



DEBRIEF

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Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Inc.

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2011

Current issues

At this time there are a number of issues that the Association are raising with the Prime Minister and respective Ministers. Briefly these matters concern the following.

The VVAA is concerned that the existing Home Medicines Review (HMR) automatically triggers an over servicing audit when more than one HMR is ordered in one year. These HMR reviews are reviews normally initiated after a request from the veterans doctor deemed it necessary for clinical reasons. Surely if a doctor feels the HMR is required for medical reasons that should not cause an automatic over servicing audit.

The ever increasing gap between the co-payment and the Pharmaceutical Allowance is another issue. It is the firm belief of the VVAA that veterans should at least receive an allowance that covers the co-payment.

Another item on which the VVAA have had correspondence with the Prime Minister is on the Carbon Tax. It has been pointed out that veterans have been dealt with harshly by the Labour Government in relation to pension increases since 2009. This Association seeks re-assurance from the Government that there will be no erosion of the purchasing power of DVA pensioners because of any new impost in relation to the Carbon pricing.

In relation to the budgetary measures in the provision to purchase Set Top Boxes. The VVAA has expressed concern that many of the members are not on full Service Pension and would therefore not be eligible for this measure. Again our thoughts are that this measure discriminates against some of our most disabled veterans who have served this country for twenty years or more.

Of course the VVAA is most disappointed with the outcome of the Parliament, at this time, in relation to the "fairer indexation of the DFRB/DFRDB pensions. A letter has been

Over the next month or so submissions are also required on a number of other reviews. One of these is the review of the Military Rehabilitation Compensation Act (MRCA). This Act concerns those veterans who served after 1 July 2004. Some of these are the people we are assisting today with claims and welfare. These personnel may still be serving or be out but they are spread all around the country so we need to keep an eye out for them to let them know there is assistance out there.

Submissions are also required for the inquiry into some provisions of the Veterans Entitlement Act (VEA). All States have been asked for input into this inquiry. The closure date for submissions is 18 July 2011. Notification of the closure for submissions was received on the 21 June so there is not much time. Details are with all State Secretaries.

The next round, round 13, of Building Excellent Support & Training (BEST) funding is due out now. Round 14 applications will be due in February. Submissions have been made to ensure this funding continues on because this funding is to allow our operations as pension and welfare officers. Included in BEST is the Training & Information Program (TIP) funding. This finance is separate in that it is controlled by the State TIP training bodies. Again this is also important to the VVAA because of the need to have everyone who works as a pension/welfare officer must be trained under this system to be covered for insurance purposes.

These are some of the issues being dealt with at the moment. With the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) calling for submissions it means that the VVAA are being consulted about changes that may occur. That is a great outcome that allows input from concerned parties.

This gives members some idea of what is being dealt with at this time. Many times members ask just what the VVAA is doing. Many of the issues are fairly technical and most ordinary members are not that interested in these matters. It gives all some idea of just what is being dealt with at any time.

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VVAA NATIONAL CONGRESS 2011 DELIGATES



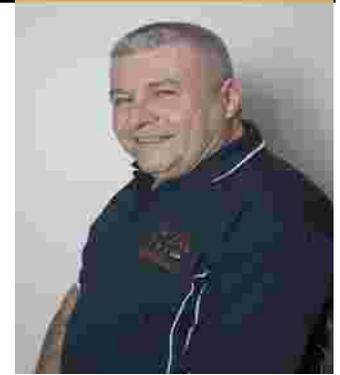
Ron Coxon OASM
National President



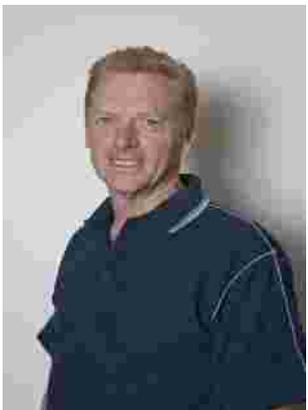
Ken Foster OAM, JP
National Secretary



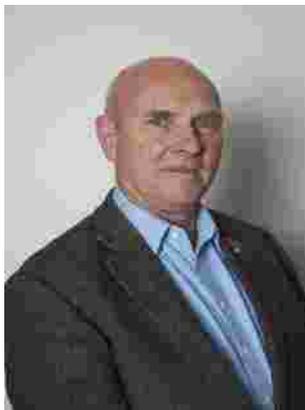
John Smith OAM, JP
Nat Vice Pres- Qld Pres



Dave McCann, JP
National Vice President



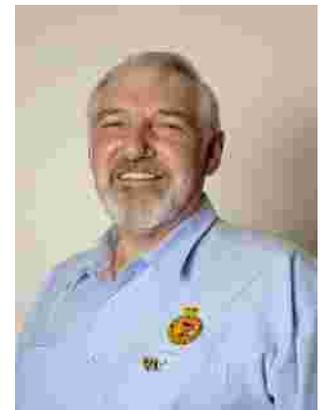
Rob Cox OAM
National Treasurer



Clive Mitchell-Taylor OAM, JP
N S W President



Bob Elworthy
Victorian State President



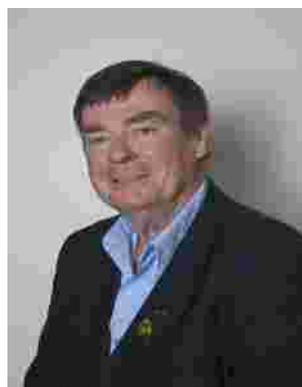
Warwick Luttrell
Tasmanian State President



Group photo of the Delegates & Representatives who attended the National Congress



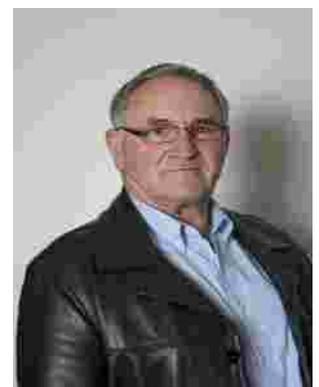
Danny Meredith
N T President



Pete Ryan
ACT President



Richard Williams
W A President



Bob Schahinger
S A Treasurer

NATIONAL PRESIDENTS REPORT



The National Council/Congress held in May was, I feel, one of the most productive meetings of the Association. Most, if not all items on the agenda were resolved. This means that we can now concentrate on issues as they arise and continue to provide service to our constituents and the younger

Service personnel from more recent conflicts.

