



# DEBRIEF

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*HONOUR THE DEAD, But Fight like Hell for the Living*

## National President's Report.

During April I have had some involvement in the Advocacy Training and Development program, attended a VRB/AAT advocates forum in Sydney and travelled to Ulverston in Tasmania to assist in recognition of prior learning assessments.

On 18 April I travelled to Canberra to attend the funeral of Pete Ryan, a long term ACT Branch president and administrator and a past National Vice President, Graham Anderson National Secretary attended as did Bob Elworthy AM from Victoria Andy and Pam Forsdike, Sam Vecchio and Tony Mullavey from the NSW Branch, the funeral was well attended. On the next page I have reproduced a copy of the message of condolence that was sent to Pete's family.

On 21 April I attended a reception attended by the Prime Minister at the Spirit of ANZAC exhibition at the Sydney International Convention Centre, this is the final site of the exhibition after 18 months travelling Australia, on 26 April I also attended a reception to mark the closing of the exhibition.

ANZAC day I attended a regional dawn service and laid a wreath on behalf of the VVAA. The VVAA National Council meet in Canberra during May followed by the National Congress, all state Presidents will be attending, or will be represented. Preparations are well in hand and a number of papers have been distributed for information and decision making.



**If you would prefer to have this publication emailed directly to you please forward your email address to the National Secretary at [secretary@vva.org.au](mailto:secretary@vva.org.au).**

**Don't forget to advise him if the address changes.**

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## VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE

As we acknowledge the passing of Pete Ryan OAM after a long battle against illness.

May I express the deep sense of loss also experienced by those who know him  
and worked with him for the benefit of other veterans.

Pete set a standard that could not be matched by others in his dedication to a task.

He would not flinch from any task he undertook.

His efforts were 100% or not at all.

On behalf of the National Executive of the VVAA and the extended V.V.A.A. membership,

may I express our condolences to those he loved, those that loved him,  
and the extended family of which he was a part.

May he rest in peace.

Ken Foster OAM JP

National President

Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

April 2017

*Compassion is not religious business, it is human business, it is not luxury, it is essential for our own peace and mental stability, it is essential for human survival.*

*Dalai Lama*

**Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) and Veterans Line**

24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free and confidential counselling.

Phone **1800 011 046.**

## OUR MILITARY HISTORY– MAY

27 May 1965. HMAS Sydney departs on first voyage to Vietnam with 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, embarked.

24 May 1966. Private Errol Noack killed in Vietnam. Private Noack, 5th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, was the first Australian national serviceman to be killed in the Vietnam War.

13 May 1968. Fire Support Base Coral attacked. The partly-constructed base, north of Saigon, was defended by Australian infantry, artillery, and air support when it was attacked by North Vietnamese troops. Eleven Australians were killed and 28 wounded before the attackers were driven back. Fifty-two enemy soldiers were killed and one was taken prisoner.

16 May 1968. Fire Support Base Coral attacked for a second time. An attack on the base by a North Vietnamese Army force estimated at three battalions was repelled by APCs and soldiers from 1st battalion Royal Australian Regiment. Five Australians were killed and 19 wounded. Thirty-four enemy bodies were found.

21 May 1968. HMAS Sydney leaves Brisbane on its tenth voyage to Vietnam with 4th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, embarked.

26 May 1968. Fire Support Base Balmoral attacked. Fire Support Base Balmoral, just north of FSB Coral, was attacked by a North Vietnamese Army battalion. Three soldiers from 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, were killed and 14 wounded. Six enemy bodies were found.

28 May 1968. A second heavy assault on Fire Support Base Balmoral took place in the early hours of the morning. The attack was driven off by combined arms – infantry, armour, artillery and air support. Forty-two enemy bodies were found on the battlefield and seven prisoners were taken.

28 May 1968. D Company, 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, receives citation. Award of United States Presidential Unit Citation for the Battle of Long Tan.

6 May & 11 May 1969. Warrant Officer Class 2 R.S. Simpson VC, Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, originally from Chippendale, NSW, wins the Victoria Cross in Kontum Province, South Vietnam.

24 May 1969. Warrant Officer Class 2 K. Payne, VC Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, originally from Ingham, Queensland, wins the Victoria Cross in Kontum Province.

8 May 1970. Anti-war demonstrations in Australia Up to 200,000 Australians participate in demonstrations against the Vietnam War.

