



DEBRIEF

Patron: RADM Neil Ralph AO DSC RAN (RTD)

Edited and Published By

Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Inc.

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COVER STORY: THE VERY LAST OUT

Photo: Courtesy Australian War Memorial

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members,

Easter has passed and the next events on our calendars include ANZAC Day, the meeting on Wednesday 11 May 2022 in Canberra of your Association's National Council followed by our National Congress the next day.

May I remind that you that the National Council is the meeting at which decisions are made regarding the topics which the National Executive will pursue with the Federal Government and other agencies. If you have an issue that needs to be addressed by the Council please address it as soon as you can to your Branch.



The Government has extended the reporting period for the Royal Commission into Veterans Suicide.

Many of the submissions to the Commission, in writing or in person, are about the suicides and experiences of veterans from the Gulf War and onwards, and of their families. This does not mean that Vietnam veterans are unable to make a worthwhile contribution to the Commission, especially where we have seen the lessons learnt during the Vietnam period and after, seem to have been ignored by successive governments, Defence and DVA.

The matter of an Association submission to the Commission will be discussed at Council in May.

With the Federal election also to be held in late May we have written to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Andrew Gee MP, and to the Shadow Minister, the Hon Shayne Neumann MP, suggesting a short list of topics to be included in their respective Party election platforms. Copies of those letters follow this report and members are encouraged to discuss these topics with their local candidates.

I am pleased to report that before the Government went into caretaker mode the Minister endorsed the proposals put forward by the Department for the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam in early 2023. \$6m has been allocated for these activities, planning by DVA for this commemorative event is expected to begin in May 2022 and guidance will be provided by a consultative committee which will include Vietnam veterans.

The next edition of Debrief will report on ANZAC Day activities. Members/sub-branches and branches are encouraged to email reports and photographs of their activities on Anzac Day to the Debrief Editor debriefeditor@gmail.com.

Best regards,

Max Ball

NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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COALITION POLICIES—2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

® **VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.**

ABN 19 068 073 450

NATIONAL PATRON RADM Neil Ralph AO DSC RAN



NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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The Hon Andrew Gee MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

March 2022

Dear Minister,

Coalition Policies – 2022 Federal Election

This Association recommends that the following matters be included in the Coalition policies for the forthcoming Federal election.

Open Arms – The Veterans and Families Counselling Service

You will recall we wrote to you on 27 July 2021 regarding our concerns about the Counselling Service.

We refer to that letter and confirm that our views have not changed. That is, the expansion of the potential client base for Open Arms to include serving members of the ADF and their families has reinforced to us the need for Open Arms to have a greater degree of independence from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

We noted that, when formed, the Service was independent of the Department but, at a time when DVA was divesting itself of all other forms of service delivery, such as repatriation hospitals, the department quickly subsumed the VVCS back into the folds of the public service for reasons which do not seem apparent in the historical literature.

Since we wrote to you in July 2021 there has been a marked shift in world affairs and strategic relationships between some countries, including Australia. The probability of Australia being involved in a defence emergency is now much higher than it was some eight months ago.

In these circumstances we submit to you that there is now a greater need than before for a clear definition of lines of accountability for the Service, which now provides support for members of the ADF, the individual Services of which are responsible the well-being of their members.

We remain of the view that Open Arms should return to its origins and be, as far as practicable, independent of DVA, albeit remaining part of the Defence portfolio, similar to the standing of the

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COALITION POLICIES—2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

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Australian War Memorial. In the absence of any other advice we conclude that your current position is one of being comfortable with the status quo

Policy Issue. We seek that, if elected to Government, the Coalition will commission promptly an independent review of the structure and operations of Open Arms with a view to establishing if the current organizational structure and reporting lines are the most appropriate given the current size of its potential client base and the risk of a defence emergency.

TPI/SRDP Pension

In recent times the Senate FADT Committee recommended that this pension receive a modest increase. The government has not responded to this recommendation but may do so in the forthcoming budget.

Further, several studies have illustrated that the purchasing power of this pension, expressed as a percentage of male average weekly earnings, has declined. (Details can be provided.)

Policy Issue. We seek that the Coalition, if re-elected will commit to;

- An appropriate increase in the level of this pension, (if not addressed in the forthcoming budget, or addressed inadequately); and
- Commission a short study to examine the feasibility of protecting the purchasing power of this pension by benchmarking it against an appropriate measure of income such as the MTA-WE.

Aged Care Policy in Respect to War Veterans and War Widows

Currently DVA administers a range of policies that provide support for ageing war veterans and war widows who reside independently. However, DVA support for these clients declines dramatically when they become residents of an aged care facility. It is understood that this situation is partly a result of whole of government policies and the separation of responsibilities for aged care as between the Commonwealth and the States.

Policy Issue. The VVAA calls upon the Coalition, if re-elected to government, to review policies that affect war veterans and war widows who are in residential aged care with a view to;

- establishing within DVA, as a minimum, an aged care desk responsible to liaise with aged care residences to ensure they understand the benefits available to those DVA clients, and
- to monitor those DVA clients who are in residential aged care and ensure that those clients are in receipt of their DVA entitlements.

DVA to Employ Advocates to Assist Veterans to Prepare Claims for Compensation

Recently, this Association made a submission to DVA, through consultative channels, that due to the complexity of veterans' compensation legislation the Australian Government had a moral responsibility to fund professional advisors (advocates) to veterans seeking to lodge claims for compensation on DVA.

Currently, some funding is provided for this purpose through the BEST Grant but this is inadequate for the purpose. Further, a recent study by the University of New South Wales has cast serious doubt on the continued availability of advocates. What is needed, in our view, is a core of professionally trained pension advocates who are employed, paid and supervised by DVA, although they may be located with the premises of ESOs or other convenient locations.

Policy Issue. We understand that this VVAA submission has found support from other ESOs and the concept is of interest to DVA. We seek from the Coalition;

- If re-elected to government continued support for this proposal and its implementation; and

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NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

COALITION POLICIES—2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

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If not elected to government, ongoing bi-partisan support for this proposal to ensure its implementation.

Conclusion

We believe that there is a need for the veteran community to be informed as to the pre-election policies of the Coalition and we seek that those policies include the issues we have described above.

A similar letter will be addressed to the current Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully,

Max Ball

National President

cc. The Hon Peter Dutton MP Minister for Defence
The Hon Barnaby Joyce Leader for the Nationals
Ms Celia Hammond MP Member for Curtin

ALP POLICIES—2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

The Hon Shayne Neumann MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs
PO Box 2579
North Ipswich LPO QLD 4305

March 2022

Dear Shayne,

ALP Policies – 2022 Federal Election

This Association recommends that the following matters be included in the ALP policies for the forthcoming Federal election.

Open Arms – The Veterans and Families Counselling Service

You will recall that this Counselling Service was formed as a result of the activities of this Association and with the support of the Minister at the time, the Hon Tony Messner. The first office was opened in Adelaide, soon to be followed by offices in other cities. At the time the VVCS, as it was known, was independent of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

However, at a time when DVA was divesting itself of all other forms of service delivery, such as repatriation hospitals, the department quickly subsumed the VVCS back into the folds of the public service.

In recent years Open Arms, as it is now called, has grown dramatically and now provides counselling services not only for war veterans who suffered war trauma but for all veterans and their families. Because of the all-encompassing nature of the definition of "a veteran" this means that

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ALP POLICIES—2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

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regular members of the ADF (without war service) and their families may now receive counseling for a wide range of service and family related issues, and do so. This would seem to be a source of potential difficulty, especially at a time when there is a high probability of a defence emergency

Within DVA, Open Arms enjoys the benefit of some access to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs through the advice given to the Minister by the NAC, but we are of the view that Open Arms should return to its origins and be as far as practicable independent of DVA, albeit remaining part of the Defence portfolio, similar to the standing of the Australian War Memorial.