As National President I attend the Ex-Service Roundtable. This meeting is held quarterly throughout the year. The meetings are an opportunity for the Dept. Of Veteran Affairs (DVA) to make presentations on new programs, projects or services they are putting in place. These meetings are then conducted in each State as the Deputy Commissioner's Forums so that the information is distributed to members by their State Branch. should add that the Veteran and Veterans Family Counselling Service (VVCS) also have input at these meetings. It is important that this information is disseminated to members so that the various programs are publicised among the veteran community so that they can avail themselves of any assistance that will help them cope with all aspects of life after and in some cases during service.

Another forum that I represent the Association is the Operational Working Party (OWP). This committee is based around the operational matters of DVA. This is one of the four specialist panels where specific topics are discussed. The others are around Aged and community Health Care, Mental Health and Current and Emerging Issues.

On the OWP work is going around programs for the severely injured, casualty and transition management. Work has also been on the care of widows and dependants. A new model for this care has now been developed. Considerable discussion has taken place on the timely access to medical records. Temporary accommodation has also been under consideration.

Problems experienced now by the younger veterans, more particularly their widows, with establishing their eligibility for a widows pension because of differing living arrangements is a concern. Each case has variations of circumstance but I believe Defence has become more understanding of the situations.

Getting back to the Association the Congress was very successful and it demonstrated that we have a great team across the board at this time. Everyone is prepared to put their shoulder to the wheel and conduct the business of the Association in all States without any fuss. Apart from the younger veterans the focus is now shifting from pension work to be much more welfare orientated

I take this opportunity to thank my Executive who have worked tirelessly supporting the operations of the VVAA and in particular me. As stated earlier we have a great team and we are all working well together. Membership of the VVAA is fairly stable, we lose some and pick up others but really as long as we continue to look for those in need we can assist whether members or not. Welfare is the biggest workload at this time and this is the most labour intensive in most cases anyway so everyone should continue to lookout for people who could join and be of assistance to us themselves.

Merchandise continue to move along quite well. It would be averaging about 3 sales per day seven days a week. Sales are world wide thanks to the webpage.

Now is not the time to become complacent we must all continue to carry on the good work and continue to present the professional service provided at this time. The minute that we relax and just let it happen is the time it will drop-off. To attract new members we need to be at the top of our game.

As stated many times in my reports the VVAA is held in high regard by DVA. To illustrate this we were invited to have a representative attend a workshop on the new Service Delivery Model to Dependants in early June. The experience and input of VVAA is valued by DVA. It is important that this continues to be the case. Again I thank all for their input to our business and remind that is continues on. Keep up the great work many have done and encourage others to assist in offering their help.

Again I urge all on the road to keep their Debrief handy and look in on any Sub Branch you can in your travels. I feel it is great to establish contact and there maybe something happening their that could be used by your own Sub Branch.

Ron Coxon.

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NATIONAL SECRETARIES REPORT



The National Congress of the association, sometimes referred to as the annual general meeting, was conducted in the Hunter Valley NSW 19 and 20 May 2011 and was a lively and productive meeting, the National Executive was re-elected and are committed

to working for the members of our association for at least another year. Minutes of the National Congress and Council meetings through the year are available through your branch or sub branch.

Within the administration area there are three area of particular concern to me as secretary.

Firstly maintaining a data base of financial members and compiling a mailing list from that data base is causing some difficulties at state levels and that is flowing on and adding considerable workload to the National Executive.

We have tried to initiate a simple process but to date some states, and possibly with some non effective input from sub branches, are experiencing manpower problems with the transition from the systems they have had in place up to now.

The second problem is that as our membership decreases, some of us are getting older, the ability to volunteers to manage the administration is becoming more difficult, I believe in the not so distant future we need to develop a process where the administration of branches and sub branches is reduced while we provide information and support to our members and the veteran community as a whole.

And finally, over the past year I have had numerous emails and phone calls asking me "what is the association policy on this or that subject" Our accepted policies are documented and readily available however I have on many occasions had to answer with the reminder that the National Executive do not make policy, our policy decisions come from the membership, that is each and every individual has an equal opportunity to contribute and decide, if no policy recommendations come through sub branches to state branches and finally to the National Council we do not have an association policy on that subject.

Those three areas of concern having been identified I am confident we are in a good position administratively and I am available to assist and advise any branch or sub branch that feel they need some support or assistance, that being said I would always expect sub branches to work through their state branch in the first instance.

Ken Foster OAM JP

R.A.N. in VIETNAM

16 -19 August 2011

HOBART TASMANIA

The Tasmania Branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia will mark Vietnam Veterans Day 2011 by commemorating the role of the R.A.N. in Vietnam. The city of Hobart will be the venue.

The broad and varied role performed by the R.A.N. in Vietnam is little known or understood and inevitably as the years begin to slip by with increasing rapidity, a valuable important part of our heritage is gradually in danger of being lost.

While Vietnam Veteran's Day has been set aside in the calendar to remember and pay tribute to our fallen comrades, we must never lose sight of the fact that Australian losses were incurred across all the service arms.

Guest Speaker will be VADM D.W. Leach A.C., C.B.E., L.V.O., R.A.N. (Ret).

An invitation is extended to all serving and ex-service RAN personnel, their families and friends, to attend the lead up functions commencing on 16 August culminating with the 18 August commemoration service. Our invitation is also extended to the families of veterans whose husband or father, or brother served in any of the R.A.N. Vietnam assets.

To register your attendance, please include the names of those attending, ship/unit, email address and the State travelling from. Early registration is requested to assist planning organisers.