28 May 1970. Australian Army Training Team Vietnam awarded United States Meritorious Unit Citation.



## VICTORIA CROSS AWARDED IN THE VIETNAM WAR.



**Warrant Officer Class II Rayene Stewart SIMPSON DCM**  
**Australian Army Training Team**  
**6th and 11th May 1969, Kontum Province, South Vietnam**



"On 6th May 1969, Warrant Officer Simpson was serving as Commander of 232nd Mobile Strike Force of 5th Special Forces Group on a search and clear operation in Kontum Province, near the Lao-tian border. When one of his platoons became heavily engaged with the enemy, he led the remainder of his company to its assistance. As the company moved forward, an Australian Warrant Officer commanding one of the platoons was seriously wounded and the assault began to falter. Warrant Officer Simpson, at great personal risk carried the Warrant Officer to safety. He then returned to his company where, with complete disregard for his safety, he crawled forward to within ten metres of the enemy and threw grenades into their positions.

On 11 May 1969, in the same operation, Warrant Officer Simpson's Battalion Commander was killed and an Australian Warrant Officer and several others wounded. Warrant Officer Simpson quickly organised two platoons and led them to the position of the contact. Warrant Officer Simpson came under heavy fire. Disregarding his own safety, he moved forward in the face of accurate enemy machine gun fire, in order to cover the initial evacuation of casualties. At the risk of almost certain death he made several attempts to move further forward towards his Battalion Commander's body but on each occasion he was stopped by heavy fire. Realising the position was becoming untenable, Warrant Officer Simpson alone and still under enemy fire covered the withdrawal until the wounded were removed from the immediate vicinity.

Warrant Officer Simpson's repeated acts of personal bravery in this operation were an inspiration to all Vietnamese, United States and Australian soldiers who served with him. His conspicuous gallantry was in the highest tradition of the Australian Army."

[London Gazette: 26 August 1969-1 Supplement, 29 August 1969]

### History

The Victoria Cross was created by Queen Victoria in 1856 and made retrospective to 1854 to include the Crimean War.

One hundred Australians have been awarded the Victoria Cross: 96 were awarded the Victoria Cross under the Imperial honours system (before the Australian Government chose to introduce its own honours system in 1975) and four Australian Army soldiers have been awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia, which was introduced as part of the Australian honours system by Letters Patent on 15 January 1991.



## VICTORIA CROSS AWARDED IN THE VIETNAM WAR.



**24492 Warrant Officer Class II Keith PAYNE**  
**Australian Army Training Team, Vietnam**  
**24th May 1969, Konum Province, South Vietnam**



"On 24TH May 1969, in Kontum Province, Warrant Officer Payne was Commanding 212th Company of 1st Mobile Strike Force Battalion when the battalion was attacked by a North Vietnamese force of superior strength. Under this heavy attack the indigenous soldiers began to fall back. Directly exposing himself to the enemy's fire, Warrant Officer Payne, through his own efforts, temporarily held off the assaults by alternately firing his weapon and running from position to position collecting grenades and throwing them at the assaulting enemy. While doing this he was wounded in the hand and arms. Despite his outstanding efforts, the indigenous soldiers gave way under the enemy's increased pressure and the Battalion Commander, together with several advisors and a few soldiers, withdrew. Paying no attention to his wounds and under extremely heavy enemy fire, Warrant Officer Payne covered his withdrawal by throwing grenades and firing his own weapon at the enemy who were attempting to follow up. Still under fire, he then ran across exposed ground to head off his own troops who were withdrawing in disorder. He successfully stopped them and organised the remnants of his and the second company into a temporary defensive perimeter by nightfall.

Having achieved this, Warrant Officer Payne of his own accord and at great personal risk, moved out of the perimeter into the darkness alone in an attempt to find the wounded and other indigenous soldiers. He finally collected forty lost soldiers, some of whom had been wounded and returned with this group to the temporary defensive position he had left, only to find that the remainder of the battalion had moved back. Undeterred by this setback and personally assisting a seriously wounded American advisor he led the group through the enemy to the safety of his battalion base. His sustained and heroic personal efforts, in this action were outstanding and undoubtedly saved the lives of a large number of his indigenous soldiers and several of his fellow advisors.

Warrant Officer Payne's repeated acts of exceptional personal bravery and unselfish conduct in this operation were an inspiration to all Vietnamese, United States and Australian soldiers who served with him. His conspicuous gallantry was in the highest traditions of the Australian Army"

[London Gazette; 19 September 1969.]

Keith PAYNE was born on 30 August 1930 at Ingham, Queensland.

## Skills that might save a life

The Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) offers suicide awareness and prevention workshops Australia-wide to help equip people with the tools and confidence to recognise suicidal tendencies and take preventive action early. The Operation Life program is available free of charge to anyone concerned about someone in the ex-service community.

Starting a conversation with someone you suspect may be having thoughts of suicide is likely to be one of the most important things you will ever do. Your willingness to talk about this emotional issue with a family member, friend, or co-worker could be the first step toward saving their life.

It is not always apparent that a person is contemplating suicide, but in some cases people do signal their pain. They may express feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness or helplessness. They may appear to be angry, depressed, sad or lonely.