Policy Issue. We seek that, if elected to Government, the ALP will commission promptly an independent review of the operations of Open Arms with a view to establishing if the current organizational structure is the most appropriate given the current size of its potential client base and the risk of a defence emergency.

TPI/SRDP Pension

In recent times the Senate FADT Committee recommended that this pension receive a modest increase. The government has not responded to this recommendation but may do so in the forthcoming budget.

Further, several studies have illustrated that the purchasing power of this pension, expressed as a percentage of male average weekly earnings, has declined. (Details can be provided.)

Policy Issue. We seek that the ALP, if elected and in its first budget, commit to;

- An appropriate increase in the level of this pension, (if not addressed in the forthcoming budget, or addressed inadequately); and

- Commission a short study to examine the feasibility of protecting the purchasing power of this pension by benchmarking it against an appropriate measure of income such as the MTA-WE.

Aged Care Policy in Respect to War Veterans and War Widows

Currently DVA administers a range of policies that provide support for ageing war veterans and war widows who reside independently. However, DVA support for these clients declines dramatically when they become residents of an aged care facility. It is understood that this situation is partly a result of whole of government policies and the separation of responsibilities for aged care as between the Commonwealth and the States.

Policy Issue. The VVAA calls upon the ALP, if elected to government, to review policies that affect war veterans and war widows who are in residential aged care with a view to;

- establishing within DVA, as a minimum, an aged care desk responsible to liaise with aged care residences to ensure they understand the benefits available to those DVA clients, and
- to monitor those DVA clients who are in residential aged care and ensure that those clients are in receipt of their DVA entitlements.

DVA to Employ Advocates to Assist Veterans to Prepare Claims for Compensation

Recently, this Association made a submission to DVA, through consultative channels, that due to the complexity of veterans' compensation legislation the Australian Government had a moral responsibility to provide assistance to fund professional advisors (advocates) to veterans seeking to

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NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

ALP POLICIES—2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

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lodge claims for compensation on DVA.

Currently, some funding is provided for this purpose through the BEST Grant but this is inadequate for the purpose. Further, a recent study by the University of New South Wales has cast serious doubt on the continued availability of advocates. What is needed, in our view, is a core of professionally trained pension advocates who are employed, paid and supervised by DVA, although they may be located with the premises of ESOs or other convenient locations.

Policy Issue. We understand that this VVAA submission has found support from other ESOs and the concept is of interest to DVA. We seek from Labor;

If elected to government continued support for this proposal and its implementation; and
If not elected to government, ongoing bi-partisan support for this proposal to ensure its implementation

Conclusion

We believe that there is a need for the veteran community to be informed as to the pre-election policies of Labor and we seek that those policies include the issues we have described above.

A similar letter will be addressed to the current Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully,

Max Ball

National President

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

Recently, the National Vietnam Veterans Museum took delivery of Lockheed C130A Hercules A92-214 forward fuselage/cockpit section from RAAF museum Point Cook.

The heavily corroded C-130A aircraft A97-214 – which was beyond economical and practical repair – was scrapped at Point Cook (Point Cook) in February 2022, with the exception of the forward fuselage/cockpit section, which has been gifted to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum (NVVM) to be added to their collection.

The NVVM's intention is to restore it and to allow visitors access to the cockpit to fully appreciate how big this aircraft is.

A special thank you to RAAF for donating it, to IAS Fine Art Logistics who financed the move, to Hi Haul Transport and Gows Cranes who collected the fuselage/cockpit from Point Cook and to our volunteers from the museum who helped with the move.



*Lockheed C130A Hercules
A92-214 forward fuselage/
cockpit section. Photo supplied
by VVAA Victoria*

COVER STORY

THE VERY LAST OUT

March 19, 1972: I arrived in Sai Gon to join the 120 man-strong Australian Army Assistance Group Vietnam - half in Sai Gon, half in a small compound at Van Kiep east of Ba Ria. I was to be the Group's interpreter. The 1st Australian Task Force had withdrawn over the final months of 1971 and the final handover completed by February 1972.

Three weeks later, the NLF launched what they called the Spring - Summer Offensive and what we called the Easter offensive. The aim was twofold. First, gain some ground before finalising the Paris Peace Agreement. Second to take advantage of the withdrawal of the US' fighting troops. Only 80,000 remained and they were mostly administrative staff and advisors.

The push had three thrusts. South and east into Quang Tri Province just below the DMZ; west to east across the Central Highlands plateau with a separate push up from the coastal plains threatening to cut South Vietnam in half; and north out of Cambodia down National Route 13 towards Sai Gon itself.

The Army of the Republic of Vietnam was stunned by the assaults and quickly lost large swathes of land to the rapidly advancing infantry backed by tanks and other armoured vehicles and extremely accurate long range artillery. It looked like the end was near. But slowly the ARVN fought back as the NLF besieged Quang Tri City in the north, Kontum in the Central Highlands and An Loc on Highway 13 just a hundred kilometres from Sai Gon.



T54 tanks, aa-guns etc are weapons captured during the Spring and Summer offensive of 1972



Captured NLF Ant-aircraft guns

As the fighting dragged on for more than a month, the boss of the AAAGV HQ, organised a pep talk for us. We were reassured the ARVN were now doing well. And we were reminded that it took the Japanese only six weeks to take all of the Malaya Peninsula while the NLF had taken only two provinces in a similar amount of time. The NLF would retain that ground under the Paris Peace Agreement. Those positions would become the launch pad for their final push to take control of South Vietnam in 1975.

It was about this time that I was accosted by a short moustachioed Major named Rex Clark. Major Clark had a penchant for heroics, danger, and medals. We were to head out into the fighting in Central Highlands with a CIA Officer and an US Army engineer as part of an intelligence program called "Chuckwagon". We were to examine the markings on captured enemy weapons to determine their country of origin. That's when I was wounded the second time in Viet Nam.

After our helicopter was turned away from one Fire Support Base by enemy ground fire,



Author with glasses in middle - on Operation Chuckwagon with Rex Clark to my right, a CIA Officer, and US Army engineer.

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COVER STORY

THE VERY LAST OUT

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*Qui Nhon POW Camp
VC Prisoner*

we landed in Kon Tum. Searching through weapons from various Eastern Bloc countries, I threw a RPG into a shipping container. The propellant charge was still in it. It exploded leaving me deaf for four days and peppered with small pieces of fragmentation.

In those days, we upheld the Geneva Conventions on Prisoners of War. Australia, as a capturing power, had to ensure that the detaining power - the South Vietnamese - were properly treating all the POWs we had taken over the years since 1966. A Staff Officer and myself would travel to different POW camps every month to interview POWs.

The Camp with the most beautiful surrounds was on Phu Quoc Island in the Gulf of Thailand near the Cambodian border. Twenty thousand NLF POWs were

guarded by 1,500 ARVN Military Police advised by a contingent of US Army MPs. These men had not been back to Continental United States for years. Instead, they rotated from Viet Nam to Guam or Korea or Europe and back to Viet Nam again. We always timed our visits for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. At their little seaside compound one Saturday afternoon, I learnt to water ski behind the runabout their mess had purchased from the Post Exchange years before.



C123 on Phu Quoc POW Camp airstrip

By October, in Paris, the Peace talks were at a stalemate. That would lead eventually to the Christmas bombing of Ha Noi - Operation Linebacker II.

In late November 1972, we all cast our postal ballots in the Federal Election. On December 2, the Governor General commissioned the Whitlam Government. On December 12, the Canberra Times reported on page 12 that Minister for Defence Lance Barnard had announced all troops would be home within three weeks.

Days later we received the word to move. We were supposed to return all our furniture and other equipment to the Americans but they laughed at us. So we destroyed as much as we could by dropping it from the first floor of the Free World Headquarters Building. We raided the Q Store and loaded ourselves up with as much gear as we could carry.