Accommodation offers have been negotiated with a number of hotels in Hobart and is available together with a full itinerary of events to all those who have registered

**RANHFV- QUEENBOROUGH-HOBART-
VENDETTA-CDT 3-PERTH-VAMPIRE-
QUIBERON-JEPARIT-SYDNEY-ANZAC-
STUART-SWAN-DUCHESS-MELBOURNE-
BOONAROO-BRISBANE-YARRA-TORRENS-
QUICKMATCH- PARRAMATTA-RAN MEDI-
CAL TEAMS-RAN (SHORE BASED) LOGISTI-
CAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL.**

We need your support to ensure that the Role of the RAN in Vietnam commemorations becomes an informative and memorable event.

To register please contact

**Warwick Luttrell
Tasmania Branch President
Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
vvaataspres@aussiebroadband.com.au**

**Telephone (03) 6431 2627
Mobile 0408 333360**

QUEENSLAND

Giddy from Sunny Qld. Yes, we have survived and still operating. I trust that the rest of Australia has done the same. VVAA Qld Branch is up and running having conducted our AGM toward the end of February and having a full executive. At this stage I would like to welcome two of our new executive, Mr Rob Moseley from Bribie Island as State Deputy President (Deputy Dawg) and Jim O'Pray from Sunshine Coast as State Secretary. Obviously we extend our congratulations to all the other state and sub branch executive and committee that stood down and welcome all the new members.

Our first activity for this year was the organising and running of the main Brisbane ANZAC Day Dawn Service in ANZAC Square Brisbane. As you may be aware the control of this service was gifted to the VVAA Qld Branch by the Diggers Association last year. May I state what a great privilege and honour it is to be involved with this most significant event on the veteran calendar. We are very ably assisted by a number of other ESO and groups including students and choir from Brisbane Boys College, Cadets from Anglican Church Grammar School (Churchie) Venturers, St John Ambulance and SES plus the very valuable support from the Australian Army Band Brisbane. The Catafalque Party and Flag Orderlies were tri service under the command of Sgt. Duckett from 2 CER. As usual Her Excellency, the Governor of Qld, Ms. Penelope Wensley AC was our guest speaker. Among our other VIP was the Honorary Consul, Turkey, Mr Turgut Allahmanli and Brig Gen John E Seward, Deputy General Commanding US Army Pacific. I am very pleased to advise that this service went off extremely well with a slight increase in numbers present from previous years plus the weather stayed fine throughout. We have already started preparing next year's event and of course preparing for the centenary in 2015.



Official Party at Dawn Service

The next significant event that we also have started to organise is our Vietnam Veterans Day March and Memorial Service which is conducted on the 18th August in ANZAC Square Brisbane with the March stepping off from the Treasury Casino at 12 Noon and marching along George and Adelaide Street to ANZAC Square. At this early stage Mr Mike Naughton has agreed to be our guest speaker. Mr Naughton was the RMO with 1 RAR at Bein Hoa 1965 to 1966 and also the CO of the 1 Australian Field Hospital at Vung Tau. As usual we are expecting a very large number to participate.



Vietnam Veterans Day, 2010



Shrine in ANZAC Square



Vietnam Veterans Day, 2010

Our first meeting for the year was conducted at the Gold Coast in February along with the AGM. It is very pleasing to report that there were 14 Sub Branches present out of total of 17. All of our meetings are away meetings and are conducted all over Qld with strong attendances at then all.

Our next meeting is to be conducted in May at Townsville and then Redcliffe in August.

I am well aware that the majority of sub branches do a lot of good work but I considered one was worth a mention here and that sub branch is Bribie Island. Over the years many of our sub branches have been involved with sending Care Packages to our troops overseas. Bribie Island has now been doing so for a number of years and have sent approximately 1000. A lot of these went to 6 RAR whilst they were in Afghanistan. When 6 RAR returned, the Sub Branch held a Welcome Home Bar B Q which also turned into a Thank

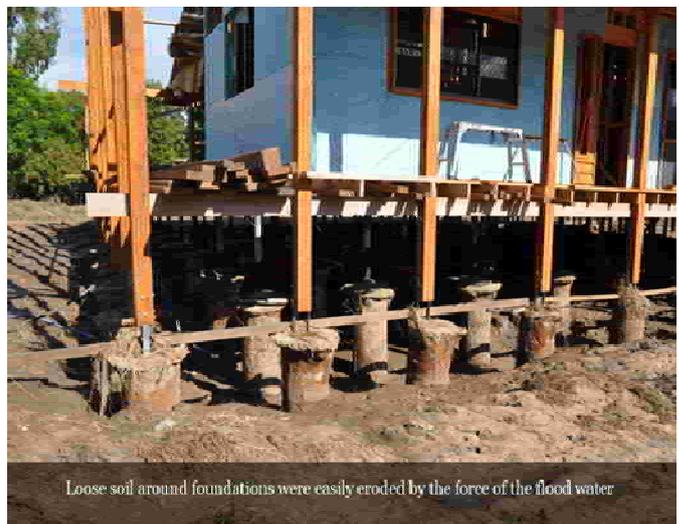
They were completely self sufficient. On their return to Bribie Island they received a letter of thanks from the local mayor. Our congratulations and a very well done to the members of the Bribie island Sub Branch.



Residents away on holidays at the time of the flood have very little left to salvage



The Bribie Is volunteers left to right: Tim, Woody, Kev, Keith, Neville, Rob and Peter.
Far right: resident, flood victim and SES coordinator Bill Power



Loose soil around foundations were easily eroded by the force of the flood water



You function from 6RAR. Apparently one of the snippets of information passed on to a member of the sub branch was that there was a saying doing the circuit in Afghanistan that on their return to Australia if they wanted any help with DVA claims etc. to go and see a disgruntled Vietnam Veteran for help

After the recent floods some members of Bribie Island Branch along with members of the Bribie Island Lions club decided to get together and do something to help those effected. So they packed up their camping gear along with cleaning gear and a Bar B Q trailer and proceeded to Condamine and Theodore to assist those townships with their cleanup.

To the new National executive may we take this opportunity to congratulate you and say once again you are under the microscope. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who enquired about our situation after the floods and cyclone offering support.

