



# DEBRIEF

Patron: RADM Neil Ralph AO DSC RAN (RTD)

Edited and Published By

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*Macaulay Cottrell (left) and the son of the late Kevin Wheatley, George, (right) were presented with the Silver Stars at a ceremony at the US Embassy. (ABC News: Craig Allen)*

## **COVER STORY**

### **Two Australian veterans receive prestigious US Silver Star award for valour.**

Story: ABC News 14 December 2021

# NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Since my last report the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has commenced its first public hearings, held in Brisbane.

On 15 November I attended, with other ESO representatives, a virtual Round Table discussion with the Commissioners and prior to that your Association responded to a "Notice to give Information" sent by the Commission asking for our comments on some 13 topics.

I was pleased with the process above and have made some follow up comments to the staff of the Commission.

Recently the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) released its revised statistics on the number of suicides of Defence serving or ex-serving personnel since the year 2000. Despite the good work and report written by Dr Bernadette Boss, the number of suicides certainly justifies the need for the Royal Commission.

While a lot of media attention for some time has been on veteran suicides since the year 2000, including the AIHW report mentioned above, the Terms of Reference for this Royal Commission do NOT exclude the post-war experiences of Vietnam veterans. This is important because many of the Vietnam generation also suffered from various levels of distress and mental health issues, including suicide.

Like most processes the outcomes of this Commission will reflect many of the inputs, so I urge all Vietnam veterans and their families to consider that if they have information and/or experiences relevant to the inquiries to contact the staff of the Commission and have your say.

This edition of Debrief contains a third article by Kel Robertson in which Kel explores key personalities and events that lead to the founding and formation of your Association, events that occurred some 42 years ago but make fascinating reading today.

Kel's article is recommended reading for all, and is also a reminder of the foresight and perseverance of those who lead the way in the formation of the VVAA.

Travel restrictions continue to affect many of us and this will be particularly sad for those families and friends who cannot be re-united for the Christmas/New Year period. The members of the National Executive, and the Debrief Editor, join me in wishing all members and their families the best for this coming period and 2022.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Max Ball*



## **ROYAL COMMISSION INTO DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE HEARINGS BEGIN**

### **MEDIA STATEMENT**

26 November 2021

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has opened in Brisbane today, with a ceremonial hearing beginning the proceedings.

On Monday, current and ex-service personnel and their families will begin sharing their very personal stories in Brisbane at the first of many public hearings to be held around the country.

Over coming months we will hear many devastating and tragic accounts from current Defence

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## ROYAL COMMISSION INTO DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE HEARINGS BEGIN

*Continued from page 2*

personnel, veterans and those who have lost loved ones to suicide. These will be extremely difficult to hear, but the nation must hear them.

My hope is that this Royal Commission will be a watershed moment in how we look after our service personnel and our veterans, now and into the future.

It is a crucially important body of national work, and I hope that it will be a catalyst for positive, lasting change and reducing the incidence of suicide in the Defence and veteran community.

I look forward to reviewing the Interim Report in August 2022 and a Final Report in July 2023, but I will not be waiting until then to get cracking on important reforms.

Our servicemen and women and their families have sacrificed so much for our nation and we have a moral duty to ensure we give them all the support they need and deserve.

To achieve what it must, the Royal Commission needs to hear from as many people as possible.

It is not too late to make a submission, and I encourage everyone with a personal experience to share it. You can also do so anonymously and without leaving your contact details.

The Australian Government has established a free, independent legal advisory service to help people who want to engage with the Royal Commission. Free counselling and support services are also available.

This has been a tough year for many in our veteran community, with the additional combined stress of COVID-19 restrictions and the Australian withdrawal from Afghanistan. I expect the Royal Commission hearings and the associated media coverage will cause further distress for many.

Anyone who needs support, or who knows someone doing it tough, should reach out to **Open Arms Veterans & Families Counselling on 1800 011 046**. Those wishing to remain anonymous can contact **Safe Zone Support on 1800 142 072**. Calls to Safe Zone are confidential and never recorded.

More information about the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, including how to contribute and where to get support, is available on the [website](#).

**MEDIA CONTACTS: Minister Gee office: 0459 966 944, DVA Media: 02 6289 6466  
Office of the Hon. Andrew Gee, Canberra ACT**

### **Instructions to access Transcripts for the Royal Commission Into Defence and Veterans Suicide Hearings**

In Google enter	Royal Commission Into Defence and Veterans Suicide
Click on the item displayed	Royal Commission Into Defence and Veterans Suicide
Click on Menu bar	Hearings
Click on Menu Block	Hearing Block 1, Brisbane
Under Documents, click on:	Transcript
	Transcripts of each day will be listed

## COVER STORY

# Two Australian veterans receive prestigious US Silver Star award for valour

*Story: ABC News 14 December 2021*

Two Australian veterans have been awarded the third-highest military combat decoration from the United States, one posthumously, for their service to the US in the Vietnam War.

Late Warrant Officer Kevin Wheatley and retired Group Captain Macaulay Cottrell received Silver Star awards for valour.

The Silver Star is one of the highest military combat awards in the US, with only six Australian recipients.

Group Captain Cottrell and late Warrant Officer Wheatley were both nominated for the award over 50 years ago, but only just became official recipients.

Late Warrant Officer Kevin Wheatley and retired Group Captain Macaulay Cottrell were each awarded a Silver Star for valour in combat while serving with US military units in the 1960s.

Group Captain Cottrell was awarded the honour for his service as a Flying Officer in 1968, directing an aircraft in dangerous weather and under fire to identify areas in need of combat support missions.

Warrant Officer Wheatley received his Silver Star for his leadership in the charge against a Viet Cong village in 1965.

Mr Wheatley was also awarded a Victoria Cross posthumously in 1967 for his service in the Vietnam War for a separate act that cost him his life. His son, George Wheatley, has now accepted both awards on his father's behalf.

US Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Michael Goldman presented the medals to Group Captain Cottrell and Warrant Officer Wheatley's son, emphasising that the award honoured the "remarkable acts of service" of the two men.

"Group Captain Cottrell and Warrant Officer Wheatley are being recognised for their actions during the Vietnam conflict while serving with US military units. Both officers illustrated remarkable bravery and sacrifice," he said.

Group Captain Cottrell said receiving a Silver Star brought back memories of those he served alongside.

"It is a great honour to accept this award from the US government," he said.

"I'm just thankful that I'm still here. Some people weren't so lucky.

"It brings back memories of all the guys I flew with, worked with, helped."

### Recognition more than 50 years on

George Wheatley said his father should have been given his Silver Star sooner, but defence policy meant he remained a nominee, not a recipient, until now.



*Macaulay Cottrell (left) and the son of the late Kevin Wheatley, George, (right) were presented with the Silver Stars at a ceremony at the US Embassy. (ABC News: Craig Allen)*

## COVER STORY

### **Two Australian veterans receive prestigious US Silver Star award for valour.**

*Continued from page 4*

*Story: ABC News 14 December 2021*



*Kevin Arthur Wheatley served and died in the Vietnam War, and has now been posthumously awarded the Silver Star. (Supplied: Australian War Memorial)*

US officers recommended Warrant Officer Wheatley for the Silver Star 56 years ago, but because of a longstanding ban on Australians receiving foreign medals, it took until now for him to be officially recognised.

"This has been 56 years since Dad was recommended for [a Silver Star]," Mr Wheatley said.

"It's wonderful for Mum because it's not an end to Dad's story, but it's an end to one chapter in Dad's life."

#### **US Embassy celebrates Aussie mateship**



*George Wheatley accepted a Silver Star from the US Embassy on behalf of George's late father Kevin Wheatley. (Supplied: US Embassy)*

*Continued page 6*

## COVER STORY

### **Two Australian veterans receive prestigious US Silver Star award for valour.**

*Continued from page 5*

*Story: ABC News 14 December 2021*



*Retired Group Captain Macaulay Cottrell has received the US Silver Star medal in Canberra.  
Image by PR HANDOUT IMAGE PHOTO*

Group Captain Cottrell also had to wait more than 50 years to officially get his Silver Star but said finally receiving it was a privilege.

"After 53 years, it's a great honour," he said.

"We weren't able to accept it back in the 60s when we came home from Vietnam, but it's a really great privilege."

Mr Wheatley said the Silver Star award ceremony was a much happier celebration of his father's life than when he accepted the Victoria Cross on his behalf.

"When I received that Victoria Cross I was 13, it was a sombre occasion then. I was proud of it, but it was sombre," he said.

"I think the best thing about today is Dad's great-grandchildren are here. They go to the marches [and] they hear about their grandfather.

"Some of the girls are only seven or eight, they marched for their great-grandfather, and they were so excited to be here today."

Mr Goldman said the mateship offered by Australians to the American armed forces was remembered and valued highly by the United States.