People thinking about suicide may lose interest in activities or engage in risky behaviours. They may give away their possessions, increase alcohol or drug use, or withdraw from friends, family and society in general.

If you are worried that someone you care about may be having suicidal thoughts, there are some things you can do:

- Express your concern, listen without judgement and reassure the person that you care. It is a myth that asking someone about suicide will put the idea into their head.
- If the person tells you they are contemplating suicide, help them to choose an appropriately qualified support person – this might be a GP or a counsellor. You could offer to book the appointment or go along with them.
- Talk to someone else about your concerns, such as a health professional or helpline. It is important that you look after yourself too.
- Encourage the person to be active; maybe invite them for a session at the gym or go for a walk or run.

The Operation Life program comprises three workshops:

- SafeTalk is a half-day presentation examining suicide alertness for everyone.
- ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) is a two-day skills training course aimed at recognising, responding to and understanding suicide risk.
- ASIST Tune-up is a half-day refresher workshop.

To register your interest in attending, or to find out more information, including dates and locations, visit the Operation Life page of the VVCS website or call 1800 011 046.

These workshops complement other suicide awareness and prevention resources, specifically the Operation Life website and the Operation Life mobile phone app. To access these useful resources, visit the At Ease portal.

## MAIL BOX

### REUNION— 30 TERMINAL SQN RAE.

I am trying to organise a reunion for current and ex members of **30 terminal Sqn (Termites)**

We are having a reunion in Sydney next year on the 17-19 Nov 2017 and this is also the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the trade

And we would like to find any of the boys and pass on this invite

My details are below

Any help will be much appreciated

Craig Ingram 0407173321 [craingram@westnet.com.au](mailto:craingram@westnet.com.au)



### REUNION –2RAR ASSOCIATION.

The reunion coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the departure of 2RAR on HMAS Sydney from Brisbane on 19 May 1967. The following are the details of the reunion:

When: 17 - 21 May 2017 Where: Brisbane (centre of gravity South Bank)

For more information: Contact: Gordon Hurford

by email [2rarsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:2rarsecretary@gmail.com) or telephone 0407 926 270.

Reunion Hotline is **(07) 3342 4272**

"Second to None"



### "MY DOG NUI DAT"

Written by Peter Simpson

Sung by Dale Duncan on his album

BACK TO THE BUSH

To order contact Peter Izod

0418 245 058

[Peterizod.ammo6@bigpond.com](mailto:Peterizod.ammo6@bigpond.com)

### VETERAN FRIENDLY RETREATS

Future listing of these facilities should be available on the various VVAA State branch web sites and these can be accessed through the web site [www.vvaa.org.au](http://www.vvaa.org.au)



### HAVE YOUR SAY— LETTERS TO DEBRIEF ARE WELCOME

The subject matter should be generally of interest to Vietnam Veterans and their families. Brief, to the point letters have a better chance of publication. Photographs should be of good colour, quality and subject matter, in jpg or similar format. Text should be submitted in Word format with minimum formatting. Vietnam Veteran writers must identify themselves by name, state, Vietnam Unit and Tour dates. Email: [debrief@vvaa.org.au](mailto:debrief@vvaa.org.au)



## Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial

From 1962 to 1973, 50 000 Australians served in South Vietnam as part of a composite force, predominantly of American troops. The Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial is dedicated to all those Australians who served, suffered and died in that conflict.

The memorial was designed by the architectural firm, Tonkin Zulaikha Harford, in association with sculptor Ken Unsworth AM. It was built largely through contributions from the Australian people - raised by the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial Committee.

Three concrete stelae, rising from a shallow moat, form the dramatic centre of the memorial and enclose a space for quiet contemplation. Fixed to the inner right-hand wall are 33 inscriptions, a series of quotations intended to recall events of political, military and emotional importance. The photograph etched into the rear wall shows Australian soldiers waiting to be airlifted to Nui Dat after the completion of Operation Ulmarrah. A suspended granite ring contains a scroll bearing the names of those Australians who died in conflict. Surrounding the memorial are six seats dedicated to the memory of the six Vietnam servicemen that had been recorded as missing in action.

## THE WAR WIDOWS GUILD OF AUSTRALIA

“We all belong to each other. We all need each other. It is in serving each other and in sacrificing for our common good that we are finding our true life.”



A strong part of the Guilds History is the origins of its Logo.

The kookaburra was adopted as the Guilds Logo from its early inception and remains today.

The Kookaburra is also present on all War Widows' Guild Badges.

## YOUR ACTIVITIES REPORTED IN DEBRIEF

States and sub branches are encouraged to contribute reports on their activities, particularly an opportunity to let others know what is happening in your area.

