrhoids, but he thinks it’s a prostate issue. Would you mind settling it for us?”

So the old guy looks at them. He points to the haemorrhoids guy and says “You’re wrong.” Then he points to the other doc and says “And you’re wrong.”

They look at him for a bit, and he follows up with “And I’m wrong.”

“I thought it was a fart”

This Able Seaman told the ships doctor that his bum hurts. The Doctor asked him where, specifically did it hurt. The AS told him it hurt all around the entrance. The doctor told him it is the exit. “And, as long as you think of it as an entrance, it’ll continue to hurt.”

And, some recent thoughts....

Why is it called a "building" when it is already built?

If flammable and inflammable mean different things why is non-flammable the opposite of both. How can someone "draw a blank"?

Why is the word "abbreviate" so long?

The first time I got a universal remote control, I thought to myself, ‘This will change everything.’ When asked what is 4000 in roman numerals always reply “mmmm”.

When you send something by car it’s a shipment, and when you ship something, it’s cargo. Weird. One difference between men and women is that when a woman says ‘Smell this’, it usually smells nice.

I can’t get over the fact that the word GULLIBLE upside-down, looks like a cat.

Do Not Touch must be terrifying when reading it in Braille.

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

**Call**

**FORMERLY KNOWN AS**



**24/7**

**A service founded by Vietnam veterans**

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

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

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

THAT IS A RATE OF 490 VETERANS PER YEAR

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.

1 JAN—31 DEC

Website: [www.vvfagrانville.org](http://www.vvfagrانville.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 <sup>o</sup> :	DONATION RECEIPT N <sup>o</sup> :
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  
 VVPPAA NSW  
 PO Box 170  
 Granville  
 NSW 2142

<b>OFFICE USE ONLY</b>	
<b>MEMBERSHIP REGISTRY</b>	
<b>DETAILS CHANGED</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	___/___/___
<b>INITIALS:</b>	_____

# 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

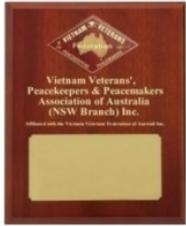
VVPPAA NSW Branch  
 PO Box 170  
 Granville NSW 2142