"The service and sacrifice of our Australian counterparts is not lost on us, nor is the camaraderie and mateship we have long found in you", he said.

"The US-Australia Alliance, and the strong democratic values at its core, is an anchor for peace and stability in the region."

Mr Goldman said these qualities were evident in both Group Captain Cottrell and Warrant Officer Wheatley.

"[The Alliance] will continue to deliver for Australians, Americans, and our friends and partners throughout the world," he said.

"It will do so because of men and women like Group Captain Cottrell and Warrant Officer Wheatley, who we have the honour of recognising today."

# AUSTIN HEALTH RESEARCH STUDY

**From:** GUZMAN, Rodney [mailto:[Rodney.GUZMAN@austin.org.au](mailto:Rodney.GUZMAN@austin.org.au)]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 14 December 2021 11:16 AM  
**To:** [sthelena@bigpond.com](mailto:sthelena@bigpond.com)  
**Subject:** Austin Health: Research Study (Vietnam Veterans)  
**Importance:** High

Dear Mr Elworthy and Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia,

My name is Rodney Guzman and I am a research nurse from Austin Health conducting a Research project called: Alzheimer's risk several decades after brain injury.

We are currently recruiting Vietnam Veteran volunteers with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

The purpose of this research is to help identify, prevent and target treatment of Alzheimer's disease in Australian war veterans.

Information collected from this study will assist in the future care of veterans.

Professor Christopher Rowe of Austin Health is conducting this study.

The project requires 80 Australian war veterans with and without history of traumatic brain injury, aged over 60.

Participation in the study will involve 5 appointments at Austin Health & Melbourne University.

They include: a screening interview to assess eligibility, a cognitive assessment, an MRI brain scan, and 2 PET brain scans.

If you are interested, please contact myself on 03 9496 5534 or [rodney.guzman@austin.org.au](mailto:rodney.guzman@austin.org.au)

**Kind Regards,**

**Rodney Guzman**



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*We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.  
We celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities*

*Contact Rodney Guzman for further information on being involved in this Research Study*

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# AUSTIN HEALTH RESEARCH STUDY

Continued from page 7



## *Alzheimer's risk several decades after brain injury*

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this research project is to help identify, prevent and target treatment of Alzheimer's disease in Australian war veterans. The study is being conducted by Professor Chris Rowe of Austin Health and Professor Jennie Ponsford of the Monash-Epworth Rehabilitation Research Centre. We want to know if combat exposure, and particularly traumatic brain injury (TBI) has long term effects on memory and the risk of Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.

Information collected from this study will assist in the future care of veterans, including recently returned service personnel. It will help identify those at high risk of AD, who may benefit from early intervention trials.

### WHO CAN TAKE PART?

We need healthy veterans and veterans with TBI (all over the age of 60) for this study.

### WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

There are 5 main appointments\* involved in participation:

- Screening interview
- Cognitive assessment
- 2 PET scans with blood test
- MRI scan

\*Taxi vouchers will be provided for those living within a 2 hour radius of assessment sites.

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE PART?

If you would like more information, or would like to take part in this study, please contact the Molecular Imaging Research Team at Austin Health (03) 94965534 / 94965953 or email:

[Rodney.guzman@austin.org.au](mailto:Rodney.guzman@austin.org.au)



This study has been approved by the Austin Health Human Research Ethics Committee

Reference Number HREC/17/Austin/202. Version 1. 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

# **MINISTER MATTERS**

**The Hon Andrew Gee MP**  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister for Defence Personnel  
Federal Member for Calare

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **AN UNKNOWN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER OF THE GREAT WAR IDENTIFIED**

The body of a Victorian soldier, killed in action during the First World War, has been identified in an unnamed grave in France, more than a century after his death.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee today confirmed the identification of Lieutenant James Mark Kennedy, 26th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force born 16 April 1879.

"Thanks to painstaking research over a number of years, Lieutenant Kennedy's family now know his final resting place and he can be given the memorial he deserves," Minister Gee said.

"It is pleasing that, as we commemorate Remembrance Day, we have been able to bring some closure to another Australian family whose loved one lost their life fighting for our nation.

"Born in Clarendon, Victoria and recruited in Queensland, Lieutenant Kennedy dedicated the majority of his life to service, including fighting in both the Boer War and the First World War.

"He was 37 when he was tragically killed near Flers on 5 November 1916, after his unit attacked German trenches near a defensive position known as 'The Maze'.

"Due to the dangerous conditions from heavy bombardment and thick mud, Lieutenant Kennedy's remains could not be recovered following the battle, and he was commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

"It is remarkable that after 105 years, his final resting place has now been identified. It says much about Australia that after more than a century we are still honouring our sacred national commitment to never forget those who gave everything for our nation.

"I want to thank Fallen Diggers Incorporated, the Office of Australian War Graves, the Australian Army, and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, whose detailed research and support made this identification possible and has given some closure to Lieutenant Kennedy's family."

In consultation with Lieutenant Kennedy's grandchildren, arrangements will be made to replace the previously unmarked headstone with one bearing his name and service details.

Lieutenant Kennedy's grandson Mark Kennedy said learning of his grandfather's burial location was a small miracle.

"Since 1987 I've tried here and there to search for information regarding my grandfather's whereabouts. But like thousands of others like him, he vanished in the trenches," Mr Kennedy said.

"I'd grown up with many stories of him from my father, so I think it's fair to say he was lost but not forgotten.

"The love story between my grandfather and grandmother was a great wartime romance. It's a great shame they weren't able to be together very long, having only been married nine months."

Margaret White, Mark's sister and the granddaughter of Lieutenant Kennedy, said she was grateful and surprised by the news.

"I find it amazing they were able to discover my grandfather's final resting place after so many years. I've got my grandfather's medals, bugle, and other memorabilia at home and it's quite incredible how much information is still available more than one hundred years later," Mrs White said.

"I am hopeful I am one day able to visit my grandfather's grave and pay my respects and continue to share these memories with my own children and grandchildren."

The First World War remains the costliest conflict for Australian lives and casualties. With a country fewer than five million people, 416,809 men enlisted of which more than 60,000 were killed.

**From Minister Gee's Media Release dated 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021.**

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# ANOTHER SOLDIER OF THE GREAT WAR IDENTIFIED

*Continued from page 9*

## LIEUTENANT JAMES MARK KENNEDY



*Lt James Mark Kennedy.  
Photo taken in Cairo. Courtesy DVA*

Lieutenant James Mark Kennedy was born in Clarendon in Victoria, on 16 April 1879.

He served in the Boer War with the South African Constabulary and enlisted in the Australian Army in the Queensland town of Miles in February 1915, being commissioned into the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

On his way to Egypt aboard the troopship *Kyarra*, he met Australian Army Nurse, Charlotte 'Lottie' Kendell from Geelong.

After serving at Gallipoli, Lieutenant Kennedy returned to Egypt and married Lottie on 29 February 1916.

In March, Lieutenant Kennedy deployed to the Western Front with his unit and while he was there, Lottie gave birth to a son they named William 'Bruce' Kennedy on 23 June 1916.

Upon his return to France, Lieutenant Kennedy was seriously wounded at Pozieres in late July 1916 and was invalided to the United Kingdom. He was able to spend a short time recovering with

his new wife and son in Scotland. Despite Lottie urging her husband to accept a safer staff role, he insisted on returning to his men and re-joined his Battalion in October 1916.

This would be the last time Lottie and baby Bruce would spend together with James.

Three weeks later on 5 November, while leading his Platoon during the Battle of Flers, Lieutenant Kennedy was killed.

Lottie returned to Geelong, Australia and never remarried, passing away following injuries due to a traffic accident in 1970.

Lieutenant Kennedy's remains could not be recovered following the Battle of Flers and he was commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

In 1925, an Australian Officer wearing a medal ribbon indicating service during the Boer War was recovered from the location that Lieutenant Kennedy was last seen, and buried nearby at Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez.

At the time, the soldier was not able to be identified and was buried in an unnamed grave

Recent investigations by Fallen Diggers Incorporated determined that Lieutenant Kennedy was the only Australian Officer missing in the vicinity of his death who had been awarded a medal for Boer War service. All other Officers were ruled out, allowing his identity to be conclusively established.

Fallen Diggers Incorporated has now helped identify 37 Australian First World War soldiers.

Further information on Unrecovered War Casualties is available on the Army's website: <https://www.army.gov.au/our-work/unrecovered-war-casualties/>.



*Wedding Day. Photo courtesy DVA*

# MINISTER MATTERS

**The Hon Andrew Gee MP**  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister for Defence Personnel  
Federal Member for Calare

## MEDIA RELEASE

8 December 2021

### 80 YEARS AGO, THE WAR CAME TO THE PACIFIC

Eighty years ago, on 8 December 1941, Australian Prime Minister John Curtin made a fateful announcement to the nation: "men and women of Australia, we are at war with Japan".

