



DEBRIEF

Patron: RADM Neil Ralph AO DSC RAN (RTD)

Edited and Published By

Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Inc.

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HONOUR THE DEAD, But Fight like Hell for the Living

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

As we go into a new year I wish you all well and a happy and successful year in whatever you have a particular interest in, remember life is not all work there needs to be a balance of interests and activities including exercise of both body and mind. Take time for yourself.



The extent of bushfires and drought across Australia late in 2019 and extending into 2020 have meant many communities are struggling to meet basic human needs, I extend my sympathy to all those effected and ask our members to keep in touch with vulnerable members of our community and if there is a need for help lets make sure they do not feel alone and neglected.

A number of instances late in 2019 reminded me that with the best intentions many of us miss the opportunity to contribute to the interests of our association, requests for input and in some cases decision making and direction to the National Executive have gone unattended and this leaves matters in-completed or we miss the opportunity to contribute to government and ex-service community discussions.

Administration is often a time consuming task that we do not look forward to, some decisions to delay a task can lead to unintended consequences that can come back to haunt us later, I again ask those that accept positions of authority at all levels of our association to be mindful of their obligations, not only to the association as a whole but more importantly to those we accept the task of protecting through administration.

The V.V.A.A. remains a vibrant force for good and the support it gives the veteran community is immeasurable, as Branches and Sub Branches go to their annual general meetings and possible changes to executives let me thank those that have served in the past and welcome those now taking up the challenges, remember you are not alone, there is strength, experience and knowledge to back you up.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Foster'.

Ken Foster OAM JP

National President

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KEEPING THE RECORDS

IF IN DOUBT DO NOT THROW IT OUT!

Mr Kel Robertson, a Canberra based post-graduate student at the University of New South Wales, and an experienced writer, has begun research into the origins and activities of the Association.

The first phase of his project will include an examination of the many Association documents held by the Australian War Memorial and the Australian National Library and, once some university procedures have been completed, interviews with members. Later, there will be a focus on State Branches and Sub-Branches.

Meanwhile, Branches and Sub-Branches are reminded of the importance of storing and maintaining their official records, including and especially newsletters, as the basis of future research by Kel and, in the longer term, other historians.

Kel will make some comments in a future edition of Debrief; at this time any queries should be asked of National Vice-President Max Ball, via email on maxball@iinet.net.au.



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OPEN ARMS COMMUNITY AND PEER PROGRAM EXPANDS NATIONALLY

SUPPORT for veterans and their families who may be struggling with mental health conditions or at risk of suicide, will be enhanced through the Community and Peer Program which is currently being rolled out across Australia.

The program, run by Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling (Open Arms), connects veterans and family members who may be struggling with their mental health, with peers who bring a lived experience of mental health issues and, importantly, of recovery.

Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel Darren Chester joined existing and newly recruited members of the Open Arms Community and Peer Program in Canberra as part of their week-long induction training.

“The pilot program held in Townsville, had positive results with Open Arms peers breaking down barriers to care, improving relationships with key community groups, and reducing the stigma for veterans around mental health and seeking help,” Mr Chester said.

“Since the First World War, veterans and their families have understood the importance and value of mateship that is instilled during service, placing them in a unique position to support one another. This program harnesses that mateship and ensures veterans can talk to other veterans, and families to other military families, to assist each other with the support of mental health clinicians.

“This is another important part of the support system—improving the holistic mental health and wellbeing outcomes for veterans and their families. The national roll-out is a significant step forward in improving the lives of veterans and their families.”

Twenty-nine peers, in addition to the six peers from the Townsville pilot, are being trained as Mental Health Peer Workers and will be employed at 14 Open Arms locations nationally. Also in attendance for the induction training were representatives from key veteran-run organisations with a passion for supporting veterans’ mental health, including Swiss8, Red Six and Survive to Thrive Nation.

Adrian Sutter from Swiss8 said, “The biggest take-out for me from the workshop is they get it. Open Arms seem to understand the current veteran space. They get what is needed to break the barriers with veterans at the moment, and get people coming forward firstly and then getting them the help that they need, if they need it, or just provide someone to talk to. That they understand the space is the biggest thing I’m taking away.”

The Community and Peer Program will provide Open Arms with a skilled workforce of veterans from across all three Australian Defence Force services and family representatives, to augment clinical capability across Australia by mid-2020.

Open Arms (formerly VVCS) is Australia’s leading provider of high quality mental health, counselling and support services for Australian veterans and their families, as well as some reservists and peacekeepers. To find out more about the services offered, call 1800 011 046 or visit www.openarms.gov.au.

INDEPENDENT INQUIRY REPORT INTO DFRDB SCHEME

The Government acknowledges the release of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's independent investigation into the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits (DFRDB) scheme.

The Government listened to the concerns of the ex-service community in initiating an independent review of the DFRDB

scheme, which focused on the accuracy of information provided about commutation by the Department of Defence (Defence), the Australian Defence Force (ADF) or the scheme administrators, such as the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC).