The Van Kiep contingent, who remained part of The Team (AATTV), came up to Sai Gon all bravado and side arms, and we headed out to Tan Son Nhut Airport. The Australian Ambassador addressed us, reassuring us we had successfully kept the Red Peril at bay. While the international media captured our departure on four C130s the Ambassador waved us good-bye safe in the knowledge that we had left a platoon behind to guard him.

On the same day, the USAF began bombing Ha Noi. Over a period of eleven days 741 USAF sorties rained 15,237 tons of bombs on Ha Noi and surrounds. The North Vietnamese later concluded the Agreement with no change in their October position. All American troops and the last remaining Embassy Guards, were out of Viet Nam by March 1973.

Walter Pearson #1201333

Photos supplied by Walter Pearson

PRIME MINISTER'S JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

KOOKABURRA KIDS



**The Hon. Scott Morrison MP Prime Minister
The Hon. Andrew Gee MP Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel
JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

Saturday 12 March 2022

\$13.7 MILLION TO SUPPORT OUR DEFENCE KIDS

More children of Australian veterans and Defence personnel will receive additional support thanks to a new \$13.7 million investment in the successful Kookaburra Kids 'Defence Kids' mental health program.

This new investment comes as Kookaburra Kids celebrates its 20th year of providing services. It builds on our Government's investment of \$2.1 million for a pilot of the Defence Kids program in 2016 and \$7.7 million to expand the program in 2018.

The additional funding will see the program expanded to more regional areas: Wagga Wagga, Albury/Wodonga, the Mornington Peninsula, Bendigo, Ballarat, and Geelong.

For the first time, services will also be available for children in north and south Tasmania.

The Prime Minister said the Defence Kids program was making a massive difference to the lives of children of Defence families, and the funding would ensure it could reach even more kids and families.

"Being a kid can be tough enough, and there can be added challenges for kids from Defence and veteran families," the Prime Minister said.

"Often, our Defence kids have to move away from friends, they change schools and they deal with a parent being away for extended periods of time or who may be facing mental health challenges.

"The Kookaburra Kids Defence Kids program helps kids to manage these challenges, and brings them together with others facing similar experiences.

"We want to give our Defence kids as much support as possible, and give our veterans and Defence members the confidence that their families are well looked after. The extension of this program will ensure just that.

"I also congratulate Kookaburra Kids on their 20th anniversary. From their start in the Shire, to now reaching out across the nation to help thousands more kids, it's truly great work."

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said the additional funding would grow the program across the regions and provide access to even more kids.

"The Kookaburra Kids program has already had more than 4,300 engagements with children in the Defence and veteran community, and this significant additional investment will see more

PRIME MINISTER'S JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

KOOKABURRA KIDS

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children reap the benefits,” Minister Gee said.

“Kids aged 8-18 years old can get involved by attending camps and activity days where they develop coping skills and resilience, building up their mental health while understanding their unique experience.

“The program delivers tailored, evidence-based, age-appropriate education, prevention and early intervention mental health services.

“Prevention is key in supporting our Defence kids and providing them with the help they need to thrive. I’m extremely supportive of anything that supports our Defence families.”

The funding will also see face-to-face services continue in all mainland capital cities as well as the regional centres of Townsville, the Hunter, Wollongong, Shoalhaven and the NSW South Coast.

To find out more about the Kookaburra Kids ‘Defence Kids’ program visit: <https://kookaburrakids.org.au/our-programs/defence-kids-activities/>

Media Contacts:

Prime Minister’s office: Press Office, (02) 6277 7744

Minister Gee’s office: Steve Kidner, 0459 966 944

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Sydney

From: Kelly Marshall [<mailto:Kelly.marshall@kookaburrakids.org.au>]

Sent: Thursday, 17 March 2022 4:04 PM

To: undisclosed-recipients:

Subject: **Kookaburra Kids** - Funding announcement from Prime Minister

Please *note the Media Release, above*, from Prime Minister, Hon Scott Morrison and Minister Veterans’ Affairs Minister for Defence Personnel, Hon Andrew Gee announcing \$13.7 million to support Kookaburra Kids program delivery for our defence kids.

This is exciting for Kookaburra Kids and the work we do with defence kids in WA and across Australia. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the support you have given this far in connecting defence families into our programs.

If you would like more information on our free programs and referral process, please e-mail me or give me a call.

See links below to a printable flyer and a short video of Rose’s journey with Kookaburra Kids.

Defence Referral Flyer <https://kookaburrakids.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Flyer-Referrer-Defence.pdf>. Rose Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2qLu43QDTM>

Kind regards,

Kelly Marshall

Community Liaison Office – Defence

Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation

Note – My days of work are Wednesday & Thursday

Mobile 0419 796 042 **Phone** 1300 566 525 **Email** Kelly.Marshall@kookaburrakids.org.au

Website www.kookaburrakids.org.au

MINISTER MATTERS



Office of the Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel

MEDIA RELEASE

26 March 2022

THE FIRST BATTLE OF GAZA: 105 YEARS ON

Today marks the 105th anniversary of the first Battle of Gaza during World War I, the first of three attempts launched by Allied forces to capture the city in 1917.

The coastal city was a strategically important Ottoman defensive stronghold in southern Palestine, but the initial attempt to take it proved costly, with more than 4,000 Allied casualties.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said that while the first battle ended in a withdrawal, the Australians involved fought with distinction.

"Two Australian Light Horse Brigades, two battalions of Australian cameleers in the Imperial Camel Corps, along with the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade played a crucial role in the attack," Minister Gee said.

"The courageous men of the Australian Light Horse were among the first to move in on the city from the north, in the early hours of 26 March 1917. They captured the high ground quickly and pressed on into the outskirts of Gaza.

"But before they could proceed further, the call came to withdraw. Some of the infantry divisions that were to attack the southern part of Gaza had been delayed due to bad weather, and the Ottoman garrison and reinforcements were thought to be larger in number than originally estimated.

"The Australians and the other Allied troops were forced to give up the areas they had seized during the battle, and retreat back to their own lines. An attempt to recommence the attack was made the next day, but this also proved unsuccessful.

"The Allied forces would attempt to take Gaza again less than a month later, with even more disastrous results, again failing to capture the city and losing more than 6,000 troops.

"The city would eventually be taken on 7 November 1917, after a feint battle at Gaza allowed Allied forces to capture nearby Beersheba, breaking the Ottoman stronghold in the region and eventually outflanking Gaza.

"The Australians who fought alongside their Allied counterparts played a critical role in the extended and repeated campaign to take Gaza.

"May we always remember their service and acknowledge the sacrifices they made.

"Lest we forget."

To learn more about the battles for Gaza, and the Sinai and Palestine campaign, visit the Department of Veterans' Affairs [Anzac Portal](#).

MEDIA CONTACTS:
Minister Gee office: 0459 966 944
DVA Media: 02 6289 6466



*Photo AWM:
Major Arthur Frank
Chambers of the 2nd
Australian Light Horse,
who died of wounds sus-
tained in the second
Battle of Gaza in 1917*

MINISTER MATTERS

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

MEDIA RELEASE

05 April 2022

DR BRENDAN NELSON AO APPOINTED TO AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL COUNCIL

Dr Brendan Nelson AO has been appointed as a member of the Council of the Australian War Memorial.

Dr Nelson fills the Council position vacated by outgoing member Mr Kerry Stokes AC, who is standing down after 15 years of exceptional and dedicated service, including as Chairman for more than six years.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said Dr Nelson's appointment would allow him to continue to serve the Australian War Memorial through its historic redevelopment.

"In the seven years Dr Nelson was Director of the Australian War Memorial he worked tirelessly to ensure it remained at the forefront of our nation's story of service and sacrifice," Minister Gee said.

"He built a legacy of innovation and inclusion in his time as Director, overseeing the centenary of the First World War and the major refurbishment of the galleries which record our involvement in that conflict.

"While serving as Australia's Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg, the European Union and NATO, he witnessed the daily Last Post ceremonies at the Menin Gate in Ypres, and the impact this moving act of remembrance had on the community.