These historic words, following the devastating Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbour and Malaya, marked the first time Australia had declared war on another country as an independent nation. Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said the declaration was a very significant moment for our country, our region and the world.

"The co-ordinated Japanese attacks on Southeast Asia meant the war would soon come within reach of Australia for the first time," Minister Gee said.

"While Australians had been fighting throughout Europe, the Middle East and North Africa since 1939, the war in the Pacific began in earnest with the co-ordinated attacks on Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand. Across the dateline on 7 December in Hawaii, the attack on Pearl Harbour had already occurred.

"Members of the Royal Australian Air Force and the Australian Army had been serving in Southeast Asia since 1940, and in December 1941 they engaged the Japanese forces for the first time in defence of Malaya and the large naval base in Singapore.

"Australia and the Allied Forces would go on to fight many fierce battles with the Japanese, enduring tropical humidity, high temperatures, disease and infections in the Malayan jungle.

"From the initial landings on the coast of Malaya, it would take the Japanese forces just 70 days to defeat the Allies and capture Singapore and its large naval base.

"The war would come to our own shores just a few short months later with the bombing of Darwin in February 1942.

"Hundreds of thousands of Australians served in the Pacific during the Second World War, and tragically around 17,500 Australians gave their lives fighting for our freedom. More than 22,300 Australians were taken prisoner and over 8,000 of those died.

"It is important we never forget what our service men and women endured and sacrificed to defend our nation during this period.

"Our nation owes an enormous debt to all those who fought in the Pacific during the Second World War, and we should recognise and remember their immense contribution which eventually resulted in Victory in the Pacific on 15 August 1945."

To learn more visit the Department of Veterans' Affairs [Anzac Portal](#).



*Photos AWM:  
Left: Malaya soldiers crossing a stream by a platoon bridge (Oct 1941)  
Right: Members of the AIF covering a Malayan road through the jungle during tactical exercises, (May 1941)*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

010400

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

007173

# **MINISTER MATTERS**

**THE HON MICHAEL SUKKAR MP**  
**Assistant Treasurer**  
**Minister for Housing**  
**Minister for Homelessness, Social and Community Housing**

**THE HON ANDREW GEE MP**  
**Minister for Defence Personnel**  
**Minister for Veterans' Affairs**

## **JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

24 November 2021

### **GOVERNMENT PROTECTING VETERANS' INTERESTS** **FOLLOWING COURT DECISION**

In a significant win for veterans across the country, the Morrison-Joyce Government has taken action to ensure no veteran will be made worse off due to a Federal Court decision.

The court's decision in *Commissioner of Taxation v. Douglas* (the *Douglas* decision) had meant that invalidity pensions paid under the Military Superannuation and Benefits (MSB) and Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits (DFRDB) schemes which commenced after 20 September 2007 would be taxed as superannuation lump sums rather than superannuation income stream benefits.

The Assistant Treasurer Michael Sukkar said that without a swift response from the Australian Government, the *Douglas* decision would have had potentially harmful financial implications for some veterans.

"The court's decision had meant that invalidity pensions paid under certain superannuation schemes would be taxed differently," Assistant Minister Sukkar said.

"By developing legislation to ensure these benefits are again treated as income streams rather than lump sums for tax purposes, we are removing the impact on adversely affected veterans while also preserving the better tax outcome for veterans who welcomed the *Douglas* decision."

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said the Australian Government was putting veterans first.

"Almost 6800 veterans would have had more tax withheld from their pension payments as a result of this court decision, meaning less money in their pockets every fortnight. In some cases this was up to \$100 per fortnight, and that was unacceptable to me," Minister Gee said.

"Thousands of veterans were also facing the prospect of being hit with a notice for back-taxes going back to 2017. It would have devastated so many vulnerable veterans.

"These veterans on invalidity pensions have given Australia their best. Having their pensions cut and then slugging them with back taxes would have been unconscionable.

"This financial storm for veterans has been brewing since December 2020. Decisive action needed to be taken to address it and that is what I have done.

"I'd like to acknowledge the Coalition Backbench Committee, chaired by the Member for Fisher Andrew Wallace, for their work on this vitally important issue.

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# MINISTER MATTERS

*Continued from page 12*

## GOVERNMENT PROTECTING VETERANS' INTERESTS FOLLOWING COURT DECISION

“Making life better for our veterans, and ensuring they get the support and care that they need and deserve is my top priority. That includes making sure that veterans will not pay higher taxes on their invalidity pension.”

To preserve the preferential tax outcome for veterans impacted positively by the decision, the Australian Government will create a new non-refundable tax offset for recipients of invalidity pensions paid from the impacted schemes.

The offset will ensure that, notwithstanding the change in tax treatment, veterans who would be better off in a particular income year if the invalidity pension were still treated as lump sums would retain that tax benefit. [In effect, whichever tax treatment provides the better tax outcome would apply to each affected veteran.](#)

Going forward, invalidity pension recipients who would have been positively affected by the Douglas decision will automatically receive the tax offset on lodgement of their tax returns.

No affected veteran will see reduced fortnightly payments as a result of the *Douglas* decision, and the offset will be incorporated into the fortnightly Pay-As-You-Go withholding system.

The changes will apply retrospectively, which will mean that those who were positively affected will continue to receive any tax benefit following the application of the court decision to historic tax payments, while preventing any tax increases for others.

The Australian Government will continue to engage with affected benefit recipients in the course of delivering this legislation, and is committed to delivering a fair outcome for veterans.

### **Media contact:**

**Minister Sukkar - Keiran Byrne 0466 922 604**

**Minister Gee – Steve Kidner 0466 385 097**

## Best wishes for the Christmas and New Year

My thanks go to all those who have contributed to articles for Debrief during the year.

Have a terrific festive season, stay safe and keep the stories coming.

Robynne

Debrief Editor  
([debriefeditor@gmail.com](mailto:debriefeditor@gmail.com))



# EMAILS FROM DVA SECRETARY

## Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Exempting Disability Payments from Income Testing and Other Measures) Bill 2021.

### **DFISA and Rent Assistance**

This Bill enacts the 2020-21 Budget measure to exempt disability payments from the income test under the Social Security Act 1991 from 1 January 2022.

Centrelink payments such as the Age Pension will increase as a result of this, removing the need for DFISA (Defence Force Income Support Allowance). DFISA will no longer be paid from 1 January 2022.

Veterans and their partners do not need to do anything, the payments will be made automatically. The Disability Income Rent Test will be removed so that disability income does not reduce Rent Assistance. This means from 1 January 2022, some veterans will receive more Rent Assistance, or receive Rent Assistance for the first time.

We encourage any Service Pension, Income Support or Veteran Payment recipients who also receive Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) Disability Pension, Military, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) Permanent Impairment or Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP) **and** who pay private rent above the following thresholds, to update their rental accommodation details if they have not already done so, in order to receive Rent Assistance. An SMS was sent last month to those who may be eligible.

Per fortnight @ 20 September 2021 rates	Threshold	Maximum Rent Assistance
<b>Single</b>	\$127.60	\$142.80
<b>Couple combined</b>	\$206.40	\$134.60
<b>Illness separated (each)</b>	\$127.60	\$142.80

They can update their details via MyService or by phoning DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

If you are eligible, your Rent Assistance payments will be made automatically – apart from updating your rental information, you do not have to do anything.

### **Rehabilitation Pilot**

The Bill also contained amendments to establish a two-year pilot for non-liability rehabilitation. The pilot is a voluntary program designed to help veterans who have not made a claim for compensation, with access to psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation support. We will write separately to provide you with more information about the Pilot soon.

Once the Bill receives Royal Assent, these measures will take effect on 1 January 2022.

### **Disability Pension name change**

The Disability Pension is being renamed the Disability Compensation Payment to better reflect the nature of the payment. This is a change in name only, and will not change the way the payment is made or how it is treated by other organisations. The change will take time, so you may see both old and new names for a while.

Wishing you all the best during the Christmas season.

Kind Regards

**Liz Cosson AM CSC**  
Secretary

Department of Veterans' Affairs

T: 02 6289 6735 Ext: 616735

E: [Secretary@dva.gov.au](mailto:Secretary@dva.gov.au)

# DVA SECRETARY EMAILS

## “MY ACCOUNT” Closing 10 December 2021

We have been working towards closing MyAccount for the last 12 months or so. We can now advise that we will be closing MyAccount on 10 December 2021.

We have prepared the attached factsheet to help you support clients during this change. In addition, we have the following communication to support clients:

- Email to all clients who are MyAccount holders. The email explains the changes and will include a factsheet about the changes and a guide on how to save their inbox contents. The factsheet and guide are also published on the [DVA website](#).
- Information on MyAccount to advise the closure date. This information also includes links to the [guide on how to save MyAccount inbox contents](#).
- An article on *Latest news for Veterans*.
- A brief article on *ForceNet*.
- An Update for Advocates to explain the changes.