While the investigation found that some information provided by Defence in the 1980s and 1990s regarding commutation was incorrect, the Ombudsman concluded that the decision to commute was, and still is, the more financially beneficial option.

In reaching this conclusion, the Ombudsman requested separate independent actuarial reports from the Australian Government Actuary and KPMG, considered a range of investment scenarios, which determined that it is highly unlikely any ADF members who commuted through the DFRDB scheme would have incurred a financial loss.

For these reasons, the Ombudsman has determined that a specific compensation scheme is not appropriate.

The investigation also found that efforts had been made since 2004 by Defence and CSC to correct the information provided, and this report now reinforces the steps taken to provide clearer information on the decision of commutation.

While the report acknowledges that it is unlikely any members who commuted would be financially worse off, we recognise that the provision of misinformation has caused confusion and distress over many years with some ADF

members believing their retirement pay would increase once they reached their notional life expectancy.

If anyone believes they did incur a financial loss they can apply for Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration. Eligibility criteria and information on how to apply is available on [Defence's website](#).

The Government has no plans to make changes to the DFRDB scheme. Further information, including the report, is available on the [Commonwealth Ombudsman website](#).



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Australian War Memorial Director appointed

Matthew Anderson PSM has been appointed as the next Director of the Australian War Memorial by the Government following a formal selection process.

Mr Anderson, a veteran himself, is the current Deputy High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

He will replace outgoing Director, Dr Brendan Nelson AO, who will conclude in the role at the end of this year.

The Prime Minister said Mr Anderson's skills, knowledge and experience will ensure the continued success of the Memorial.

"Mr Anderson is well placed to guide the Australian War Memorial through generational change to tell the stories of our more recent conflicts," the Prime Minister said.

"He has demonstrated his passion for military history and ensuring future generations are educated about the service and sacrifice of our personnel, having written three children's books on Australia's involvement in the First and Second World Wars.

"Over the past three years he has further built on his knowledge and passion, serving as the Australian Alternate on the Board of Trustees of the Imperial War Museum and Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

"I would like to congratulate Mr Anderson on his appointment and wish him all the very best for his tenure in guiding the memorial through an important part of its history and upholding its purpose in assisting to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society."

Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel Darren Chester said as a veteran himself, Mr Anderson will understand the importance of the Memorial's development project and ensuring the stories of our veterans are appropriately told.

"Mr Anderson is a Graduate of the Royal Military College Duntroon, spending eight years as an Australian Army Officer, including three years as Troop Commander for the Royal Australian Engineers," Mr Chester said.

"His service, along with his proven record of achievement in senior diplomatic postings, demonstrated leadership and knowledge of military history, will ensure the continued success of the Memorial."

The Prime Minister thanked Dr Brendan Nelson for all he has done to remember the almost two million people who have served in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations, but also ensuring the stories of those currently serving are told in a solemn and respectful way.

"Dr Nelson has ensured the stories of an entire new generation of service are told and remembered alongside those that inspired their own sacrifice and to do the same for future generations. I wish him all the best for the future," the Prime Minister said.



Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant

The Oath is a declaration on behalf of the Australian people recognising the valuable contribution that current and former members of the Australian Defence Force and their families make and have made for our country. It can be read aloud at commemorative events as a sign of respect and support.



The Veteran Card helps Australians, including businesses, organisations, community groups and service providers to identify veterans and offer respect to them and their family.

The Lapel Pin provides the opportunity for veterans to be easily identified when not wearing their medals or uniforms.



Visit recognition.dva.gov.au for more information on how to apply for and support the Covenant.

MILITARY REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION COMMISSION APPOINTMENT

REAR Admiral Sarah Sharkey CSC, Commander Joint Health and Surgeon General of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), has been appointed to the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (MRCC) replacing Air Vice-Marshal Dr Tracy Smart AO.

Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel Darren Chester congratulated RADM Sharkey on her appointment, noting her extensive skills and experience in the military and health sector are integral to supporting and honouring our nation's current and former ADF community.

"RADM Sharkey has an extensive career in Defence, beginning her service under sponsorship while an undergraduate medical student at the University of Queensland and has enjoyed postings at sea and ashore," Mr Chester said.

"With her clinical background primarily in submarine and diving medicine, RADM Sharkey has more recently served at the Director-General level in Joint Health Command, and as Head of the Navy Health Community.

"I congratulate RADM Sharkey on her appointment and wish her well in her new role. I have no doubt she will be an asset to the MRCC."

Mr Chester thanked outgoing MRCC member AVM Dr Smart on her service to the Commission over the past three years, and for her more than 30 years' service in the Royal Australian Air Force.

"AVM Smart has had a long and distinguished career in the ADF and I thank her for her service and wish her all the best for the future as she transitions back into civilian life," Mr Chester said.