Email text in Word or photos in JPG to the editor at [www.debrief@vvaa.org.au](mailto:www.debrief@vvaa.org.au)



## UNIT HISTORIES –VIETNAM



### 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment

In 1945 Australia sent three units to Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF). Originally known as the 65th, 66th and 67th Infantry Battalions, they were raised from Australian Divisions stationed in New Guinea at the end of the Second World War. On 23 November 1948, the battalions were renamed the First, Second and Third Battalions, The Australian Regiment, respectively. The prefix "Royal" was granted by King George VI on 31 March 1949.

3RAR was stationed at Woodside in South Australia when it was committed to the Vietnam War. It arrived in South Vietnam throughout December, 1967. Its arrival brought the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) up to three-battalion strength.

On 29 January, C Company was placed under the command of 7RAR for Operation Coburg (24 January - 1 March 1968). The operation was carried out on the Bien Hoa-Long Khanh border. C Company rejoined 3RAR on February 10, when the battalion relieved 7RAR. 3RAR was joined by W1 Company, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR), from 2RAR for the remainder of the operation. It returned to Nui Dat on 1 March.

3RAR next operated outside of Phuoc Tuy during Operation Toan Thang (21 April - 7 June). Toan Thang aimed to block the communist withdrawal following the Tet Offensive. 3RAR was stationed on the Bien Hoa-Bien Nuong border. On 13 May it occupied Fire Support Base Coogee, before moving 5 kilometres north on 24 May to establish Fire Support Base Balmoral. The first attack on Balmoral occurred on 26 May. A second attack took place on 28 May. In both attacks the position was mortared before a ground assault began. Both attacks were repulsed. On 5 June the battalion withdrew from Balmoral and returned to Nui Dat.

During the follow-up operation, Toan-Thang II (3-18 July), the battalion moved to the Bien Hoa-Long Khanh border. This was followed by Operation Merino (18-24 July), which took place further south in the same province. The battalion returned to Nui Dat after Merino was completed.

3RAR continued to patrol Phuoc Tuy province. It was relieved by 9RAR in November 1968. The battalion returned to Woodside, South Australia.

3RAR returned to Vietnam in 1971 and relieved 7RAR on 25 February. It was based at Nui Dat and the Horseshoe. 3RAR joined with the work of pacification. 1ATF had adopted the "Pacification Program" as its first priority in April, 1969. Pacification involved seeking out and destroying the enemy in its base areas, preventing enemy access to the civilian population and helping to create a secure climate for South Vietnamese social, political and military life to develop. This work was demanding, dangerous and monotonous for the troops. It was the primary task carried out by the battalion during its second tour.

3RAR was involved in an attack on an enemy bunker system in Long Khanh province as part of Operation Overlord (6-7 June). The bunker system was captured by the battalion, along with a second bunker system further south.

On 1 October the battalion ceased its offensive operational commitment and returned to Nui Dat. It was replaced by 9RAR. On 6 October the battalion departed Vietnam, arriving in Fremantle on 16 October.

Battle honours; • Bien-Hoa • Coral-Balmoral

Commanding officers; • Hughes, Ronald Laurence • Shelton, Jeffrey James • Scott, Francis Peter

Decorations; First tour: 1 DSO; 1 MC; 1 DCM; 4 MM; 11 MID;

Second tour: 1 DSO; 1 MC; 1 DCM; 2 MM; 5 MID

THE HON DAN TEHAN MP  
 MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
 MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL  
 MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR CYBER SECURITY  
 MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE CENTENARY OF ANZAC  
 14 April 2017



### **Modernising rehabilitation and compensation systems delivers benefits to veterans**

The time taken to process certain claims for veterans has fallen dramatically thanks to the Government's investment in updating claims processing systems, Minister for Veterans' Affairs Dan Tehan announced today.

Mr Tehan said the Government had provided \$23.9 million in the last Budget to replace outdated rehabilitation and compensation systems and to simplify and improve internal processes.

"Claims for non-liability health care are now processed within a day, and in some cases within 30 minutes where previously the average processing times for these claims was 18 days," Mr Tehan said.

"Veterans seeking treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, alcohol and substance abuse are accessing treatment faster than ever before.

"This system update is ongoing and there will be further improvements to processing times and more consistency in decision making and calculations.

"The Government wants those in the ex-service community to have quick and easy access to the support services they require."

The next system improvements will focus on incapacity claims review, rehabilitation, needs assessment and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 permanent impairment processing.

## **Advocacy training and development program.**



What type of training does the ATDP provide?

The ATDP will provide training for advocates in compensation and welfare.

Welfare training focuses on providing the skills to assist veterans, their dependents, war widows and former serving members to access the wide array of community services that are available as well as DVA's health and housing services and other services that are not pensions-related.

Training for Compensation focuses on developing the skills required to assist veterans, their dependents, war widows and former serving members to lodge claims under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986, the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004.

Training is also provided to more experienced Compensation Advocates who assist with appeals to the Veterans' Review Board and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.