If you have any questions about this change, please send them to our team at [digitalclientexperience@dva.gov.au](mailto:digitalclientexperience@dva.gov.au).

**Liz Cosson AM CSC**  
Secretary

Department of Veterans' Affairs

T: 02 6289 6735 Ext: 616735

E: [Secretary@dva.gov.au](mailto:Secretary@dva.gov.au)

*Refer Page 16 for FACTS SHEET on this matter*

## LETTERS

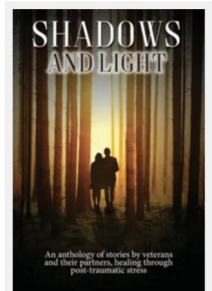
**From:** Laurel <[laurelmiles@bigpond.com](mailto:laurelmiles@bigpond.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, 25 October 2021 11:52 AM

**To:** [secretary@vvaa.org.au](mailto:secretary@vvaa.org.au)

**Subject:** Shadows and Light an anthology of stories by veterans

In 2005, my husband Marty and I attended an intensive PTSD course at Heidelberg Repat. There were other veterans and their wives/partners who attended and we have remained close ever since. A couple of years ago it was suggested we should write our story and publish it in book form which has been achieved. The book is called "Shadows and Light", published by Busybird and available through various online book retailers including Booktopia, Amazon and Ebay. I was wondering if some information regarding our publication could be forwarded to members of the VVAA.



Regards

Laurel

*Refer page 25 for a synopsis of the book. Contact Laurel regarding purchase and delivery*

# DVA SECRETARY EMAILS

*FACTS SHEET Referred to on page 9*



## FACTSHEET

**This factsheet contains information for ex-service organisations (ESOs) about MyAccount turning off on 10 December 2021.**

**A review of services has identified several services that will not transition to MyService.**

### Background

DVA is continuing to improve MyService. The need for simpler, better, and more accessible online services has never been more important and is a priority for DVA.

To achieve this, we have been moving MyAccount services to MyService over the past year so that veterans, their families and representatives have a single online platform to interact with. To complete this transition, we will be turning off MyAccount on 10 December 2021.

As part of the transition to MyService, DVA reviewed which features to transition from MyAccount to MyService. The following features will not be available in MyService:

- Honours and Awards
- Claims and Advocacy Support Essentials
- Apply for Gold Card
- Single Online Claim form
- MyAccount Inbox.

**Australian Honours and Military Awards.** DVA respects the Australian Honours and Military Awards earned by veterans in recognition of the outstanding service they have provided to Australia.

Honours and Awards that clients have entered in MyAccount are not in their official DVA record and won't be available in MyService. We know Honours and Awards Information is important, but this change won't affect clients' entitlements or the services they can access, including veteran commemorations.

If clients wish to have an official title or post-nominal added to their client record, they should contact DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372). Once we add it to their record, it will display in MyService and in most of our correspondence with the client.

Veterans who have added Honours and Awards information into their MyAccount will be contacted and informed as part of our broader communication strategy.

**Claims and Advocacy Support Essentials (CASE).** CASE allows a MyAccount user to act on behalf of a veteran to lodge claims or reviews and appeals.

In January 2020, the nominated representative framework was released into MyService, allowing a MyService user the ability to act on behalf of another user within the MyService environment.

Removing CASE from MyAccount does not impact the ESO portal or advocates' ability to use the ESO portal to assist veterans with their claims.

**Apply for Gold Card.** Veterans and members of medical teams who are eligible are automatically sent a Veteran Gold Card. Eligibility is generally determined from their initial claim or when they have qualifying service and turn 70. These processes remove the need for a separate function to apply for the Gold Card.

**Single Online Claim form.** The big change with MyService was to move away from the single claim form approach available on MyAccount toward an intuitive automated claim process to simplify the claiming process.

**MyAccount inbox.** We're making changes so clients can receive DVA correspondence in their myGov inbox.

When MyAccount is turned off, the MyAccount inbox will no longer be accessible. Until they're available in the myGov inbox, the letters clients currently receive in their MyAccount inbox will be sent to them via Australia Post.

If clients have correspondence in their MyAccount inbox they'd like to keep, they'll need to save it. We've posted these instructions on the [DVA website](#).

If clients have questions about correspondence, they should call us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

# VVAA HISTORY—KEL ROBERTSON

## VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS – STEPS TOWARDS THE FOUNDING OF A NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF VIETNAM VETERANS

**Previously: Part 1 of this series attempted to account for the unprecedented interest of Justice Paul Toose in the possible effect of defoliants on Vietnam veterans at the 1972 beginning of his Independent Inquiry into Repatriation. Part 2, as a way of exploring the RSL's attitudes to Vietnam veterans during and immediately after the war, speculated on the reasons why, in 1972, the RSL might have been expected to embrace or reject Vietnam veterans who believed their illnesses to be the result of chemical exposure.**

A sequence of events in December 1979 and January/February 1980 that resulted in something resembling a national association of Australian Vietnam veterans has been given little attention by historians. That these events have not been closely examined is not surprising, as they are less important in veterans' and historians' eyes than other matters to do with (or resulting from) the emergence of an organisation that looked to be "national".

In veterans' eyes the founding events are less significant than the early work of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (however named in its early years) in agitating for a judicial inquiry into wartime chemical exposure, providing welfare and other services, pushing for better repatriation conditions, urging the provision of Government-funded counselling and encouraging community appreciation of the service of the Vietnam cohort.

In historians' eyes the sequence of founding steps is less important than events leading up to and including the Agent Orange Royal Commission and is much less interesting than the underlying reasons for the VVAA's establishment: reasons reflecting veterans' perceptions of themselves and of their treatment by others. In other words, historians have been more interested in the "why" than the "what" and have, consequently, been keen to explore the psychological and other origins of the Association's early existence and behaviour. More particularly, they've been eager to assess the validity of feelings of alienation, maltreatment and betrayal that are seemingly more 'attractive' explanations for the existence of the Association than a straightforward desire on the part of involved veterans to do something about their post-war difficulties.

The earliest commentators on the Association's founding provide helpful background information on people and events without telling a complete and coherent story. John Dux and P J Young, the journalist authors of Agent Orange: The Bitter Harvest (1980) provide useful information - much of it not found elsewhere - but get a number of important matters wrong or miss significant events, probably because of the speed with which their book was written. Jock McCulloch, the academic author of The Politics of Agent Orange: The Australian Experience (1984), provides an even better account of the broader context in which the founding of the Association took place but, oddly, fails to register the earliest events outside Victoria and seriously downplays the role of the inaugural national president, Holt McMinn, even if rightly noting the important repeated engagement of veteran Bernie Szapiel with the media in 1979 (to draw attention to his and other veterans' health issues) and referring to the first multi-state meeting of veterans concerned about defoliant exposure (at the house of Bernie and Senia Szapiel in Melbourne on 4 January 1980).

Importantly, foundation events also pre-dated the involvement of the Association's champion in the historical skirmishes of later decades: its long-time Research Officer, Graham Walker (who joined in the second half of 1980 and was quickly engaged in the practical work of Association, rather than in charting its short history).

Most significantly, perhaps, the events, themselves, were difficult, even by the mid- 80s, to piece together, as records of meetings and discussions weren't made (see below) or retained, as many

# VVAA HISTORY—KEL ROBERTSON

## VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS – STEPS TOWARDS THE FOUNDING OF A NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF VIETNAM VETERANS

*Continued from page 17*

key players were no longer involved in the Association, and as the remaining individuals tended to attach maximum significance to the events in which they participated in their own States. Indeed, in later years there would be a competition of sorts to claim key roles for States and individuals in the establishment of the Association.

It should also be recalled that initial office holders had more important things in mind than the keeping of records for the assistance of historians; they could have had no idea that they were establishing an organisation which would, in multiple guises, last for more than forty years and be of ongoing importance in veterans' affairs. Patchy initial record keeping can also be explained by the fact that so many early figures had little experience of public organisations, had little or no knowledge of the mechanics of establishing and running such organisations, and were (with some notable exceptions) not well known for their penmanship. The fact that the very earliest leaders at national and state levels usually had work and family responsibilities is also material.

The absence of a formal foundation event (at which a national constitution, agreed processes for decision and policy making, and mechanisms for the election of office holders were ratified) also made the early history hard for commentators to trace.

A still popular but inaccurate view is that there was a gradual coming together of concerned veterans in most of the Australian states in the latter half of 1979 – a gradual accretion of resolve and commitment – which inevitably led to the founding of a national organisation.

It's true that before December 1979, some veterans had publicly expressed their concerns about the possible effects of war-time chemical exposure, beginning, it would seem, with Gary Adams' approach to the Sunday Telegraph newspaper in November 1978 and then with Bernie Szapiel's approach to the Melbourne Herald in March of 1979. However, there had been (a) no coming together of Vietnam veterans from various States (for chemical-related reasons) before early January 1980 and (b) no public call for an organisation to assist Vietnam veterans in obtaining compensation for chemical-related illnesses before 17 December 1979.