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

# MERCHANDISE LIST

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

# MERCHANDISE IMAGES



1101



1103



1105



1107



1108



1109



1111



1112



1113



1114



1120



1121



1122



1125



1126



1127



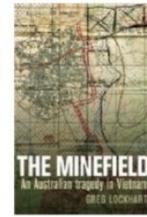
1128



1129



1130



1201



1308



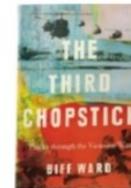
1309



1312



3440



3442



1401



1402



1403



1404



1405



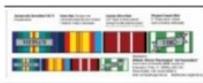
1406



1411



3445



1500



1501



1507



1502



1503



1504



1506



1508



1509



1510



1511



1512



1513



1514



1515



1516



1517



## MERCHANDISE SPECIALS

ONLY WHILE STOCKS LAST  
ALSO AVAILABLE ON LINE

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

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



3301



3302



3133



3134



3140



3402



3403



3404



3406



3407



3408



3409



3412



3414



3415



3416



3420



3500

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

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



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
R64030	LSBA	JJ	SHARMAN	HMAS SYDNEY (2)	UNK	12/1/48
R96117	EM2	MA	AVARD	HMAS SYDNEY (3)	26/7/24	5/7/51
R109444	OS	MR	BOSUSTOW	HMAS SYDNEY (4)	19/10/24	15/3/54
R103544	EM2	PG	DOUGLAS	HMAS SYDNEY/BRISBANE	17/5/24	30/10/52
R59493	AS	AJ	GRAYSON	HMAS DUCHESS (2)/SYDNEY (7)	22/8/24	17/7/45
R63521	LEMP	PJ	BIRD	HMAS VAMPIRE/SYDNEY	18/11/22	10/5/47
R58961	EM	GL	DAVIES	HMAS VAMPIRE	UNK	23/3/45
R42939	ERA2	CM	KELSON	HMAS VAMPIRE/VENDETTA	18/4/24	29/5/48
R65458	ERA2	BR	WILSON	HMAS VENDETTA	UNK	21/10/39
O370	LCDR	AG	FERRIS	HMAS HOBART	17/9/24	18/3/35
R93363	LTO	NT	SAMPSON	HMAS MELBOURNE/HOBART	30/7/24	2/10/45
R93275	SA2	PM	SCOTT	HMAS QUEENBOROUGH	19/9/24	3/5/45
R58038	OS	RR	COPELIN	HMAS QUEENBOROUGH	UNK	17/5/43
R42153	CSA	JJ	ASPLIN	HMAS DERWENT/SWAN (2)	UNK	28/5/41
R63493	EM	RR	MCGREGOR	HMAS PARRAMATTA/STUART (2)	UNK	17/4/47
R53196	LSWM	DR	LAWSON	HMAS YARRA (2)	UNK	30/5/40
R94081	POCD	PC	NARRAMORE	CLEARANCE DIVING T3	7/24	6/8/47
R54765	LAM	KJ	FRENCH	RAN HELICOPTER FLIGHT	UNK	15/7/37
213810	LCPL	JB	DYSON	DET 1OFP/161RECFLIGHT	5/6/24	13/2/43
3787052	PTE	BJ	WALL	161 REC FLIGHT	UNK	25/2/45
3791524	PTE	PR	BRASSINGTON	1ARU/HQ1ATF	11/8/24	1/5/47
2789868	PTE	RJ	MITCHERSON	1ARU/HQ1ATF	16/6/24	25/10/47
1201024	CPL	CF	OAKDEN	AFV PROV UNIT	6/6/24	31/3/43
2788247	LCPL	P	BOYD	8FLD AMBULANCE	UNK	5/6/47



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
311466	MAJ	J	JEANS	67 GLS	26/7/23	11/3/31
44914	CPL	GB	THOMSON	HQ1ATF/HQAFV	6/24	30/1/51
2781696	LCPL	BL	TUCKER	21SUP PL RAASC	UNK	23/2/45
216514	CPL	RJ	DAVIS	HQ 5COY RAASC	13/8/24	16/10/47
4411136	CPL	PT	FARRELL	HQ 26COY RAASC	24/9/24	16/9/48
3793725	PTE	KR	BROWN	HQ1ATF/HQ1ALSG	26/12/23	24/1/47
2789526	PTE	MA	GROSSE	1OFP	UNK	10/12/47
2784191	GNR	JD	HANRAHAN	4 <sup>TH</sup> FLD REGT	UNK	18/11/45
2784993	BDR	JA	LAING	12 <sup>TH</sup> FLD REGT	14/5/24	8/7/45
37405	WO2	DE	SPARK	1 <sup>ST</sup> FLD REGT (2)	23/6/24	7/9/35
511526	SPR	SJ	GOOD	198 WKS SECT	UNK	4/8/48
2789075	SPR	J	SMITH	17 CONST SQD	UNK	30/1/47
2788121	SPR	B	LORD	17 CONST SQD	UNK	23/3/47
2782633	SPR	DJ	SCHUBERT	1 <sup>ST</sup> FLD SQD	6/9/24	2/6/45
2784266	TRPR	NG	MULHOLLAND	A SQD 3CAV REGT	UNK	5/5/45
43938	TRPR	GM	VIGAR	A SQD 3 CAV REGT	20/12/23	16/4/444
3410993	SGT	AJ	PLANT	A/B SQD 3 CAV REGT	UNK	3/10/42
2788423	TRPR	PC	GOODMAN	A/B/SQD 3 CAV REGT	UNK	17/1/47
	PLEASE NOTE THAT THE “UNK” DENOTATION UNDER THE DOD INDICATES THAT THE DATE OF DEATH WAS NOT ADVISED, OR THAT THE INFORMATION WAS SUPPLIED BY THE RSL ‘REVEILLE’ MAGAZINE, IN MOST CASES.					
				LAST POST CONTINUED (OVER)		