"It is thanks to his guidance, that we now have a daily Last Post ceremony at the Australian War Memorial, which gives all Australians the opportunity to remember and honour the sacrifice of the more than 102,000 Australians who have given their lives in service.

"His long history of service to the Australian people as a medical practitioner, member of the Australian Parliament, diplomat and business leader will also bring a wealth of experience to the Council.

"Dr Nelson served as the Minister for Defence during ADF deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, East Timor and the Solomon Islands, ensuring a special understanding of the stories that will be told through the Memorial's redevelopment.

"His business acumen, as president of Boeing Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific, will also prove invaluable.

"Our War Memorial is sacred to Australians as a place of solemn reflection and pride in our nation's history of service. Generations of Australians have a special connection and bond to it through their own story of service and sacrifice or that of their family. I am very pleased Dr Nelson will again bring his passion and energy to it."

Minister Gee also thanked outgoing Chair of the Council Mr Kerry Stokes AC for his outstanding dedication to the Australian War Memorial, the culmination of which is evident in the delivery of the \$500 million expansion of the Memorial.

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MINISTER MATTERS

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“Mr Stokes has served on the Council of the Australian War Memorial for the last 15 years, and as Chair since 2015, playing a critical role in maintaining and developing the nationally significant institution,” Minister Gee said.

“On behalf of all Australians, I thank Mr Stokes for his passion, leadership and vision, as demonstrated by his induction as a Fellow of the Australian War Memorial in November 2015.

“Since inception Mr Stokes has overseen the commencement of the building works for the expansion of the memorial’s exhibition spaces. He has also been a major benefactor to the Memorial over many years and his passion and respect for the sacrifices made by our service men and women has been evident in the many hours he has devoted to his role as chairman.”

During his tenure Mr Stokes has had many achievements, including sponsoring the 95th Gallipoli anniversary touring exhibition, *This company of brave men: the Gallipoli VCs*, and donating several significant medals, including nine Victoria Cross medal groups and two George Cross medal groups.

He also donated to the Memorial an extremely valuable collection of First World War glass plate negatives from the Thuillier estate in July 2011.

Mr Stokes said “I have enjoyed every moment in working with the dedicated staff and council of the Memorial over the last 15 years and will continue to follow closely the progress of construction to expand the facility in Canberra over the next few years.

“The Memorial holds a special place in every Australian’s heart and I am proud to have played a role in its development. I am sure Brendan will again make an important contribution in his new role”, he added.

“I want to thank both Mr Stokes and Dr Nelson for their contribution to the Australian War Memorial and our nation more broadly. I wish them both all the best for the future,” Minister Gee said.

The Council of the Australian War Memorial will decide who will replace Mr Stokes as Chairman.

Biography

Dr Brendan Nelson has served the Australian public for more than three decades, working as a medical practitioner from 1985-1995 and serving as the youngest-ever National President of the Australian Medical Association from 1993 to 1995.

After entering politics and being elected as the Member for Bradfield 1996, he spent more than 13 years as a Member of the House of Representatives, serving as the Minister for Defence, Minister for Education, Science and Training, and as the Leader of the Opposition

In 2009 Dr Nelson was appointed as the Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg, the European Union and NATO, and in 2012 was appointed as the Director of the Australian War Memorial.

In 2016 Dr Nelson was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for his services to the community, the parliament of Australia, diplomacy and cultural leadership.

Dr Nelson holds an honorary lifetime membership of the RSL, honorary citizenship of the Belgian city of Ypres in Flanders, and three honorary doctorates from the Australian National University, the University of South Australia and Flinders University of South Australia



Dr Brendan Nelson AO. Photo: AWM—Members of Council.

MINISTER MATTERS

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

MEDIA RELEASE

20 April 2022

\$400,000 TO HELP MARK CENTENARY OF LEGACY SUPPORT

The Liberal Nationals Government has invested \$400,000 through the 2022-23 Budget to help Legacy Australia mark 100 years of supporting veteran families and widows.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee today attended the formal launch of the Legacy Centenary Torch Relay in Melbourne, which will be the centrepiece of the celebrations.

There will be 1,500 torch bearers guiding the torch as it travels 55,000 kilometers from Pozieres in France, to London, and back to Australia, making 100 official stops across Europe and Australia, including all Legacy clubs worldwide.

"The emotional, financial and development support Legacy provides to the families of our killed and injured soldiers cannot be overstated, and it is important we give this significant anniversary the respect it deserves," Minister Gee said.

"From a promise made in the trenches of the Western Front during the First World War, legacy has grown to over 44 branches in communities right around our country, with 3600 legatees supporting tens of thousands of partners and children.

"Particularly during COVID-19 lockdowns, the connections Legacy has maintained with some of the most vulnerable in our community is extraordinary.

"One hundred years of delivering this critical support is certainly a milestone to celebrate and what better way to do it than with this huge, multinational torch relay.

"This will be a massive logistical feat and I am pleased our government has been able to provide additional financial support to Legacy to make it happen.

"The Legacy torch will visit communities around Australia, to raise awareness of the experience of veterans and their families, the impacts of service, and the work of Legacy. I would encourage everyone to get out and show their support when the torch comes to town.

"Legacy represents the very best of our nation and we are so grateful for all that they do."

The funding is part of the Liberal-National Government's \$369 million additional investment in the 2022-23 Budget to support those who have served our nation and their families. This is on top of the \$11.5 billion a year we invest in supporting more than 340,000 veterans and their families.

MEDIA CONTACTS
Minister Gee office: 0466 385 097

MINISTER MATTERS



Office of the Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel

MEDIA RELEASE

7 April 2022

INDEPENDENT TRIBUNAL TO RECONSIDER MEDALLIC RECOGNITION FOR RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH

The independent Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal will re-examine the issue of medallic recognition for Australians who served with Rifle Company Butterworth in Malaysia between 1970 and 1989.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said the Government had listened to the concerns raised by many veterans who had served on Rifle Company Butterworth deployments.

"The Tribunal will consider whether these Australian veterans should receive the Australian Active Service Medal for their deployment to Malaysia," Minister Gee said

"The issue was looked at by the Tribunal more than a decade ago, and a view was taken at the time not to recognise their service as "warlike".

"The New Zealand Government recently broadened eligibility for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal for veterans who served in Malaysia and Singapore between 1959 and 1974. Given this, and the concerns raised directly with me by the veteran community, it is timely that this issue is re-examined.

"The Tribunal is an independent statutory body specifically set up to consider honours and awards issues like this.

"I sincerely appreciate the many representations made to me and my office on this matter since I took on the Veterans' Affairs portfolio last year.

"I also acknowledge that veterans who have served on Rifle Company Butterworth deployments have been fighting for this additional recognition for years, and I don't want this to drag on. I expect the inquiry to be complete by the end of the year.

"This will be a public inquiry and I encourage all those with an interest to make a submission before 1 July 2022."

Australian Defence Force personnel have served continuously at the Royal Malaysian Air Force Base Butterworth in Malaysia since 1970, when Rifle Company Butterworth was deployed at a time of unrest in Malaysia, led by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The MCP signed a peace treaty with the Government of Malaysia in 1989.

Information about the inquiry, and how to make a submission, can be found on the Tribunal's website: <https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au>.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Minister Gee office: 0459 966 944

Defence Media: 02 6127 1999

Office of the Hon. Andrew Gee, Canberra ACT.

VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS—PART 5

Continued from February Debrief

EVENTS IN QLD, SA, AND THE NT IN LATE 1979 AND EARLY 1980

Previously: Part 4 looked in more detail at events resulting in state organisations in Victoria and New South Wales, noting that some resources on these events couldn't be accessed because of covid-related travel restrictions. This article looks in more detail at events in QLD, SA and the NT, noting, again, that some resources – mostly early publications and theses – have not been accessed because of travel restrictions.