That public call for an organisation was made on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1979 by Queensland veteran John Harper, who was reported in The Australian as calling for the establishment of an organisation to assist ex-servicemen and their children to obtain compensation from the Australian and US Governments for the side effects of exposure to the defoliant Agent Orange.

Within a day Holt McMinn and Bernie Szapiel had responded to that call. On 20 December 1979, the Adelaide newspaper, The Advertiser, reported that the two men were, together, establishing "an Association of sufferers to put pressure on the Government to hold an enquiry, recognise the sickness and increase their war service pensions." On the same day, The Age, in Melbourne, reported the intention of McMinn to set up an organisation of Vietnam veterans to rival the RSL.

Whether there had been inter-state contacts prior to these announcements is unclear (and will probably never be known).

The first report of related organisations being established appeared in The Australian on Boxing Day; an article focussing on NSW veteran Jim Wares (and on the veterans who'd contacted him in the week since a previous article in the same paper), included reference to meetings being planned for Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

*Continued page 19*

# VVAA HISTORY—KEL ROBERTSON

## VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS – STEPS TOWARDS THE FOUNDING OF A NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF VIETNAM VETERANS

*Continued from page 18*

In fact, the Sydney event took place a day later at the Castle Hill RSL Club and appears to have been the first public meeting to form an association (soon to be part of a national-like body) with the aim of, amongst other things, seeking chemical exposure compensation for veterans, their wives and their children.

Dux and Young claimed that a very large meeting took place in Brisbane a few days later, on 30 December, but they are likely to be referring to the meeting at the Park Royal Motel which didn't take place until 20 January 1980. (Their brief description of the 30 December meeting better fits the reported inaugural meeting of the Queensland Branch on 20 January.) It is possible, though, that a smaller meeting was held on 30 December, as an interim committee was in place by the time of the 20 January gathering.

The previously referred to gathering of veterans from various states at the Szapiels' house in Melbourne took place on 4 January (see note 7 in the version of this article with citations) as did the establishment of a Victorian organisation (once again, see note 7.)

Then followed a meeting in Melbourne on January 10 at which some State representatives consulted the influential Queensland solicitor, Bill McMillan, to decide on a legal strategy, principally in relation to steps taken by US veterans. It seems likely that this is the meeting at which the division of national positions, referred to by John Harper in Dux and Young, took place. Draft minutes of this meeting were distributed to attendees by McMillan the day after, but do not appear with the letter introducing them on the relevant VVAA file at the Australian War Memorial. However, a later update on events by the Queensland president, John Harper, probably from February 1980, listed attendees, outlined the organisation's aims and stated that this was the meeting at which the national Association was formed.

Within a week an advertisement for three branches of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association – note the use of a single name to describe all three entities – was published in The Courier Mail and, presumably, in other newspapers. Holt McMinn was referred to as the National President, even though he'd been described as the Victorian VVAA Convenor in newspaper reports for a few days after the 10 January meeting.

If a public announcement of the intention to form a Vietnam veterans organisation is regarded as the key founding moment of the Association, the date of McMinn and Szapiel's announcement of an intention to establish a rival to the RSL – 19 December 1979, reported on 20 December – could be deemed to be the Association's birthday.

If greater honour attaches to the first formal public gathering of interested veterans, the date of the meeting that took place in Castle Hill in Sydney – 27 December 1979, as evidenced by meeting minutes supplied by Gary and Sandra Adams – is the key one.

If the first physical gathering of veterans from various States is regarded as the key moment, then the date of the meeting at Bernie and Senia Szapiel's house – 4 January 1980 – is the foundation date.

If formal agreement of the Victorian, New South Wales and Queensland organisations, such as they were, to act together under one name – and, perhaps, with self-appointed national officers – is seen as the crucial foundation act, then the date of the second, smaller Melbourne meeting – 10

*Continued page 20*

# VVAA HISTORY—KEL ROBERTSON

## VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS – STEPS TOWARDS THE FOUNDING OF A NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF VIETNAM VETERANS

*Continued from page 19*

January 1980 – will be the notable one. It is this date that the author currently regards as the true foundation date of the Association.

The next part of this series will look at the establishment of State and Territory Branches of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association and at the circumstances of the individuals most involved in these events.

**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 Association. Readers who have additional information about matters mentioned in this article or who would like a copy of the article with sources cited can contact Kel at [vyhistory99@gmail.com](mailto:vyhistory99@gmail.com). Readers who wish to take issue with the content of this article are urged to view the additional material and information on sources that are contained in the version available from Kel. © Kel Robertson 2021.**

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## Residue: The Dark, Lingering Fragments of Veterans' Memories

There is no doubt that many veterans from the Vietnam War were treated badly on their return to Australia. Many veterans returned to hostile receptions. Media exposure of all aspects of the war, hostility towards conscription, partisan politics, and a developing sense of doom about the unwinnable war all made it seem that veterans' contributions were pointless. Unlike the Second World War where the troops who saved Australia from the Japanese invasion were treated like heroes, the Vietnam Veterans were ostracised and treated like pariahs. It was unsurprising that our veterans suffered severe mental anguish, often in solitary, unsupported contexts.



### **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

The Vietnam War was different to other modern wars, and it was one that we did not win in Vietnam, or in our home countries. Because of that, public opinion turned inwards on those who had served, and as a result there was an explosion of mental health issues among veterans. In an excellent study of PTSD the French researcher Marc-Antoine Crocq (2000) made comment of the history of PTSD:

In the collective mind, this diagnosis (PTSD) is associated with the legacy of the Vietnam War disaster. Earlier conflicts had given birth to terms, such as “soldier's heart”, “shell shock”, and “war neurosis.” The latter diagnosis was equivalent to the *névrose de guerre* and *Kriegsneurose* of French and German scientific literature.

*Continued page 21*

# Residue: The Dark, Lingering Fragments of Veterans' Memories

*Continued from page 20*

The term PTSD was coined in the 1970s and recognised in the American Psychiatric Association's publication "The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" (DSM) in 1980. These problems for veterans were labelled "disorders" and associated with that pejorative labelling is the concept of victimhood. This was a double whammy for veterans!

## Residue

What is interesting is that the treatment for PTSD never removes all aspects of the disorder from the victims' memories. Lebow (2021) noted:

Imagine going about your day when you're suddenly hit with the memory of a past trauma. You drive down the road where your accident happened, and even though you've been down this road many times before, those feelings of angst and fear return. But you thought the treatment for your post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) worked, and your symptoms were better. So, why are you having symptoms again?

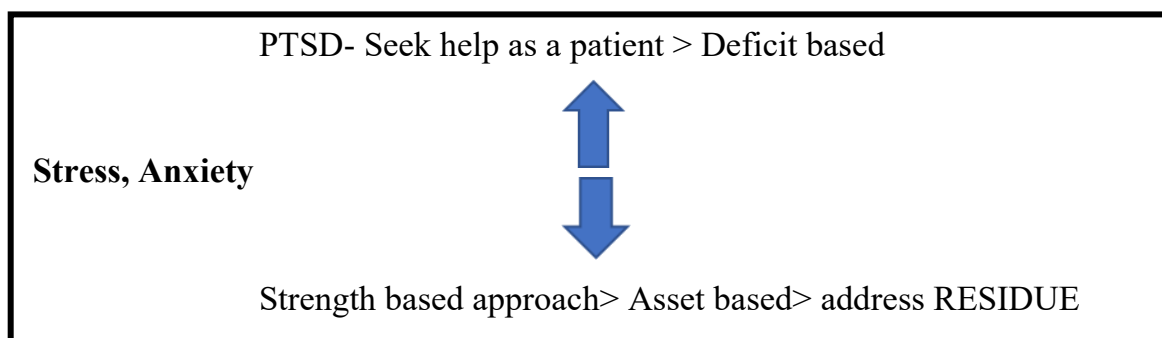
PTSD is a complex condition. Symptoms don't simply turn "on" and "off" like a light switch. It's not as simple as that. Recovery is a gradual process. Even after treatment ends, some people with PTSD find themselves having residual symptoms.

In Australia, Harry Moffitt (ex SASR and author of "Eleven Bats") is a director of the Mission Critical Team Institute (MCTI) (<https://missioncti.com/>) which has proposed a different way of looking at the dark, regenerating fragments that live in veterans' minds. The MCTI co-founder, Dr Preston Cline, identified what he called "Residue", which is the result of extreme experiences. Dr Cline recognised the problem faced by all veterans: "You are not broken. You are not a victim. You are not a survivor. You have chosen the hard path—a path full of extreme experiences, both good and bad, which leave memories. These memories, in turn, leave a residue within you, which if processed can serve as the fuel that moves us to wisdom and joy. If unprocessed, however, it will begin to build up, to harden, until you can no longer move or breathe, until all you know is pain and sorrow".