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
2785235	PTE	RS	COLLINS	1 RAR	UNK	12/9/46
2785170	CPL	TJ	YATES	1 RAR	19/4/24	5/4/46
3791700	LCPL	EJ	HOULIHAN	1ARU/1 RAR	23/8/24	24/1/47
1735618	PTE	P	LEP	2 RAR	28/7/24	24/9/48
2785630	PTE	RTF	WICKES	2 RAR	UNK	15/4/46
2787342	PTE	DW	FERGUSSON	3 RAR	17/9/24	1/1/47
235162	MAJ	BW	HOWARD MC	3 RAR	16/5/24	23/3/38
3790131	PTE	JT	RICHARDSON	3 RAR	17/11/22	18/4/46
2795827	PTE	E	PATON	1ARU/4 RAR	UNK	31/5/50
2789506	PTE	GJ	GAUCI	1ARU/4 RAR	9/8/24	29/10/46
2788785	PTE	J	LEWIS	5 RAR	9/10/24	11/5/46
335113	CAPT	RJ	O'NEILL MID	5 RAR	19/4/23	5/11/36
2790815	PTE	J	MARINE	1ARU/5 RAR	UNK	15/3/48
2790899	PTE	PJ	TAYLOR	1ARU/5 RAR	6/7/24	12/2/48
18394	PTE	CF	CAIN	6 RAR	17/6/24	6/7/46
213757	SGT	A	EVANS	6 RAR	UNK	23/10/32
1733663	PTE	WG	SNAPE	6 RAR	7/9/24	29/4/47
312727	PTE	DJ	ATTWOOD	7 RAR	UNK	30/1/49
2788294	PTE	MS	EVERILL	7 RAR	11/6/24	30/3/46
219495	PTE	RE	WEBB	1ARU/7 RAR	1/6/24	25/12/44
2791492	PTE	WT	BABBS	8 RAR	27/6/24	30/1/47
55647	PTE	AE	HALE	8 RAR	29/9/24	5/8/49
4720803	PTE	DA	MILDE	8 RAR	26/9/24	13/10/47
3795552	LCPL	SH	ROBINSON	8 RAR	14/8/24	17/6/48
2787871	LCPL	JJ	SMITH	8 RAR	27/9/24	14/8/46



Number	Rank	Intl	Surname	Unit	DOD	DOB
17900	PTE	SJ	YOW YEH	1 RAR/ 8 RAR	26/8/24	14/3/39
2276539	LCPL	KJ	BARRY	1 ARU/9 RAR/8 RAR	6/10/24	14/6/50
3795376	PTE	RS	KENNY	8 RAR	21/1/24	28/7/48
4719705	PTE	LR	HOLDER	9 RAR	24/5/24	18/2/47
A216447	SGT	JW	RIDOUT	BSF/ 36 SQN (2)	12/8/24	8/8/37
0223864	PO	JJ	WILKINSON MID	2 SQN / 36 SQN	UNK	27/7/46
A224313	ACM	MR	RYAN	2 SQN	UNK	6/6/49
A349958	CPL	JRP	HINDS	79 SQN	UNK	14/12/33
A61454	CPL	DR	RAMSAY	1OPS SPT UNIT	UNK	28/7/47
A227774	LACM	TP	BYFIELD	HQ RICHMOND DET S	UNK	6/3/55
A219760	SGT	AF	BEEHAG	HQAFV (RAAF)	10/10/24	22/3/39

**FRIENDS OF VVFA, VOLUNTEERS, & SUPPORT**

		R	OLIVER		21/4/24	UNK
		J	WEBB		3/3/23	UNK
217279		C	PEDERSEN		1/3/24	UNK
		KR	MCINTYRE OAM	X-PRES. CANTERBURY/ HURLSTONEPARK RSL 20 YRS NAVY.	25/1/24	2/2/47
W19729	CRFTM	M	THOMAS OAM	WW2 VET	24/6/24	27/8/23
29635	AS	JH	GIBBINS	HMAS SYDNEY KOREA	1/4/24	26/10/28
		TN	LAM	MEMBER SINCE 1999	AUG/23	UNK

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

PLEASE NOTE

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

# 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

**10% discount**

**On mechanical repairs**

**& competitive prices on tyres and batteries.**

To all Vietnam Veterans

Federation Members.