Holding Bachelors of Medicine and Surgery, Masters in Business Administration, and a Masters in Politics and Policy, RADM Sharkey is also a Fellow of the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies and an Associate Fellow of the Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators. In 2014, RADM Sharkey was awarded a Conspicuous Service Cross for outstanding achievement as the Director of Clinical Governance and Projects and ADF Health Services Project Transition Lead.

Information about the MRCC, including Membership can be found on the [DVA website](#).

OUR ASSOCIATION

The Structure—Branches and Sub Branches

TITLE; **VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc NATIONAL COUNCIL.**

CONTACT; PO BOX 97 MINTO NSW 2566

Phone 0413 046 077

Web site www.vvaa.org.au

EXECUTIVE. NATIONAL PRESIDENT Ken Foster Email president@vvaa.org.au

NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS (2) Max Ball & Mike Benyk

NATIONAL SECRETARY Graham Anderson. Email secretary@vvaa.org.au

NATIONAL TREASURER Peter Fox. Email treasurer@vvaa.org.au

MEMBERSHIP; ALL SIX (6) V.V.A.A. State Presidents.

MEETINGS; NATIONAL EXECUTIVE March, May & October each year in Canberra.

NATIONAL COUNCIL May & October each year in Canberra.

NATIONAL CONGRESS (AGM) May each year in Canberra.

We Honour the Dead, and Fight Like Hell for the Living.

LEST WE FORGET

This page is now dedicated to promoting and supporting V.V.A.A. Branches and Sub Branches with information similar to that above.

Branches and Sub Branches are invited to send details and a brief description of your activities, please keep to one page, email to debrief@vvaa.org.au

‘Australia’s Vietnam War’ Website.
University of New South Wales Canberra
Vietnam.unsw.adfa.edu.au



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Department of Veterans' Affairs

New

Hearing services brochure

Download from; <https://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/providers/rehabilitation/Hearing-Services-Brochure-2019.PDF>

Or go to the web site www.dva.gov.au and look for "Hearing" factsheets that also give good information

VISITING VIETNAM

Hi I would like to bring to your notice a Veterans fund we run in Vung Tau conducting tours to the Aust Battle-ground's. With the funds earned we build houses for the poor families who have children we mainly operate in the Phuoc Tuy province, we also fund surgery for needy children .

Can you please make mention of us to your association .

VTVFCF.org

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Bill Laidlaw 0418 824 944

Viet Nam +84369 528034

<https://vtvfcf.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/vtvfcf.org/>

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.

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Events at NVVM 2020

Sat 22 Feb—Australian Army Band performs 'Back to Nam Again'

Sat 4 April—Sisters & Mistery

Sat 25 April - ANZAC DAY Debra Byrne & Dion Hirini

Sat 9 May – Rock Away in May

Saturday 30 May – The Spooky Men's Chorale

Sunday 7 June – Antiques Fair

Sunday 21 June – The City of Melbourne Highland Pipe Band

Sunday 5 July – Locals Free Open Day

Saturday 15 August—Forgotten Heroes

Sunday 16 August—Art Exhibition opening 'Lest We Forget - Vietnam'

Sunday 13 September – Big Boys Toys

Saturday 3 October – Rock Away in Spring

Watch this space for dates and any changes.

National Vietnam Veterans Museum
25 Veterans Drive, Newhaven, 3925

Enquiries: sales@vietnamvetsmuseum.org
www.vietnamvetsmuseum.org



REUNIONS

WHAT'S HAPPENING ?

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



THE VIETNAMESE MUSEUM- AUSTRALIA



For more information and to see a visual concept of the project go to;
www.vietnamesemuseum.com.au

If you would prefer to have this publication emailed directly to you please forward your email address to the National Secretary at secretary@vvaa.org.au.

ADVOCACY CORNER.



Advocacy Training and
Development Program

I would encourage all advocates and those interested in advocacy to visit the ATDP web site at atdp.org.au.

Among other items there are newsletters and regular updates on how the program is developing, that said I am confident the next year or so will see a number of changes that many may, or may not, approve of.

One section that needs regular visits that covering the Continuing Personal Development needs and requirements of the program, many who have not paid attention to this area will get a shock in the future when their knowledge will need to be reviewed, many asked when will refresher training be available, this is it.

Another area that I am sure will raise the ire of some is the fact that 2019 authorisations to advocate on behalf of the V.V.A.A. are expiring, this needs your attention now.

Those still needing recognition of prior learning assessment and new training options will also need to review the process required to complete nominations, things have, and continue to, change and we need to keep on top of the requirements to maintain our professional indemnity insurance as individuals and our protection as an association.

Anyone having difficulties in any of these areas can contact me direct and we can get things back on track, in the first instance emails to president@vvaa.org.au

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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

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

25 VETERANS DRIVE, NEWHAVEN, PHILLIP ISLAND VIC 3925

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Membership enquiries welcomed



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.