Part of the Queensland story was told in instalment three of this series, as it was a Queenslander, **John Harper**, who, on the 17th of December 1979 called for an organisation to help Vietnam veterans and their families obtain compensation from the Australian and US Governments for the side effects of exposure to Agent Orange. As previously detailed, on the day after Harper's call was reported in The Australian, Victorians **Bernie Szapiel** and **Holt McMinn** announced they were attempting to establish an association to pressure the Federal Government into an inquiry and to increase the war service pensions of affected veterans.

Harper's 17 December interview included reference to his nearly two-year-old daughter's club feet, to the five operations she'd endured (with more to come) and to her daily hospital visits. Harper referred to other cases of child deformities in veterans' families. "Money", he was quoted as saying, "cannot buy back deformed limbs, but it can provide a future for these unfortunate children and pay for the best medical care."

In the new year, The Courier Mail, began its coverage of the Vietnam War chemical exposure issue with an article on Harper, on his firming view that Agent Orange was responsible for his daughter's deformities and on his request for other ex-servicemen with deformed children to get in touch with him. (The suburb where he lived was included in the article, enabling others to find him in the phone book.) Harper explained that he was acting not for himself but for children like his daughter who would live with physical difficulties for the rest of their lives.

On the following day, Friday 4 January 1980, the Queensland state secretary of the RSL was reported to be concerned about reports linking Vietnam veterans with a high risk of birth deformities. He urged veterans who believed themselves to be affected by Agent Orange to make repatriation claims; the RSL would, he said, assist even non-members with those claims.

On Saturday 5 January The Courier Mail revisited the Harper family's circumstances, repeated John Harper's call for other veterans with deformed children to make contact, and announced that 9 other veterans had so far been in touch. A day later, The Sunday Mail announced that further calls had been received and on Monday 7 January an editorial in The Courier Mail referred to "disquieting evidence" of link between Agent Orange and "human disorders"; it acknowledged that some soldiers could be embarrassed about accepting an invitation from the Minister for Veterans' Affairs to come forward. The editorial concluded with the statement: "Yet, If Agent Orange has caused damage to [soldiers'] ... health, or that of children subsequently born, it is Australia's responsibility to care for them, with gratitude."

In the middle of the same week the focus of The Courier Mail shifted to the families of **the three Fulton brothers** – Ken, Barry and Peter. The health misfortunes of the three families were detailed, and Barry, the eldest of the three brothers, was quoted as saying that while he couldn't be certain that Agent Orange was the cause of their health problems, it was "a fairly large coincidence."

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VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS—PART 5

Continued from page 17

EVENTS IN QLD, SA, AND THE NT IN LATE 1979 AND EARLY 1980

Correspondence in The Australian on the same day included a letter from **Graham Bell**, President of the Queensland Branch of the Korea and South-East Asia Forces Association (KSEAF), urging any men who operated in “defoliant target areas” to come forward, both in order to aid epidemiological studies and in the interests of early detection of disorders. (Bell and two of the Fulton brothers, but especially Ken Fulton, were later to play significant roles in the Queensland Branch of the VVAA.)

A report in The Courier Mail on Thursday 10 January, introduced the Brisbane solicitor, **Bill McMillan** to the Queensland story. (He was to be the principal lawyer representing Australian veterans’ interests in the US Class action in the following years.) McMillan announced legal action against a wide range of entities – Governments, defoliant manufacturers, and commercial middle men – and stated that there were more than 50 Queensland cases; this was more than the total number in NSW and Victoria, combined, at this time.

In subsequent days the Queensland Branch of the KSEAF was reported as calling for medical checks of all men who’d served in Korea and Vietnam. It was reported also as classing politicians who withheld unqualified support for the relevant veterans as “enemy”. Other articles kept the chemical exposure issue alive in The Courier Mail in the days leading up to the inaugural state meeting on Sunday 20 January 1980. These included ones about the experiences of **Bob Gibson** and Holt McMinn (referred to in previous parts of this series), about Bill McMillan’s prediction that as many as 2,000 Australian veterans could seek compensation and about domestic defoliant issues (including those involving the Queensland Government).

Attendance at the 20 January meeting by nearly 200 people was probably aided by the appearance of an advertisement in The Courier Mail on 16 January, inviting affected veterans to register with the State Branch of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association. However, word of mouth and the contacts earlier made by veterans with Harper were likely to have been of greater utility.

The Courier Mail summarised the speeches made at the 20 January 1980 meeting by Melbourne visitors i.e., by McMinn, introduced as the Action Association’s National President, and by John Evans, introduced as the Association’s scientific adviser. However, a formal account of the meeting in the VVAA’s files provides a better understanding of what transpired, with the Brisbane solicitor, Bill McMillan, opening the meeting and emphasising the importance of a properly constituted association, John Harper and Holt McMinn briefly following, and then John Evans speaking on a range of scientific matters and answering questions. After the election/appointment of office bearers, McMinn provided a final address on the need for commitment by the membership, on a requirement for funds and about possible steps to pressure the Federal Government into necessary action. The meeting’s key messages were about the potentially nasty effects of relevant chemicals, the delay in symptoms becoming apparent and the likelihood of a long campaign for compensation.

The goal of the new organisation, seemingly undisputed from the moment McMillan opened the inaugural meeting, was to secure an independent inquiry into chemical exposure as a prelude to compensation for veterans and their families, while aiding members’ participation in the various suits commenced or being contemplated by US veterans. Bearing in mind Harper’s (by this time) practiced call for compensation for chemical exposure victims and his sign-on to the national agenda on January 10, this is no surprise.

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VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS—PART 5

EVENTS IN QLD, SA, AND THE NT IN LATE 1979 AND EARLY 1980

Continued from page 18

An undated progress report by Harper to Queensland members soon afterwards – the report that referred to the founding of the national body at the 10 January Melbourne meeting – noted that “nearly three hundred veterans are registered in the Brisbane Metropolitan area alone.”

In the initial volume of the NSW Branch’s magazine, Debrief, in August 1980, a Queensland representative reported that a general meeting had been held on 1 June, with updates being provided from the executive and Bill McMillan, and that Graham Bell had replaced John Harper as State President. The writer observed that “John and Heather Harper had virtually no time for themselves for several months; their phone rang hot at all hours of the day and night as veterans sought help. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that John’s health suffered.” This was a pattern to be oft repeated at VVAA branches and sub-branches across the nation in the years ahead.

South Australia

South Australian coverage of the veteran chemical exposure issue began on 13 December 1979, with a brief report in The Advertiser on the filing of lawsuits by US veterans, and continued on 20 December 1979. On that day a page 1 article in the paper summed up Bernie Szapiel’s story, providing details of his illness and impending tests, and stated that about 50 Australian veterans were claiming exposure to Agent Orange. It further revealed that McMinn and Szapiel were attempting to form an Association.

More than 2 weeks later, the paper reported Veteran’s Affairs Minister Evan Adermann’s call for servicemen to contact his Department if they believed themselves to be victims of Agent Orange. A local dimension to the story was then revealed: a page 1 report featured **Wendy Rowney**, whose husband, Kevin, had served in Vietnam. Rowney announced that she was trying to contact veterans who believed their children to be affected by Agent Orange. She was clear about her overarching need to know why her daughter, Karen, had been born with deformities of the arms, noting that Kevin believed he had been exposed to defoliants. She provided her phone number and expressed the hope that information gathered by her could be provided to “the Government”, presumably to assist an investigation. A charming photo of the Rowney family, proving once again the power of the “smile for the camera” imperative (regardless of the circumstances), accompanied the article.