He went further to note: "I have come to see "residue" as neither good, nor bad, only the substance that experience and memories leave behind. We often think about the bad days that mark our lived experiences, but we should also consider those extraordinary day when we overcame a previously perceived limitation".

Figure 1

Residue: The Strength Based Alternative Treatment Model



*Continued page 22*

# Residue: The Dark, Lingering Fragments of Veterans' Memories

Continued from page 21

## Addressing Residue

In Dr Cline's research he worked with the military's elite operators and others, but the findings are applicable across a broad range of occupations that generate trauma. Dr. Art Finch, who compared WWII veterans with Vietnam veterans regarding rates of PTSD and combat stress, noted the time it took to return home. By the 1970s, Vietnam veterans were landing on U.S. soil hours after being in combat. Whereas, WWII veterans boarded ships that took 2- 4 weeks to return home, allowing soldiers the opportunity to share war stories, make meaning of their experiences collectively, while simultaneously preparing for homecoming by talking about what they most missed and hoped to do first (expectancy). The British military used ship transport, and not planes, to bring their veterans home from the Falklands and this time for *group absolution* lessened the occurrence of PTSD.

In summary, Dr Cline promotes asset-based, positive treatment approaches, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Asset and Deficit Based Treatment Approaches

Asset Based	Deficit Based
Strengths Driven	Needs Driven
Opportunity focus	Problems focused
Internally focused	Externally focused
What is present that we can build upon?	What is missing that we must go find?
May lead to emergent and novel solutions	Often leads to downward spiral negativity

## Conclusions

The "Residue" approach positively contrasts with the clinical approach used to treat issues such as PTSD in veterans, which often exhibits the residual return of the problem even after treatment. The message that MCTI promotes is that of service, suffering, honour, and the comradeship of shared experiences. If this approach works with individual cases, then it is far better than labelling veterans with a disorder, and then controlling aspects of their lives.

This new approach is certainly worth exploring, given the current suicide rates among veterans.

## References

Cline, P.B. (2020). *Residue*. Mission Critical Team Institute. <https://app.box.com/s/6zbzt8tlxt82n2kvbweb5ojxbp6jndpk>

Crocq, M-A. (2000, March). From shell shock and war neurosis to posttraumatic stress disorder: A history of psychotraumatology. *Dialogues Clin Neurosci*. 2(1), 47–55.

Lebow, H.I. (2021, June). Residual Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. *PsychCentral*. <https://psychcentral.com/lib/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-residual-symptoms#residual-symptoms>

Dr Neil MacNeill

# SERVICES FOR VETERANS

## MOBILE SERVICE CENTRE FOR NORTHERN NSW

DVA has partnered with Services Australia to give veterans and their families in rural and remote areas face to-face access to DVA and Services Australia services through the Mobile Services Centre (MSC) pilot.

### **What is the Mobile Service Centre (MSC)?**

The MSC is essentially an 'office on wheels' that travels to rural and regional locations throughout Australia. The Services Australia staff on board the MSCs have been trained by DVA and can provide information about DVA services as well as assisted access to online services.

### **What do I need to know?**

During mid-January to April 2022, the Blue Gum MSC will be travelling across Northern New South Wales. I have attached the current itinerary showing the dates and towns it is scheduled to visit.

**It is important to note the MSC schedule can change at short notice in the event of a natural disaster or due to COVID-19 restrictions, please regularly check the following Service Australia link to keep up to date with any changes to the itinerary: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/mobile-service-centres/when-and-where-find-us>.**

Please note the location of the MSC in each town will be available on the link closer to the date.

### **We would love your support**

Letting your members know when the MSC is arriving, helps us provide services to more members of the veteran community. You can distribute the attached factsheet to your members, which explains the types of services offered. Further information on the service is also attached.

Services Australia will be in contact with any additional information on how your organisation can assist with promoting this service.

Thank you for your assistance and ongoing support to the veteran community.

### **Jacqui Hair**

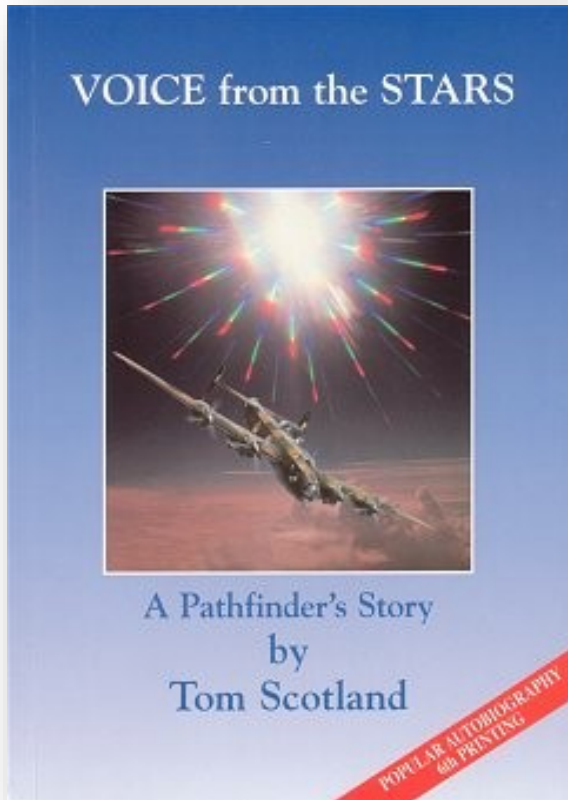
Executive Officer (Acting) to Deputy Commissioner NSW/ACT  
Client Benefits Division  
Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)  
T. (02) 9213 7987 (Ext: 417987)



# BOOKS

## VOICE FROM THE STARS - A PATHFINDER'S STORY

by Tom Scotland, DFC



This is a compassionate story of the making of a pilot and the crew who flew with him through 62 operations flying from Italy with a Pathfinder Squadron of the RAF. The book reveals the feelings engendered in these men during the violence and superaction into which they were thrust.

It contains a very personal story commencing when the writer grew up during the depression years in Western Australia. Air Force experience in Australia and with the RAF in England followed. During wartime flights he and his British crew experienced many near disasters including escape from a burning Halifax aircraft over Cleckheaton near Leeds.

Running through the autobiography, a thread is detected of a man on a search. It is a search for the meaning of existence, the purpose of life and death and the Voice which brought him answers in the most unexpected times and places

318 pages of cartoons, maps, and photographs

To order your copy of this excellent book:

[info@writerspen.com.au](mailto:info@writerspen.com.au) or [www.writerspen.com.au](http://www.writerspen.com.au)

### **PURCHASE OFFER FOR OUR VETERANS**

**Email from: Administration - Writerspen <[admin@writerspen.com.au](mailto:admin@writerspen.com.au)>**

Dear Editor,

Nov 11 2021

I wish to place an offer under merchandise if possible for a copy of my father's book Voice From The Stars by Tom Scotland about RAF operations in Italy WW2. This may be away from a Vietnam experience however **we are offering Vets a no cost book at cost of postage only being \$5.50.**

Any help you could provide is appreciated.

Regards

**Peter Scotland**

**Australian WWII Bomber Pilot**

**RAF ITALY**

**Voice From The Stars - A pathfinders Story**

**by Tom Scotland**

**A moving account of a RAAF pathfinder's air operations and escapades over Europe.**

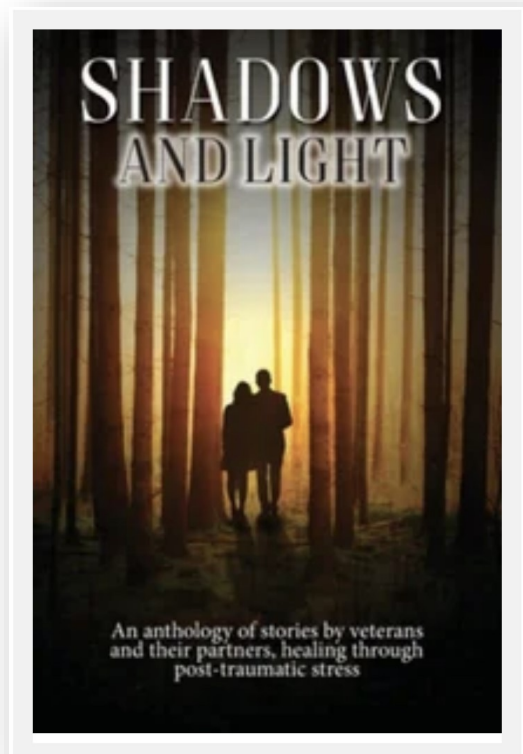
**Offered here to vets and families for the cost of postage and packing only, \$5.50 within Australia.**

**Contact: Peter Scotland [info@writerspen.com.au](mailto:info@writerspen.com.au)**

**[www.writerspen.com.au](http://www.writerspen.com.au)**

# BOOKS

## SHADOWS AND LIGHT



### Synopsis

Personal stories told in their own words by eight veterans and their partners.