### MALCOLM MOTORS

**Automotive Service Specialist. All mechanical repairs & servicing.**

**15% Discount for members on services and repairs.**

**JOE CARE**

603-605 Parramatta Rd

Leichhardt NSW

MTA Lic. # 42198

## EXHAUST SYSTEMS

### Balmain Radiator Centre

**Mark Borghonzian**

22d Crystal St

ROZELLE

Ph: (02) 9818 4920Mbl:

0419 417 206

**10% Discount**

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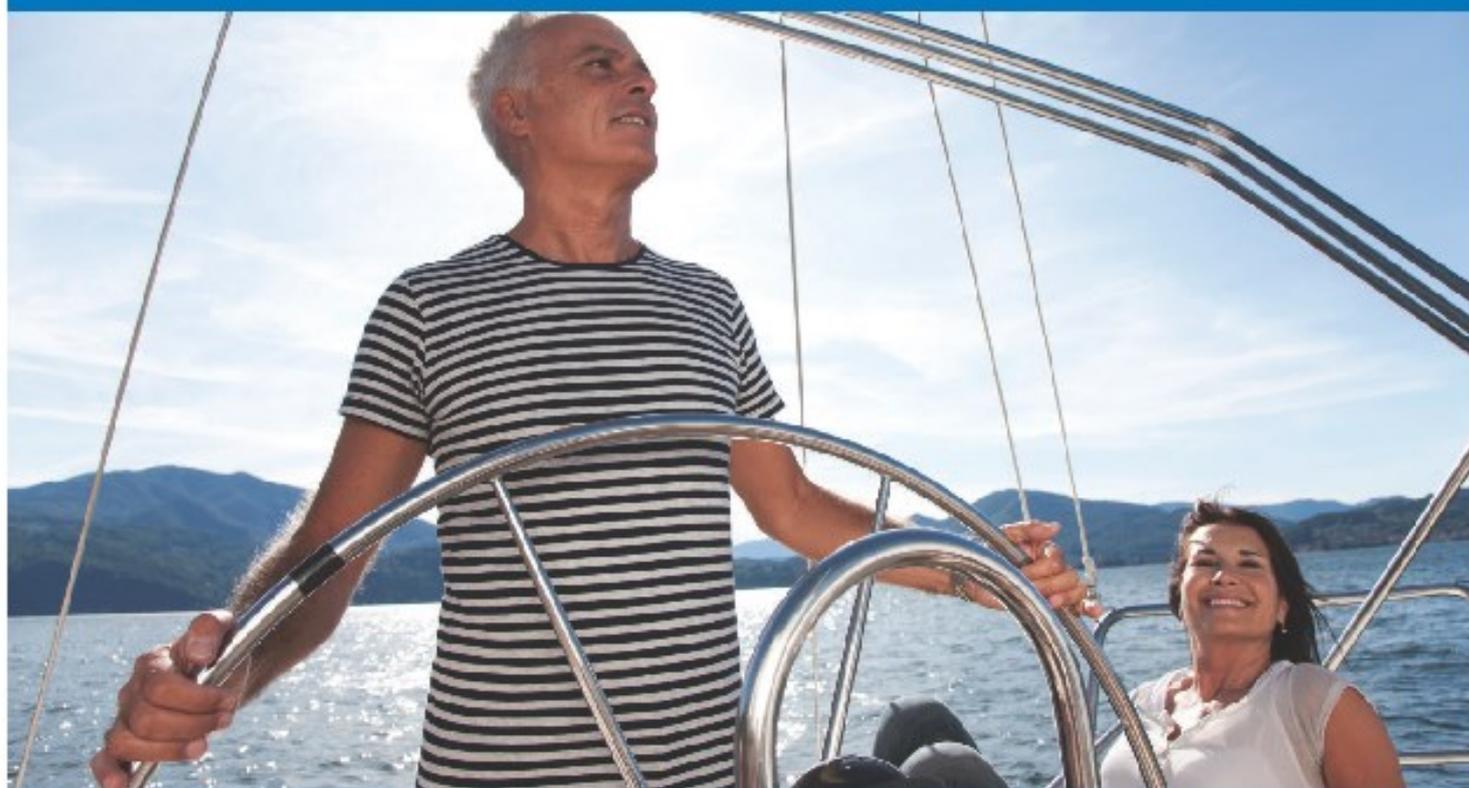


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