John P Smith OAM, JP(Qual)
State President



At the National Congress John Smith presents Ron Coxon with his National Life Membership.

VIETNAM VETERANS COMMEMORATIVE WALK SEYMOUR Stage 1 Opened

Victorian Minister for Veterans' Affairs Hugh Delahunty officially opened Stage One of the new Victorian Veterans' Commemorative Walk in Seymour on Wednesday 30th March 2011. The completed first stage of the development includes a memorial cairn and a new interpretive centre called Luscombe Bowl.

Joining local Member for Seymour, Cindy McLeish, Mitchell Shire Mayor Graeme Coppel, President of the Victorian Branch of the RSL, Maj Gen David McLachlan and Chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk Committee Ross Stewart at the facility, Mr Delahunty congratulated all involved for their work in developing the innovative commemoration project.

The Coalition committed \$1.2 million during 2010 election campaign towards the cost of developing Stage 2 of this wonderful development that will include a memorial walk and walk surrounded by rubber trees, rice paddies and military artefacts from the period. I look forward to celebrating the beginning of the next exciting stage."

Below. VVAA State President Bob Elworthy with VVAA National President Ron Coxon OAM after the opening of Stage 1.



NOTE Individual Brick/Pavers can be purchased by donation for \$50 or \$100. Your name and details will be engraved into a paver as a lasting record of your valued support of the Commemorative Walk Project and will provide an historical record of your military service well into the future.

For further details contact:
Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk
PO Box 764
Seymour Vic 3661
Ross Gregson 03 5792 3227
[Www.vvaavic.org.au/Mitchell.asp](http://www.vvaavic.org.au/Mitchell.asp)

NEW VICTORIAN VETERANS PSYCHIATRY UNIT OPENED

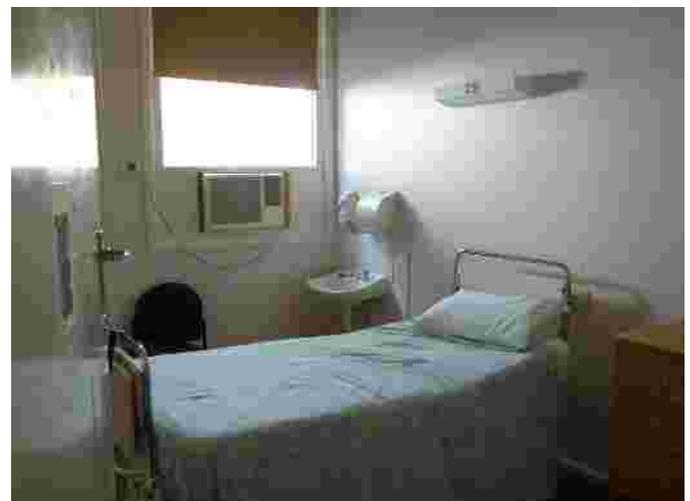


A new era for veteran mental health management has arrived in Victoria with the opening of the new Coral-Balmoral centre at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. The new facility, which is part of the hospital's Psychological Trauma Recovery Service, replaces the WWII vintage Wards 17 and 18 Veterans Psychiatry Unit which had well and truly exceeded its use by date. The new \$15.0M building, funded by the Victorian State Government, boasts a modern in patient facility, contemporary accommodation standards, including private rooms with en-suite, attractive outdoor and break out areas and modern kitchen and laundry. The new out patients area is also state of the art providing excellent group therapy areas and private consulting rooms. The long suffering staff have also been looked after with modern offices and working spaces. The old Ward 17/18 facility will be fondly remembered by all who were treated there, and by those who worked there. Despite the decrepit building and poor facilities, miracles were worked there, and the buildings became a form of refuge and a place of comfort and healing.

It is interesting to note that it was through the concerted efforts of Victorian ESO's that the new facility became a reality, and in the first instance, it was

through the vigorous campaigning of VVAA Victoria Ballarat Sub-Branch family members, that the poor state of the old facility was highlighted.

Adjacent to the VPU is a new hydrotherapy and rehabilitation centre. The VPU has become the major provider of specialist assessment and management of trauma related mental health conditions and takes a leadership role in the development and provision of community based mental health treatment services for veterans and their families.



VICTORIA

Greetings from Victoria.

It's ironic that just over two years ago we were mourning the loss of over 150 Victorians in devastating bushfires, and now we are water logged! Thankfully, we did not suffer loss of life as in Queensland, or be subjected to devastating flash floods: our experience was more of a slow creep, with flood waters inexorably working their way across great tracts of land, slowly swallowing small towns and millions of hectares of crops and pastures.

Thankfully, there is a silver lining of sorts; the Murray River is running a banker for the first time in many years, the magnificent stands of river red gums are rejuvenating and our reservoirs are mostly full. Against that, it feels like we are in for a real Victorian winter-the first really cold one for some time.

I am pleased to report that membership is holding up extremely well, and new members are still coming on board-we look like being around the mark of our 2010 membership of 2400 odd. Sadly, we have lost quite a number of mates who have succumbed to a variety of illnesses-even sadder is the fact that some of the departed had warning signs but chose to do nothing.

Our relationship with the Vietnamese Veterans here has been strengthened further with the raising of a joint council to foster better relationships, and our support for the Vietnamese objections to the notion of reconciliation with our former enemies. The Vietnamese are good supporters of the National Museum and our education team.

As is our normal practice, the State council has been "on the road" again this year, with the 2011 AGM held in Geelong followed by state council in Ballarat. Swan Hill and the museum will be the venue for meetings later in the year. Four state life memberships and acknowledgement of the successful completion of tertiary studies by two William Hacking Bursary recipients-both daughters of Victorian Vietnam Veterans-were highlights of recent meetings. Our William Hacking Bursaries provide financial support of \$3000 per year for three years for successful applicants.

There has been plenty happening around the state: phase one of the Seymour Commemorative Walk has opened, a new Veterans Psychiatric Facility has opened at the Repat. Hospital in Heidelberg, the second hangar at the National Museum is all but complete, and we have confirmation of two more helicopters for the museum.