From the war zones and the disappointments and tragedies of our lives, come our intimate stories of who we are and how we were shaped by military service.

The stories tell of coming home to wives and partners who were unprepared to cope with the traumatised men they loved and thought they knew.

Our group, comprised of eight veterans and our partners, met for the first time on 17 October 2005 to participate in an intensive four-week residential Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Treatment Program (plus full day sessions once a week for eight weeks), at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital Melbourne. Our partners participated in a separate program but we came together on occasions to strengthen relationships.

Our diverse group is made up of conscripts and regular army soldiers (Vietnam), a British Army officer (Belfast), a member of the AATT (Australian Army Training Team) Vietnam, Navy and Airforce veterans, and our wives and partners.

We meet regularly, to share our lives and support each other in times of crisis and celebration. We thought the many yarns, strong narratives, genuine support and empathy for each other was reward enough, but we felt we needed to share our experiences with others who suffer with depression and PTSD. So, at our 2015 Christmas lunch (our group's tenth anniversary) we asked each other whether we should consider writing our own personal stories to be compiled into a book and then published. The point of doing this for others is probably best described by one of the veterans.

Suffice to say we all had a good look at our own mortality at some point and had all been irrevoc-

*Continued page 26*

# BOOKS

*Continued from page 25*

## SHADOWS AND LIGHT Synopsis.....Continued

cably changed by the experience. We all have this condition in common, and we are all affected by it in different ways. It has taken a long time as well as a lot of hard work and soul searching to get to a point where I can function reasonably normally. To me that is the point of this book – to let those poor souls who are left to scream in the dark know that they are not alone and that it is possible to re-join the human race.

After considerable discussion we decided on the questions and topics we needed to address. The main questions that occupied us were:

- What has it been like to live with depression and PTSD, and in particular, what happened to make us so susceptible?
- What was it like for partners and wives trying to cope with traumatised men, and in particular, their own struggle with mental stress and anxiety?
- What was it like to be captured by the extraordinary events of war and then trying to cope with normal everyday living, and why did our lives become so complex, illusory and mentally destructive?

We then set about answering these questions and many others, as we related our personal stories of events and episodes that have irrevocably changed our lives.

We accepted the challenge, and now, five years later, our stories are complete.

Dr Tarni Jennings (Clinical Psychologist) who was with the PTSD Treatment Program from the beginning, offered to read our stories for context. She sent us this observation:

I am incredibly impressed with the quality of the stories and the writing. Thank you for putting your lives on paper to be shared with others. I commend the courage it takes to write about yourselves and in particular your vulnerabilities. I think a raw and honest reflection of your lives, your experience of war and your struggles in the aftermath is the most helpful thing you can offer others who might be struggling with the shame of their difficulties. There is a great power in reading someone else so clearly describe their inner world and seeing this as a reflection of your own experience. The honesty and clarity with which you write shows a strength, which offers hope to the reader. You don't need to offer solutions; you are modelling the solution in many ways simply by being able to confront your own situation with insight and without shame.

The purpose of this project and this book, *Shadows and Light*, was to give hope to the many men and women, partners and wives, dealing with post-traumatic stress. We also hope that this anthology will give many women as well as men (regardless of occupation or situation) the opportunity and the courage, as we found in the writing of our stories, to share their own life experiences with family and friends.

Thank you for any assistance that you may be able to give.

Kind regards

Laurel Miles

Contact Laurel at [laurelmiles@bigpond.com](mailto:laurelmiles@bigpond.com) regarding purchase and delivery

# AROUND THE STATES

## ST MARYS OUTPOST SUB BRANCH

Prime Minister Scott Morrison stops by the Train for the world renown BBQ and to meet the Veterans and support staff



*Prime Minister and Sam Vecchio Secretary, St. Mary's Outpost Sub Branch and NSW State President. Photos: St. Mary's Outpost*



*Tony Allen (left) and Tony Mullavey (right) explain the working of The Train*



*PM taking an interest in the stories and opinions of Sub Branch members.*



*Sub Branch Advocates, Hira (left) and Kylie (centre) welcomes the Prime Minister*

## AROUND THE STATES

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA



The Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of Adelaide would like to honour those South Australians of Ukrainian decent who served in Viet Nam during 1962 – 1975, by placing their names on a plaque, which will be displayed on their church grounds at Wayville, Adelaide, South Australia.

For further information contact:

Mr Eric Kokoshko : Tel 0428 254 018.

### TASMANIA



What is Terry Roe up to?

You will have to wait for the next edition of Debrief to find out what exciting events are happening in Tasmania.



*It is with great Sadness  
we announce the passing  
of*

***2792455 Leslie Alexander GRAHAM***

*on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021*

*Leslie served in Vietnam with the  
Royal Australian Engineers*

*On behalf of VVAA St Marys Outpost we  
extend our deepest sympathies to family,  
veterans and friends of the late  
Leslie Alexander GRAHAM*

***MAY HE REST IN PEACE***



# VALE



*It is with great sadness we announce the passing of  
37718 Adrian John (Dicko) DICKSON  
on 13 November 2021*

*Dicko served in Vietnam with the  
1st Field Regiment 20/5/1966 to 2/5/1967*

*On behalf of VVAA Victoria we extend our deepest  
sympathies to family, veterans and friends of the late  
Adrian John (Dicko) DICKSON.*

*'MAY HE REST IN PEACE'*



*Lest We Forget*



# VALE



*It is with great sadness we announce the passing of  
38600 Nazzareno (Reno) BORG  
on 5th November 2021*

*Nazzareno served in Vietnam with  
106 Field Workshop 26/11/1968 to 12/11/1969*

*We extend our deepest sympathies to family,  
veterans and friends of the late  
Nazzareno (Reno) BORG.*

*'MAY HE REST IN PEACE'*





*It is with great Sadness  
we announce the passing  
of*

**2783581 Kenneth Noel CLEMENTS**

*on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021*

*Kenneth served in Vietnam with the  
Royal Australian Infantry Corps  
from 1967 to 1968*

*On behalf of VVAA St Marys Outpost we  
extend our deepest sympathies to family,  
veterans and friends of the late  
Kenneth Noel CLEMENTS*

**MAY HE REST IN PEACE**



# REUNIONS



## 21 ENGINEERS SUPPORT TROOP ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS



### RESCHEDULED REUNION

29<sup>th</sup> August to Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2022

Tuncurry Bowling Club

For information on the program contact the 21 EST Committee

Contact Ian (below), Phil Hicks 0414 761932 [phil.hicks@gmail.com](mailto:phil.hicks@gmail.com) or Stan Monkley 0411 506787 [stan21est@gmail.com](mailto:stan21est@gmail.com). Contact Ian McLean (0412 431297) [jaim@hotmail.com.au](mailto:jaim@hotmail.com.au)

Website: [www.21est.org](http://www.21est.org)



## **HEADQUARTERS** **1ST AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE** **SOUTH VIETNAM 1966 - 1972**

### **HQ1ATF ASSOCIATION REUNION**

*In Memory of our D&E losses at Long Khanh – 12 June 1971*

**Canberra: 3 March to 7 March 2022**

Capital Country Holiday Park

47 Bidges Road, SUTTON NSW 2620 Ph:(02) 6230 3433

Email: [bookings@capitalcountryholidaypark.com.au](mailto:bookings@capitalcountryholidaypark.com.au)

Web: [www.capitalcountryholidaypark.com.au](http://www.capitalcountryholidaypark.com.au)

### 2022 REUNION PROGRAM

**Thursday 3 March 2022**

1400 Onwards. Arrival at Capital Country Holiday Park (CCHP) for welcome and registration.

1800 Onwards: Evening BBQ at the Mess Tent - CCHP

**Friday 4 March 2022**

Breakfast own arrangements.

1030 HQ1ATF Association Members meeting at Mess Tent - CCHP.

1300 Coach tour of Canberra visiting some of the major sites, including: Australian War Memorial, National Museum of Australia, Parliament House, National Gallery of Australia and the National Portrait Gallery.

1800 Group dinner

*Continued page 34*

# REUNIONS

## HQ1ATF ASSOCIATION REUNION

*Continued from page 33*

### **Saturday 5 March 2022**

Breakfast own arrangements

- 0930 A coach will depart CCHP for the Canberra Outlet Centre (Fyshwick) shopping mall (*canberraoutletcentre.com.au*) returning to CCHP about 12 noon. Alternately you may wish to further explore the Canberra region. Or enjoy a few drinks and lunch with mates at CCHP. Lunch, own arrangements.
- 1515 A busy afternoon and evening. Gentlemen, medals please. Coach transfer to Duntroon House, Royal Military College for afternoon tea hosted by the PMC.
- 1630 Travel onto Anzac Parade for our Commemorative Service at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Our own Padre, Arthur Fry, from Caloundra will again officiate.
- 1730 Continue by coach to Old Parliament House (Museum of Australian Democracy) for cocktails and our bi-annual Commemorative Dinner. Music by the RMC Military Band.