Two days later, in another page 1 story, Rowney revealed that fourteen people had been in touch with her to report deformities, infant deaths and miscarriages. “They were all”, she said, “searching for answers.” An interesting consequence of Rowney’s prominence, rather than her husband’s, in the earlier story was that most of the people making contact with her were women, many of whom allegedly called without telling their husbands. (This phenomenon points to a number of the reasons why connections were not previously made between suffering families; women were evidently more comfortable talking to other women about health issues; men were probably inclined to stoic silence, even when they mixed with other veterans). The article concluded with detail on the Queensland Fulton families, claiming, ambitiously, that “Nine of the 10 children born to [the] three Brisbane brothers... have disorders which may be related to Agent Orange.”

On the same day, 9 January, The Advertiser became the third major newspaper in as many days to editorialise on the Vietnam chemical issue, expressing approval of the Government’s decision to set up an independent inquiry, speculating on the impact of chemicals on the Vietnamese, and portentously remarking that it was quite possible no link would ever be established between

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VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS—PART 5

EVENTS IN QLD, SA, AND THE NT IN LATE 1979 AND EARLY 1980

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Agent Orange and the broad range of health issues attributed to it. Veterans reading this editorial would, perhaps, have derived modest comfort from the text that read: “The servicemen who took the risks and endured the hardships associated with the carrying out of their country’s policy ... deserve, at the very least, a concentrated effort to discover whether those of them who have suffered are indeed the victims of chemical warfare.”

In a broad-ranging article the next day, Wendy Rowney reported the doubling of the numbers of veterans in touch with her and noted that half of the contacts feared their children suffered from birth defects (suggesting, perhaps, that these defects went beyond the more obvious deformities).

On 12 January 1980, the secretary of the SA Branch of the RSL expressed the optimistic view that the National Executive of the organisation would satisfactorily handle the chemical issue. Four days later the local dimension to chemical exposure returned to the front page with a story about **Peter Keech** and his four-year-old son (who suffered from mental retardation, epilepsy, a deformed foot and a double cleft palate). A touching image of father and son was accompanied by two photos Keech senior had taken in Vietnam: one of planes releasing what was believed to be Agent Orange near his unit’s camp site and one of a denuded area like the one which, when passed through, caused Keech and others to suffer severe skin rashes.

Two days later a brief article reported the announcement by a local veterans’ spokesman,

Mr K Stephens, that a SA branch of the Vietnam Veterans Action Association was likely to be formed on the forthcoming weekend. On 22 January Wendy Rowney in her new capacity as a committee member, reported that 12 veterans had attended a meeting the previous Sunday and a steering committee had been formed. On 9 February a call for veterans to attend a 17 February meeting in North Adelaide, in order to register for compensation, included the phone numbers of Rowney, Keech and the publicity officer for the new organisation, **Mrs S Klose**. (Sandie Klose was to be a prominent figure in the SA Branch in the time ahead.)

That 17 February 1980 meeting proceeded and was attended by the Queensland solicitor, Bill McMillan, who was appointed to represent the assembled veterans in the US class action. A photograph in The Advertiser showed a segment of an evidently large attendance. Peter Keech, now referred to as the Association’s president, was quoted as saying that “at least 100 SA veterans would be involved in a ‘class action’.”

In the initial edition of Debrief, in August 1980, Keech reported in his capacity as SA president, that there were 100 veteran members and a further 200 on the mailing distribution list. Fundraising activities had enjoyed success, a sub-branch had been formed at Mt Gambier, and an official headquarters had been established at the Klose family home in Modbury “to give information and assistance to veterans on any problems they might have.” The SA Branch was well and truly established.

The Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory things happened differently. The Northern Territory News reported only intermittently on Federal Government and Opposition responses to Action Association agitation elsewhere and didn’t report in any detail on local veterans’ efforts to organise. On 9 January it stated that complaints about symptoms and birth defects had been received by Labor NT Senator Ted Robertson, helpfully described those symptoms. On 16 January 1980 it made its first reference to one of the veterans’ groups in the eastern states, referring extensively to **Jim Wares** and the Vietnam Veterans Association (the name initially adopted in NSW); the article, written from Syd-

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VVAA HISTORY DRAFTS—PART 5

EVENTS IN QLD, SA, AND THE NT IN LATE 1979 AND EARLY 1980

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ney, asked veterans to contact the VVA about chemical exposure consequences, instead of calling DVA or the RSL, but provided only a NSW contact address.

On 23 January an article reported in the initial meeting between VA Minister Adermann and senior officers of the Vietnam Veterans Action Committee (sic), including the National President Holt McGinn (sic) and Victorian President Bernard Szapiel. A further report on a Queensland Branch matter followed on 25 January and then, the following day, a substantial link was at last made between the bigger narrative about defoliant exposure and a family in Darwin. On page 1 of The Northern Territory News there appeared a cheerful photo of the Bouwman family, accompanied by a sobering account of their medical problems and of the death of a young disabled daughter, at age 2 ½. The article also stated that, as a result of agitation by **Carl Bouwman** and other veterans, “the Vietnam Veterans Association and the RSL launched a joint move this week to set up a local Agent Orange Committee, similar to those being set up in other states.” No other news of local developments appeared in February 1980.

However, in the earlier referred to summary of developments provided by Queensland President John Harper in early February 1980, mention was made of contact between Harper and **Frank Alcorta** from the NT in that early period. Six months later, the second number of the NSW Branch’s magazine, Debrief, reported that an initial Darwin meeting had been held in January, after coverage of Agent Orange developments in the media, and that office bearers had been elected in February. The branch boasted nearly 50 members by August: an impressive number bearing in mind the size of the local population. Alcorta noted, too, that NT VVAA members were given significant assistance by the RSL to get organised and that their branch remained a sub-committee of the RSL.

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 VVAA. The aim of “VVAA History Drafts” is to inform readers about progress made with the Association’s history and encourage people who have extra information to contact Kel. 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 vvhistory99@gmail.com. Readers who wish to take issue with the content of the article are encouraged to view the extra material and notes on sources contained in the version available from Kel before becoming unnecessarily excited.

RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS ARTICLES

A number of veterans have been in touch with Kel to tell him that the Vietnam Veterans Action Association was founded in the 1970s, well before the events of late December 1979 and early January 1980 described in recent articles. The evidence relied on by Kel for foundation events taking place in very late 1979 and very early 1980 is, though, from a very large number and variety of sources, and is conclusive. That said, the Korean and South East Asian Forces Association and similarly named organisations certainly existed in the 1970s and boasted branches with large numbers of Vietnam veteran members. A number of these branches decided to affiliate with the VVAA in the 1980s, (before formally becoming branches or sub-branches of the Association and changing their names to reflect their inclusion), thereby making it seem that the VVAA had existed earlier than was the case. Other independent organisations like the Geelong Vietnam Association, founded in 1974, existed before the VVAA, and still others, like the Vietnam Legion, were to follow. In summary, men who recall their membership of Vietnam veterans before 1980 are probably recalling membership of organisations that predated the VVAA and, in many cases, were later absorbed by it.

Despatches from your Da Nang correspondent - Ted McEvoy

“Damn”, I say to myself.

I’ve forgotten to set the alarm on my mobile phone the previous night. I’ve slept in and now I don’t have much time to get to the college for my first English class of the morning.

This is my second stint of teaching “Ingrish” to Vietnamese kids in Da Nang. They are generally young university students (18-25yo) or kids finishing their high school education. They all are a delight to teach as they have a thirst to learn. They are all fully aware that a good education is their ticket to a good occupation in the future.

Many of them want to study overseas and therefore they will need good English speaking skills.

I jump out of bed, grab a very quick shower, throw on some clothes, gather my teaching resources for the day then jump aboard my bicycle for the short ride to the college.

I’m in a mild panic as, with most Asian cultures, I don’t want to “lose face”.

In each of the classrooms of the college, a set of rules is prominently displayed. These rules are:

1. Be on time.
2. No Vietnamese.
3. No cell phones.
4. Do not chat in class.
5. If absent, please call the college.

As I do not want to break rule #1, I madly pedal my bike like Lance Armstrong in the Tour of France although he did not have to navigate through mobs of kamikaze motorbike riders.