I am pleased to confirm that the 2012 National congress will be held in Geelong in May 2012. Preliminary planning is already underway, and we are assured of a great reception by the Geelong council who are very Veteran friendly. The proximity of Avalon airport to

Geelong will also make it a relatively painless exercise for most delegates to get to Geelong.

Speaking of 2012, plans are being developed for commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the first Australian deployment to Vietnam. The Victorian AATTV Association will be a central focus in our activities, and proposals being examined include a march through Melbourne, Civic reception at the Melbourne Town Hall, Concert, Formal Dinner, a special activity involving the National Museum, extensive commemorations at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance and state wide activities in partnership with local councils.

The Branch remains an important participant in State Veteran related matters: we are represented on the VVCS Regional Consultative Forum, RSL ESO Round Table Forum, Victorian DVA Deputy Commissioner's Committee and the Victorian Veterans Council.

A key issue before the state (and all other states) of late has been the release of the review into BEST funding and recommendations flowing from the review. Victoria has submitted a response to National in which we are particularly critical of recommended cuts to funding which will place such strain on the Victorian Regional Veteran Centre Network and ESO welfare/pension support activities that it is hard to see that there will not be a reduction in the level of support that will be available to veterans and families in the future.

We were disappointed that the federal budget did not provide anything of substance to needy veterans - but managed to pinch a few dollars from carer's allowances-and the recent decision by the DFRDB Fair Indexation review committee to recommend that the Senate not pass the bill. It is clear that we have much to do just to hold the line.

Bob Elworthy
State President

VICTORIAN VETERANS STRENGTHEN TIES

Following on from the highly successful Australian - Vietnamese Veterans day at the National Vietnam Veterans Museum last November where plaques were unveiled to commemorate the sacrifices of both the Australian and Vietnamese Forces, ties between Victorian based Australian and Vietnamese Veterans have been further strengthened by the recent formation of the Australian Vietnamese Veterans Council of Victoria.

The Council has a very broad charter: to improve relationships and understanding between the Australian and Vietnamese Veteran communities, and to promote issues of mutual interest.

The inaugural committee consists of a President and Secretary-both Australian Vets, and three Australian and Vietnamese representatives. The meeting to raise the Council was held at the Footscray RSL, home to the Vietnamese Veterans Association of Victoria.



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY IN THE VIETNAM WAR

© Lieutenant Commander Rodney T. Nott, MBE,
RFD, RAN (Rtd)

Introduction

The role of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in the Vietnam War is often overshadowed by comparison with the Australian Army's much larger numerical involvement. The RAN's involvement in Vietnam began with a two ship diplomatic visit to Saigon from the 25th to the 29th of January 1962 and ceased on the 30th of November 1972 when HMAS SYDNEY arrived in Hong Kong after completing a two day operational deployment to the South Vietnam port of Vung Tau on the 23rd and 24th of November 1972. HMAS SYDNEY sailed from Hong Kong on the 4th of December 1972 arriving in Sydney on the 18th of December 1972 when the RAN finally closed its chapter on the Vietnam War.

Who served?

Approximately 13,500 Royal Australian naval personnel were deployed on operational service during the War in Vietnam. As well as serving in ships deployed to Vietnam for US Seventh Fleet attachment or as part of the logistic support force, naval personnel also served ashore in a variety of circumstances. As members of the RAN Clearance Diving Team (CDT3), the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV), 9 Squadron RAAF, as Sea Transport Officers, in medical teams assigned to various hospitals and for staff duties at the Australian Embassy in Saigon and at the Australian Task Force HQ, Nui Dat. Also, the RAN Fleet Band completed a short tour of Vietnam in 1970 entertaining the troops and RAN Chaplains provided pastoral care to RAN and allied personnel both ashore and afloat during the period 1962-1972.

Early involvement

Though the RAN did not become 'officially' involved in the Vietnam conflict until May 1965, HMA Ships VAMPIRE and QUICKMATCH were the first RAN ships to visit South Vietnam, since HMA Ships TOBRUK and ANZAC in the late 1950's, when they paid a diplomatic visit to Saigon in January 1962.

They were followed the next year by the 'Q' Class Anti-Submarine frigates, HMA Ships QUIBERON and QUEENBOROUGH, which paid diplomatic visits to Nha Tran and Saigon in January and February 1963. These were not operational visits *per se* but were designed to show Australian government support for the South Vietnamese government in Saigon. During the visit members of the ship's company visited the Vietnamese Special Forces Training centre at Duc My and other military establishments in the Duc My and Saigon area. At Vung Tau on the completion of the visit the small Vietnamese naval vessel KY-HOA accidentally rammed and holed HMAS QUIBERON whilst coming alongside her to transfer passengers.

These ship visits in 1962 and 1963 were originally designated diplomatic until a status change to operational service was made by way of a Ministerial Instrument of Allotment, signed by the (then) Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop, MP on the 23rd of December 1997 and back-dated to the 13th of May 1997.

However, the granting of operational service status to these ship visits realised very different benefits and awards for each pair of ships involved. For instance, the visit by HMA Ships VAMPIRE and QUICKMATCH was considered to be part of their Far East Strategic Reserve duty and no additional benefits were awarded to the ship's company for visiting Saigon. Whereas the change of visit status to operational qualified the ship's company of HMA Ships QUIBERON and QUEENBOROUGH, for repatriation benefits and the issue of the Returned From Active Service Badge (RAS Badge).

Increased involvement

Australia's commitment steadily increased in Vietnam from 1962 but it was in mid 1965 that the most significant naval and military increases took place.

HMAS SYDNEY (The Vung Tau Ferry)

The converted aircraft carrier HMAS SYDNEY began transporting Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and equipment from Australia to Vietnam in May 1965. The ship was to become a familiar sight and temporary home to some 16,000 Australian Army and Air Force personnel as they deployed to Vietnam or returned to Australia. Because of these troop runs HMAS SYDNEY was to become affectionately known as 'The Vung Tau Ferry'.