### **Sunday 6 March 2022**

Breakfast own arrangements

At leisure until 1700.

1700 Cocktails at Mess Tent CCHP.

1800 Informal dinner (no ties, no medals) at Mess Tent CCHP. Kel and Mel will entertain us again.

### **Monday 7 March 2022**

**From 0800** Farewell “self serve” BBQ breakfast at Mess Tent CCHP

The participant cost will include all meals as indicated above, wine and beer where possible with dinners, touring and transport as indicated. The participant cost is \$200 for members and \$200 for partners, plus an additional \$40 for member’s membership fee for the period, October 2020 to September 2022. For other family members and friends, the reunion cost is \$240 per person. Children’s prices on request.

***To obtain our special rates when making reservations at the Capital Country Holiday Park (CCHP), please quote “HQ1ATF Reunion October 2022”.***

### **DIRECTIONS TO CAPITAL COUNTRY HOLIDAY PARK.**

**47 Bidges Road, SUTTON NSW 2620**

Capital Country Holiday Park is located just off the Federal Highway, on the ACT border. Canberra Airport is some 8 KM from the Holiday Park. There are taxi’s and mini buses available to get you to the Holiday Park. If driving to CCHP, take the Federal Highway to the Eaglehawk turnoff and follow the Federal Highway Service Road about two KM until you reach Bidges Road – the Holiday Park is 200 metres up this road on your left side. (NOTE: if you drive to Eaglehawk Holiday Park nearby, you have the WRONG place).

Now if you are a little soft and need a hotel, the IBIS STYLES Eaglehawk is two km from the CCHP.

**REGISTRATION FORM ON NEX PAGE>>**

# REUNIONS



## **HEADQUARTERS 1ST AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE SOUTH VIETNAM 1966 - 1972**

### **REGISTRATION FORM: REUNION: 3 – 7 March 2022**

Surname:			
First Name:			
Address (please include Post-code):			
Preferred name on badge:			
Wife / Partner Name attending			
Any dietary requirements!			
Home Phone:		Mobile	
Email:			
Reunion Cost Members	\$200 per member	\$200	
Reunion Cost Wife / Partner	\$200 per partner		
Reunion Cost Others	\$240 per person		
Membership Fee: November 2020 to October 2022	\$40 per member	\$ 40	
Donation (optional)			
<b>TOTAL</b>			

#### **PAYMENT DETAILS:**

Cheque payable to:- **HQ1ATF ASSOCIATION**, and mail to **PO Box 328, GLADESVILLE NSW 1675**

Or EFT: **BSB: 082697 HQ1ATF Association Account: 188667746** Please reference your name  
It would help if all money be paid no later than **15<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022**

#### **What do I get for my money?**

*Welcome BBQ., Dinner, Commemorative dinner, Final night dinner, Farewell breakfast,  
Coach travel, tour of Canberra, Tour to factory outlet shopping centre.*

### **PLEASE RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM TO:**

John Verhelst, HQ1ATF ASSOCIATION  
Post to: PO Box 328, GLADESVILLE, NSW 1675, or  
Scan and email to: [jeverhelst@gmail.com](mailto:jeverhelst@gmail.com)

## **SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VETERANS & THEIR FAMILIES**



**SAFE ZONE  
SUPPORT**

**FREE ANONYMOUS  
COUNSELLING LINE  
CALL 1800 142 072**

Safe Zone Support is a free and anonymous counselling line, for veterans and their families – call 1800 142 072 (available 24/7).

This service provides access to specialised counsellors, with an understanding of military culture and experience.

The service offers care without the need for individuals to identify themselves or be concerned that their call will be recorded.

This line has been created for vulnerable cohorts of veterans and their families which might not otherwise seek mental health care.



**OPEN**  
Veterans & Families  
Counselling  
**ARMS**

A service founded by Vietnam Veterans now for ALL Veterans and their Families. 1800 011 046

## **SUPPORTING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

At Open Arms your wellbeing is our business.

We offer free:

confidential counselling for individuals, couples  
and families  
group programs  
transition workshops  
peer networks  
suicide prevention training  
education, self-help resources, and more...

**To get support or find out more  
call or visit:**

**1800 011 046 | [OpenArms.gov.au](http://OpenArms.gov.au)**

# **OPEN ARMS**

**Veterans & Families Counselling**

**> A service founded by Vietnam veterans,  
now for all veterans and families**

## **OUR HISTORY**

Recent research has identified a loss of records from our associations past. If anyone has copies of VVAA. National Congress minutes prior to 1996 please forward to:

[president@vvaa.org.au](mailto:president@vvaa.org.au) or [secretary@vvaa.org.au](mailto:secretary@vvaa.org.au)

## **TELL OTHERS ABOUT YOUR ACTIVITIES**

VVAA States and sub branches are encouraged to contribute reports on their local activities for publication in Debrief.

Don't miss this opportunity promote your group; it may give others ideas of what they can do for, and with, members and their families.

The preferred method is to attach to an email the article in Word format and photographs in JPG format for better quality, to [debriefeditor@gmail.com](mailto:debriefeditor@gmail.com)

## **Has your Email Address Changed?**

Please advise your new email address to the VVAA National Secretary at [secretary@vvaa.org.au](mailto:secretary@vvaa.org.au).

# NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

25 Veterans Drive, Newhaven, Phillip Island VIC 3925

[www.vietnamvetsmuseum.org.au](http://www.vietnamvetsmuseum.org.au)

Membership enquiries welcomed—application form next page



## AUSTRALIAN WAR WIDOWS Incorporated

*(formerly 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 inception and remains today.

The **kookaburra** was the mascot of the 7th Division of the 2nd AIF, commanded by Mrs Jessie Vasey's husband, Major-General Vasey.

**More information on [www.warwidows.org.au](http://www.warwidows.org.au)**

## DEBRIEF DEADLINE

The deadline for articles to be included in DEBRIEF is the first day of every **even** month.

When submitting articles with photographs, to achieve the best print quality, where possible, please include the photographs separately in JPG or similar format.

Also identify each photograph i.e., Photo 1 – SA President laying a wreath; Photo 2 – Cenotaph gates etc.

*Debrief Editor: [debriefeditor@gmail.com](mailto:debriefeditor@gmail.com)*

# NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

## Become a Friend of NVVM

Office Use Only

Membership Number



The Friends of NVVM program unites people committed to supporting the mission of this unique museum: to remember, interpret and understand the experience of Vietnam War veterans and the enduring impact of the war on society.

As well as demonstrating your high regard for NVVM and its work, Friendship brings you:

- ♥ Free admission on all visits to the museum.
- ♥ 2 free guest passes per year.
- ♥ 10% discount on admission cost for immediate family.
- ♥ 10% discount in NVVM shop & Nui Dat Cafe.
- ♥ Exclusive "Friends" only private viewing & events.
- ♥ Regular newsletters.
- ♥ Discounts for guest lectures, film nights, conference and other special events.
- ♥ Single vote at AGM.

Payment:	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year
Individual	\$35 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$65 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$95 <input type="checkbox"/>
Concession	\$25 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$45 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$65 <input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$70 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$130 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$190 <input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate	\$200 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$350 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$500 <input type="checkbox"/>
Life: Aged 60 yrs+			
Individual	\$800 <input type="checkbox"/>	Concession \$600 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Life: Aged under 60 yrs			
Individual	\$1200 <input type="checkbox"/>	Concession \$800 <input type="checkbox"/>	

Direct payments can be made to:  
NVVM Ltd Trading Acct  
Bendigo Bank BSB 633 000  
Account: 149738577

### Primary Members Details (please print)

Company name: .....

Title: ..... Surname .....

First Name/s: .....

Address: .....

State: ..... Postcode: .....

Email address: .....

@ .....

Phone: .....

Signature: .....

Date: ...../...../.....

Immediate family in Friend's household.  
(Please provide given name and surname).

**Concession** applies to veteran card holders, full time students & pensioners, does NOT include Senior Card. Benefits as per individual member.

**Family** allows for 2 adults and up to 4 children. Benefits as per individual member.

**Corporate** allows for four adults and up to 10 children. Benefits as per individual member.

**Post:** Friends of NVVM Association  
PO Box 318  
San Remo VIC 3925

**Email:** office@vietnamvetmuseum.org  
**phone:** 03 5956 6400

**Website:** www.vietnamvetmuseum.org  
**25 Veterans Drive, Newhaven, Phillip Island VIC**

☐ Cheque ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

Expiry date: ...../...../.....

Card holder's name: .....

Signature: .....

Card number: .....

Date signed: ...../...../.....