I’m told the population of Saigon is in the order of 10 million people with 5 million motorbikes – phew!!! I shudder to think that when this country has a bigger middle-class and the people become more prosperous, those 5 million motorbikes could be replaced with 5 million motorcars.



Now, back to the rules in the classrooms

I tend to allow some latitude with rules number 2 and 4. Sometimes a little Vietnamese is useful especially when a student has little English skills – luckily I have a smattering of Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese) which does come in handy from time to time.

As far as chatting is concerned, I do permit the kids to chat only if they are chatting in English and it does not interrupt the other students. I have found, as with most other kids, if the rules are clearly defined and understood, the kids will respect them.

I have added a further rule – No 6 which is to “Have fun”. Initially the kids find this rule a little difficult as their Vietnamese teachers at school tend to be very strict and reserved. To have this Australian man joking, laughing and even singing songs is a bit strange to them initially but they soon get into the scene and enjoy the time in class.

Phew!! I finally arrive at the college in one piece and, to my delight, I’m a few minutes early. To my dismay, I realise that I did not have time to clean my teeth before leaving my accommodation this morning. My mouth feels like the bottom of a cockie’s cage with a good covering of fur on the teeth but I know the perfect way to resolve this hygiene faux pas is a good, strong cup of Café da.

The drinking of coffee in Viet Nam is a very old and popular tradition. The product has become so popular that coffee is second only to rice in value of agricultural products exported from

Despatches from your Da Nang correspondent - Ted McEvoy

Continued from page 22

Vietnam. The drinking of coffee is taken at any time of the day or night – to be sipped slowly when having a yarn with a friend or sitting on a small stool on the pavement while watching the passing traffic.

There are four main ways to drink coffee in Viet Nam,

English

Hot, black coffee

Hot coffee with milk

Black coffee on ice

Coffee on ice with milk

Vietnamese (Sua = Milk Da = Ice)

Café

Café sua

Café da

Café sua da



1. Add two tea spoons of sweetened condensed milk into a glass.



2. Take the filter, remove the lid and unscrew the damper. Position the filter on top of the glass. Add 2 ½ full heaps of ground coffee into the filter.



3. Screw the damper securely back on to the filter, pressing down on the ground coffee.



4. Pour a little hot water into the filter first to warm up the ground coffee. Wait a few seconds and then pour some more hot water to fill up the filter.



5. Place the lid on the filter and the coffee will slowly drip through into the glass.



6. It should take about 5 minutes for the coffee to brew. So once the water has strained thorough remove the filter.



7. Stir the coffee and the sweetened condensed milk layers together.



8. Add a few ice cubes to the coffee and stir in well.



Complete

Janet@giadinhfood.com

As mentioned earlier, I order a cup of Café da which is so strong, the teaspoon can stand up in the coffee by itself..!!!!

It's a great way to remove that fur from my teeth and to raise the heartbeat by a notch or two.

I'm now ready enough for my class – let the day begin.

In my next dispatch, I will write about that other famous fur in Viet Nam – **Phở** - the very traditional Vietnamese noodle soup. Many Western people pronounce it as **Fo**, the correct Vietnamese pronunciation is **Fur**.

Ted McEvoy



AROUND THE STATES

MELBOURNE SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE - 1968 VIETNAM TET OFFENSIVE

On Sunday 30th January 2022 the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance commemorated the 54th anniversary of the 1968 Vietnam TET Offensive at their Last Post Service.

Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Victorian Branch (VVAA Vic) Commemorations Manager Maurie Benson was privileged to lay the wreath and deliver the Ode.

VVAA Vic and Maurie have a long history of involvement at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance, in particular Vietnam Veterans Day conducted each year at the Shrine on the 18th August each year.



Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance Pic: TET 300122 supplied by VVAA Victoria



Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance Pic: TET 300122 supplied by VVAA Victoria

EMAILS

TRACKING DOWN A VIETNAM VETERAN

From: Suzanne Holden <suzanne.holden123@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, 21 March 2022 3:18 PM

To: secretary@vvaa.org.au

Subject: Tracking down a Vietnam Veteran

Dear Mr Roe

I wonder if you can help.

My name is Suzanne Holden and I live at 1 Holt Avenue, Mosman, NSW, 2088

I recently received some mail at my address for Mr Michael McDermott which was post marked Indianapolis. When I investigated, I realised that Michael McDermott had lived at our house some 18/20 years ago and that he was in fact a Vietnam Vet who was an “**Adviser on the ground with the 2nd BN, 5th regiment, 2nd ARVN**”.

Rather than sending back what appeared to be interesting mail, I thought I would try and track him down. I have no doubt that Michael would have a lot of interesting American contacts and this may be quite special.....particularly if the author had done the same research as me (as Michael McDermott has referenced this address during a previous interview which is available on line.

If there is any way you can help me to contact Mr McDermott or can forward this email to him, I would be delighted to then forward the letter.

Than you in anticipation.

Kind Regards

Suzanne

suzanne.holden123@gmail.com

From: Wendell Minnick <wendellminnick@yahoo.com>

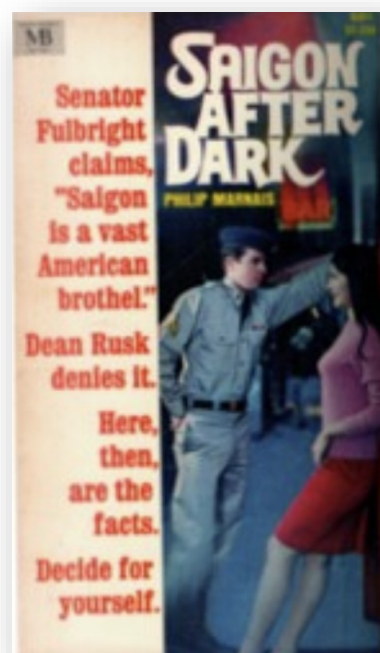
Sent: Friday, 11 March 2022 3:47 PM

To: secretary@vvaa.org.au

Subject: Minnick - Saigon After Dark 50th Anniversary

Terry, your members might be interested in the 50th Anniversary of [Saigon After Dark](#). It's available on Amazon for \$19.95. Original collectors copies are normally over \$50.

Best regards,
Wendell Minnick



VALE

AVM B J Graf AO (Retd) BSc BE(Aero) CPEng[Retd] CEng FRAeS FIEAust

Air Vice Marshal Brian J Graf passed away on 9 Feb.2022 after a prolonged illness, a per advice from RAAF Association ACT.



Graduation photo from 160 Pilots Course 13 Jan—29 Oct 1992

Back Row L-R: MP Hardcastle, PS Nalpon, JF Gamlin, LS Legradi.

Middle Row L-R: LJ Pulford, MC Binns, PJ Beanland, RJ Tucker, MA Thiess.

*Seated L-R: C Tan, MS Eller, WngCdr JR Woodman, **AVM Brian Graf**, AirCdr NA Smith, N Tan, AJ Butler*

Photo: radschool.org.au

Air Vice Marshal B J Graf enlisted in the RAAF on 18 January 1954 as a cadet at the RAAF College [later renamed RAAF Academy]. He completed two years of the course and was then attached to the University of Sydney where he completed two degrees – a Batchelor of Science [BSc] and a Batchelor of Aeronautical Engineering [BE[Aero]]. He graduated in 1960 with the University Medal and First Class Honours. In December 1957 while attached to the University he graduated from RAAF College as a Pilot

Officer and later in December 1958 he was promoted to Flying Officer.

During 1960 he completed a pilot's course and was awarded his wings in December 1960. His first flying post was to Central Flying School where as a staff pilot he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant. Subsequent postings during 1962-64 included Maintenance Squadron east Sale and Aircraft Research and Development Unit [ARDU] both as a junior engineer. In 1965 he was posted to a Mirage squadron as the Unit Engineer Officer and in 1966 to flying duties as a fighter pilot [Sabre, Vampire aircraft]. Promotion to Squadron Leader followed in 1967.