Besides Service personnel the ship also transported many thousands of tons of stores and equipment and a great variety of vehicles, field guns and aircraft, including the RAAF 9 Squadron helicopters to and from Vung Tau.

HMAS SYDNEY completed twenty-five successful operational deployments to and from South Vietnam between May 1965 and November 1972. Most of these deployments to South Vietnam were covered by an Operational Order as follows:

Date	Operation	Task
June 1965	Trimdon	1RAR?
Sept 1965	Tanton	Troops/Stores?
May 1966	Hardiwood	5RAR/6RAR?
June 1966	Hardiwood 2	RAAF 9 Squadron?
April 1967	Rumbling 1	7RAR? ? 5RAR
May 1967	Not named?	2RAR? ? 6RAR
Dec 1967	Rover 1	3RAR?
Feb 1968	Rover 3	Troops/Stores?
April 1968	Rover 4	1RAR? ? 7RAR
June 1968	Rover 6	4RAR? ? 2RAR
Nov 1968	Trudge 1	9RAR? ? 3RAR
Feb 1969	Trudge 2	5RAR? ? 1RAR
May 1969	Trudge 3	6RAR? ? 4RAR
Nov 1969	Rising Fast	8RAR? ? 9RAR
Feb 1970	Not named?	7RAR? ? 5RAR
Oct 1970	Uniform Beat	2RAR? ? 8RAR
Feb 1971	Round Barrel	3RAR? ? 7RAR
April 1971		Defence Aid Stores?
May 1971		4RAR? ? 2RAR
Oct 1971	Interfuse 1	? 3RAR
Nov 1971	Interfuse 2	Aid Stores? ? Support units
Dec 1971	Interfuse 3	? 4RAR- 9 Sqdn - 104 Bty
Feb 1972	Interfuse 4	Aid stores? ? Misc troops
Nov 1972		Aid Stores? ? Misc stores

During these deployments HMAS SYDNEY was always escorted and protected by other units of the RAN and on at least three such occasions her escort included the aircraft carrier HMAS MELBOURNE with her embarked Carrier Air Group (CAG) of Fleet Air Arm (FAA) Squadrons; VF805 DH112 Sea Venoms, VS816 Fairey Gannets and DH112 Sea Venoms and HS817 Wessex 31A Helicopters. Though HMAS MELBOURNE when part of the escort Task Group did not enter Vung Tau Harbour, she did enter the Market Time Area (Seaward Operational Area), which extended out from the coast of Vietnam for 100 nautical miles.

Clearance Diving Teams

In May 1966 the RAN's Clearance Diving Team 1 (CDT1) spent a short period in Vietnam working with US Navy divers. Almost a year later the Australian government announced the deployment of Clearance Diving Team 3 (CDT3). This team was made up of personnel from the two existing RAN diving teams, CDT1 and CDT2 and after a period of additional training arrived in South Vietnam on the 6th of February 1967.

CDT3 was primarily employed in clearing rivers and shipping channels of mines and booby traps laid by the Viet Cong. This normally dangerous task was made even more so by the murky-water and the strong tidal

stream in Vung Tau harbour, which at times would run up to six knots. These adverse conditions severely hampered the divers in their tasks and restricted their ship bottom searches to the periods of slack water between ebb and flood tides.

Other tasks assigned to the divers included demolition of enemy explosives, salvage work and assisting in trawler and ship searches.

Regular searches were also conducted of Australian Army water transport vessels and other ships. This task was known as Operation STABLE DOOR and was intended to protect and secure South Vietnamese ports and military shipping from sabotage by the Viet Cong. As part of this operation RAN clearance divers conducted approximately 7500 ship searches.

While the RAN clearance divers normally operated as a distinct unit a number of personnel were attached for short intervals to US Navy diving teams. Such attachments provided the RAN divers with valuable experience and exposure to other operating techniques. Perhaps the most unusual request for assistance received by the RAN clearance divers came from the US Army 36th Evacuation Hospital when they reported that a patient had just been admitted who had eaten some C-4 plastic explosive. Treatment was a strong laxative then a wait for nature to take its course.

US (Navy) Seventh Fleet Attachment (Gunline)

In February 1967 an agreement in principle was made, with Commonwealth Government approval, between the Commander-in-Chief, US Pacific Fleet, Admiral R L Johnson, USN and the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Sir Alan McNicoll, KBE, CB, GM, RAN that the RAN would provide a Clearance Diving Team (CDT3) and a Destroyer, The destroyer would be under the operational control of the Commander, (US) Seventh Fleet (COMSEVENTHFLT) with CDT3 under the operational control of the Commander, Naval Forces Vietnam (COMNAVFORV).

In March 1967, one month after the announcement of the deployment of the Clearance Diving Team to Vietnam, the (then) Minister for the Navy, the Hon Don Chipp, MP announced that the newly commissioned RAN guided missile destroyer HMAS HOBART (DDG39) would be deployed to join the US Seventh Fleet to support operations off the coast of Vietnam. HMAS HOBART departed Sydney on the 7th of March 1967 and joined the US Seventh Fleet on the 15th of March. Her arrival at the US Naval Base in Subic Bay began the six monthly rotations of RAN destroyers, which was to continue until October 1971.

HMAS HOBART was commissioned on the 18th of December 1965 at the US Navy Shipyards, Boston, Massachusetts, USA (Captain Guy Griffiths, DSC, RAN) and fired her first angry shot in Vietnam off Cap Mia at 1145 on the 31st of March 1967. The RAN had then joined the shooting part of the Vietnam War.

HMAS HOBART was the second of the Australian DDG's to be commissioned into the RAN; HMAS PERTH (DDG 38) was the first to be commissioned at the US Navy Shipyards, Boston, Massachusetts on the 17th of July 1965 (Captain Ian Cartwright, RAN). However, HMAS PERTH was not available to fill the first operational deployment to Vietnam as the ship was in the process of being fitted with the Australian designed and built IKARA anti-submarine weapon and control system at Garden Island Dockyard, Sydney.

On completion of her Seventh Fleet deployment HMAS HOBART was relieved by HMAS PERTH in Subic Bay on the 14th of September 1967

HMAS BRISBANE (DDG41) was the last of the Australian DDGs to be completed and was commissioned at the US Navy Shipyards in Boston, Massachusetts on the 16th of December 1967 (Captain Alan Willis, RAN) and relieved her older sister ship, HMAS PERTH, at Subic Bay on the 30th of March 1969 for a six month Vietnam attachment to the US Seventh Fleet.

The Charles F. Adams class DDG's were ideally suited for deployment to the US Seventh Fleet. The ships

were fast and comfortable, however they did roll more than expected and were often referred to as the 'Bay City Rollers', a reflection on the name of a popular 'Musical Pop Group' at the time and the city where all three were constructed, Bay City, Michigan, USA.

They were well armed ultra modern ships with state of the art weapons, weapon and missile control systems, communications and radars. The RAN DDG's were also fitted with the Australian designed and built Ikara anti-submarine system.

In the Naval Gunfire Support (NGFS) role these ships had no equal in any navy, save the US Navy. The gunnery fire control system was capable of bringing down accurate 5 inch gunfire on targets at ranges beyond 14 nautical miles (28,000 yards); depending on barrel wear, the prevailing atmospheric conditions at the time and if the shooting direction was west and not up hill. Each of the ship's 5 inch 54 calibre gun mounts was capable of firing the standard 76lbs high explosive (HE) shell at a maximum rate of fire of 40 rounds per minute.

All three RAN guided missile destroyers were, in turn, deployed to Vietnam as was the Daring Class destroyer HMAS VENDETTA. HMA Ships HOBART (D38) and PERTH (D39) completed three deployments each, HMAS BRISBANE (D41) two and HMAS VENDETTA (D08) one. During the course of these operations the destroyers fired over 100,000 rounds of 5 inch and 4.5 inch ammunition in support of military operations in Vietnam and steamed 397,484 miles.

HMAS VENDETTA, which was attached to the US Seventh Fleet in Vietnam from September 1969 until April 1970, was the only Australian-built destroyer to deploy to Vietnam on Gun Line duties. With her six 4.5 inch guns and six 40 mm Bofor guns she was a welcome and aggressive addition to any combatant force.

The Daring Class destroyers were designed and built as 'Gun Ships' and had three weapon control systems to control the main and secondary armament in certain circumstances, or a combination of both if required. The main Gunnery Fire Control System, when in the Naval Gunfire Support (NGS) mode was capable of providing very accurate and rapid fire to a range of nine nautical miles (18,000 yards) in normal mode and in excess of 11 nautical miles (22,000 yards) in extended range mode; depending on barrel wear, the prevailing atmospheric conditions at the time and providing the shooting direction was west and not up hill. At a rate of fire of 16 rounds per gun per minute the ship was capable of firing up to a 100 x 4.5 inch shells per minute. The standard 4.5 inch HE shell weighed 56lbs.

HMAS VENDETTA was a more than adequate 'stand in' for a DDG on Vietnam gunline duties and her readiness for action, quick response time and accurate

fire often won admiration and praise from Allied troops in harm's way ashore and from the US Navy top brass.

Primarily the RAN destroyers operating with the Seventh Fleet were part of Task Force (TF) 115 but were under the operational command of Commander Seventh Fleet Cruiser-Destroyer Force, which was responsible for Task Group (TG) 77.1, Operation Sea Dragon, and Task Unit (TU) 70.8.9, Naval Gunfire Support. Only HMA Ships HOBART and PERTH during their 1st and 2nd deployments took part in Operation Sea Dragon the name given to surface ship operations against North Vietnam Military target, coastal resupply routes and waterborne logistic craft (WBLC). Operation Sea Dragon commenced on the 25th October 1966 and concluded on the 1st of November 1968 when the then US President, Lyndon B. Johnson, ordered a cessation of all naval bombardment, air strikes and ground attacks of North Vietnam. Other tasks performed by the destroyers included screening US Navy carriers (Task Force 77) on Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin as part of Operation Rolling Thunder and in the case of HMAS PERTH, supervising an abortive effort to return POW's to North Vietnam.

Operation SEALORDS (Southeast Asian Lake, Ocean, River and Delta Strategy) was commenced in October 1968 and was intended to complement Operation Market Time in coastal waters and in particular in the Mekong Delta area. HMAS Brisbane was alerted to provide NGS as part of Operation SEALORDS on Anzac Day (25 April) 1969 in support of US Navy Riverine boats in a river operation near Long Toan. However, before the ship reached the area the fire mission was cancelled.

However, the primary role of RAN ships was to provide naval gunfire support for Allied and Australian ground forces ashore, which they did with a triple 'A', Alacrity, Accuracy and Aplomb.

On a number of occasions when destroyers assigned to Operation Sea Dragon operated close inshore they were fired upon by North Vietnam shore batteries. HMAS HOBART was fired upon 10 times during her first deployment and 3 times during her second deployment. HMAS PERTH was fired upon 4 times during her first deployment and once during her second deployment. Neither HMAS BRISBANE nor HMAS VENDETTA participated in Operation Sea Dragon and therefore were not engaged by North Vietnam shore batteries.

On the 18th of October 1967 both HMAS PERTH and USS NEWPORT NEWS were fired on by enemy shore batteries and HMAS PERTH was hit by one round. The shell, either a 85mm or 100mm, glanced off Mount 52 (the aft 5 inch gun turret) and penetrated the upper deck and exploded in the Confidential Book vault

causing a fire and injuring 7 sailors, two seriously. It was estimated that the enemy shore batteries fired over 200 rounds of 85mm or 100mm shells at the two ships during this action.

HMAS HOBART was the only Gunline ship to suffer fatal casualties when she was attacked by air launched missiles on the 17th of June 1968. This attack was later identified as four Sparrow missiles launched from a US Air Force F4 aircraft. Two sailors were killed and nine wounded several seriously. HMAS HOBART suffered extensive damage to her weapon and radar control systems, electrical systems and to a lesser degree hull and superstructure damage. The Ikara magazine was extensively damaged; however as the Ikara system had not yet been fitted a greater possible calamity was avoided. The ship was repaired at the US Navy ship repair facility at Subic Bay in four weeks and then readily resumed her gunline duties.