Air Vice Marshal Graf then attended the Empire Test Pilots School in the UK in 1967 later graduating as a test pilot. Later he was employed at ARDU as a performance engineer and a test pilot. In 1970 he was promoted to Wing Commander. In 1971 he attended the RAAF Staff College and spent the next two years as the Commanding Officer of a Maintenance Squadron. In 1974 he was posted to be Senior Engineer Staff Officer at Headquarters Operational Command where he was promoted to Group Captain in 1975. In 1977 he was appointed to the post of Staff Officer Aircraft Engineering at Headquarters Support Command [HQSC]. In 1979 he was posted within the Command to be Staff Officer Repair and Overhaul.

In 1981 he was promoted to Air Commodore and posted to Air Force Office Canberra as Director General of Aircraft Engineering. Subsequent posts at one star level were Senior Logistics Engi-

VALE

AVM B J Graf AO (Retd) BSc BE(Aero) CPEng[Retd] CEng FRAeS FIEAust

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neer Officer and Controller of Logistics at HQSC. In 1985 Air Vice Marshal Graf attended the Royal College of Defence Studies [RCDS] in the UK and subsequently returned to Australia to Canberra to assume the post of Director General of Technical Plans in 1988. He was promoted to Air Vice-Marshal in 1989 and was appointed Assistant Chief of the Air Staff – Engineering. Later that year he was posted to be the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff Materiel. Air Vice Marshal Graf was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia [AO] in June 1990.

Air Vice Marshal Graf retired from the permanent Air Force in October 1993. He spent the next three years as the Victorian Chairman of the Defence Industry Study Course [DISC]. He retired in 1999 as the National President of the Defence and Industry Courses Association [DAICA]. He continued to operate a defence, engineering and aerospace consultancy business.

Source: Ausairpower.net/CV-BJG-2008.html.

VALE

Roy William FLORENCE “FLO” A113138

Late of Condon. Roy passed away at the Palliative Care Unit on Saturday 19th March, 2022. Beloved Husband to Kay (deceased). Adored Dad to Penny, Shelley and Natalie (deceased). Father-in-Law to Chris. Cherished Pop to James, Joseph, Joshua, Madelyn, Savannah and Yvette. Great Pop to Grace, Aylah, Alexander, Jordan, Hayden and Donika. Much loved Brother, Uncle, Cousin and dear Friend to many.

~ LOVINGLY REUNITED WITH HIS SOUL MATE AND DAUGHTER ~

Passing of one of our members

It is with sadness I must inform all Townsville branch members of the passing of Roy Florence a member of this sub-branch for many years. Roy passed away on the 19th of March just eleven days after his 77th birthday. He will be missed.

Apart from being a valued member of the Townsville Vietnam Veterans Association Roy was also a Life Member of the Townsville Cycle Club.

Vietnam Service

Leading Aircraftsman, Airfield Defence Guard (Grade 2).

Served with Base Squadron Ubon at various times between September 1966 and March 1968.

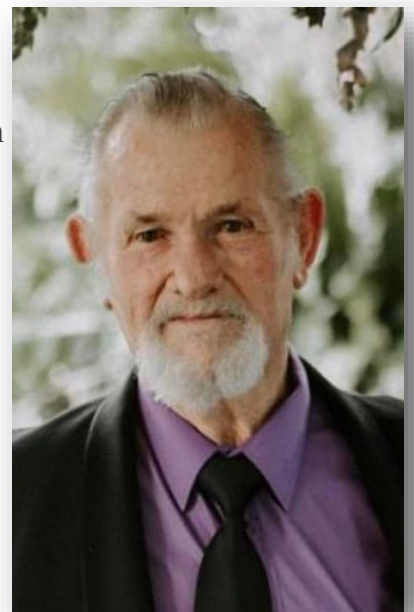


Photo: mytributes

REUNIONS

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR FIRE SUPPORT BASE CORAL FIRST BATTALION ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT INCLUDEING SUPPORTING ARMS & SERVICES TO BE HELD AT KEDRON WAVELL RSL

FRIDAY 13 MAY 2022

A Memorial Service reflecting on the actions 54 years ago at Fire Support Base Coral. Followed by Lunch at the Kedron Wavell RSL 21 Kitty Hawk Drive Chermside Queensland 4032. kedron-wavell.com.au

Due to the implications that the Virus had on planning the outline programme is to keep things simple but relevant for this important event in our Military History.

As highlighted in our previous messages it is important that Veterans indicate their intention to attend the function so arrangements for seating etc can be requested when dealing with the RSL.

At the time of writing we have over 50 names we had hoped to improve on that as we had nearly 80 when we attempted to hold a Service in 2021.

The latest date for acceptance is Monday 9 May 2022

Venue:

The Service will be held at the Memorial in front of the Kedron Wavell RSL in Chermside Brisbane.

Timings:

Service: Commence at 1100hrs

Lunch: 1200hrs for 1230 hrs

Attendance

*All we ask is that contact Gus via Email {guswalker@tpg.com.au} to say you **are attending**.*

The Cut Off date is Monday 9 May 2022

Covid 19

Attendees need to have been double vaccinated to enter the RSL and our interstate attendees should make themselves familiar with Queensland Club requirements to enter their facilities.

Costs:

Cost of Buffet is \$50 Per Head

*Money paid to Glenda Loxton **by 9 May 2022***

Phone: 07 32970872

Account Name:	Glenda Loxton
Bank:	NAB
BAB:	084-134
Account No:	91 237 2085

Email: agloxtton@tpg.com.au

Continued next page....

REUNIONS

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR FIRE SUPPORT BASE CORAL
FIRST BATTALION ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT
INCLUDEING SUPPORTING ARMS & SERVICES
TO BE HELD AT KEDRON WAVELL RSL
FRIDAY 13 MAY 2022

Continued from previous page.....

When paying please include your name for recording purposes.

The wreaths will be paid for by the Association of the First Battalion Queensland Branch.

Catering

The meal will be in the form of a Buffet. There will no Bar Tab pay as you go!

Seating

Except for a small number of attendees there will be no seating Plan. The seating will be tables of 8.

Poppy Service

A Poppy Service will be conducted during the playing of the Last Post which is incorporated with the playing of Waltzing Matilda. Members will be arranged by Bruno Flematti to place a poppy on the imitation tree in front of the Memorial for each of the 21 who made the supreme sacrifice. We will be looking for volunteers for this aspect.

Order of Service:

An order of Service will be produced for distribution on the day.

Conclusion:

As our earlier Email indicated we are prepared to organise the activity please make the effort to join us. The support of the Kedron Wavell RSL and their Sub Branch has been outstanding.

Regards

Bryan Smith {Jazza}

MOB: 0407036214

Email: bajjsmith42@webshield.net.au

REUNIONS



21 ENGINEERS SUPPORT TROOP ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS



RESCHEDULED REUNION

29th August to Friday 2nd 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 or Stan Monkley
0411 506787 stan21est@gmail.com. Contact Ian McLean (0412 431297)
jaim@hotmail.com.au Website: www.21est.org



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

OPEN ARMS

Veterans & Families Counselling

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

VVAA 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 or 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

Has your Email Address Changed?

Please advise your new email address to the VVAA National Secretary at secretary@vvaa.org.au.

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

25 Veterans Drive, Newhaven, Phillip Island VIC 3925

www.vietnamvetsmuseum.org.au

Membership enquiries welcomed—application form next page



AUSTRALIAN WAR WIDOWS Incorporated

(formally 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

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

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

Become a Friend of NVVM



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

☐ Cheque ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

Card holder's name:

Card number:

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@vietnamvetsmuseum.org

phone: 03 5956 6400

Website: www.vietnamvetsmuseum.org

25 Veterans Drive, Newhaven, Phillip Island VIC

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

Signature:

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