On the 29th of June 1969 HMAS BRISBANE was relieved on station by USS JAMES E. KYES (D787) and set course for Singapore for a maintenance and rest period. The next day, in the South China Sea, the ship went to the assistance of the merchant ship MV SINCERE, which was on fire. However, even with the transfer of approximately 70 personnel and fire fighting equipment the attempt to extinguish the fire was unsuccessful.

HMAS BRISBANE embarked the crew of the MV SINCERE and remained in the vicinity of the stricken vessel until the 3rd of July when the salvage tug SALVANA took her in tow. HMAS BRISBANE landed the crew of the MV SINCERE in Singapore. However, their ship lost her battle with the onboard fire and sank about 80 miles from the island of Pulau Tioman.

Whilst participating in a co-ordinated air to ground, artillery and naval gunfire support clearing mission on the 22nd of July 1969, HMAS BRISBANE experienced a premature explosion in the barrel of Mount 51. The ammunition being used at the time was the standard 5inch AA Common HE, which has both a nose and base fuse. The US Navy Board of Inquiry into the incident determined that the shell had move up the barrel approximately six feet when the base fuse malfunctioned and the shell exploded. The explosion blew out the side of the barrel and a small piece of shrapnel injured a sailor on the AA Control position above the bridge. However, the ship remained on station and completed all her assigned firing missions using Mount 52.

On the 3rd of August the ship returned to the US Navy ship repair facility at Subic Bay where Mount 51 was removed. However, a replacement mount was not fitted until HMAS BRISBANE completed her next gunline assignment in September 1969.

Whilst on gunline operations in Vietnam RAN destroyers were logistically supported by US Navy replenishment ships. Also, at regular intervals the ships visited Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines; this was to allow for maintenance to be carried out and to provide shore leave and rest for the ship's company.

RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV)

In July 1967 it was announced by the (then) Minister for Defence, The Hon Allen Fairhall, MP, that approximately fifty personnel from the RAN Fleet Air Arm (FAA) would be attached to a US Army Aviation Company and also that a group of RAN pilots would join RAAF 9 Squadron based at Vung Tau Air Base. Both the US Army Aviation Company and RAAF 9 Squadron operated Iroquois helicopters.

Selected from various billets in and outside the FAA, but attached to HS723 Squadron based at the Naval Air Station (NAS) Nowra for the duration of their Vietnam service those personnel selected served with the US Army 135th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC).

Known as the RAN Helicopter Flight-Vietnam (RANHFV) the first contingent of pilots and support personnel arrived in Vietnam on the 16th of October 1967. This and each following deployment, except for the last, was for a period of 12 months. The RAN personnel were quickly integrated into the 135th AHC which was designated as an Experimental Military Unit (EMU).

Initially based at Vung Tau Air Base the company was ordered to move to Camp Blackhorse near Xuan Loc in December 1967. In November 1968 the unit was moved to Bear Cat (32 km NE of Saigon) and finally the unit moved to Dong Tam in Dinh Tuong Province in September 1970.

The 135th AHC was equipped with two variants of the UH-1 Huey (Iroquois) helicopter, the UH-1C gunship and the UH-1D/H utility helicopters. The UH-1C, 'Charlie' model was developed from the UH-1B as an armed attack helicopter and approximately 800 were built for almost exclusive use in Vietnam. Over 5000 of the UH-1D/H

'Hotel' model were built and besides being used in great number in Vietnam they were also in common use throughout the world and still are today

The Charlie model gunship carried a very impressive array of armament including two 7.62mm mini-guns or a 40mm grenade launcher in a chin turret, two pods of 62.5mm rockets (2x7) and two 7.62mm door-mounted machine guns.

The Hotel model had a carrying capacity of seven European troops or ten South Vietnamese troops and was armed with two 7.62 mm door mounted machine guns for self defence and retaliatory fire.

On the 22nd of February 1968 the RANHFV suffered its first fatality when LCDR PJ Vickers, RAN died as a result of wounds received when his aircraft was hit by ground fire.

Four contingents of approximately 50 Officers and Sailors served with great distinction in very difficult circumstances over a period of four years. The RANHFV suffered a much higher casualty rate than the RAAF or Australian Army Aviation Units. The Flight had amongst its members some of the most highly decorated Australians of the Vietnam War. One interesting statistic is that all RAN aviators qualified for the US Air Medal so to did many of the senior and junior sailors of the RANHFV maintenance and support staff.

Throughout their service in Vietnam with the 135th AHC members of the RANHFV provided tactical air-lift and gunship support for Australian and Allied ground forces, which was second to none.

9 Squadron RAAF

A small band of RAN pilots, eight in total, from the RAN's FAA HS817 Squadron served with RAAF 9 Squadron, based at Vung Tau Air Base, between February 1968 and April 1969.

RAAF 9 Squadron flew a variety of UH-1 Huey (Iroquois) helicopters including the initial UH-1B the squadron arrived with. Replacement aircraft for the UH-1B's was the UH-1D model, however when helicopter numbers were increased the squadron received the updated UH-1H model.

Besides the eight RAN pilots the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) rotated sixteen pilots through RAAF 9 Squadron between July 1967 and December 1971. In February 1968 an agreement was made for pilots from RAAF 9 Squadron to be attached to the 135th AHC to gain combat experience on the newer UH-1H models. This integration of RAAF, RAN and RNZAF pilots into the 135th AHC was not only good from a combat training/experience stand point but also for the lasting interpersonal relationships the placements engendered.

Logistic Support

Besides personnel, HMAS SYDNEY also carried her share of the heavy lift materiel support burden, transporting upwards of 6000 tons of stores and equipment, over 2400 vehicles, numerous army field guns and also Army and RAAF aircraft that was so necessary for

Australia's war effort in Vietnam. She was ably assisted in this task by the merchant ships JEPARIT and BOONAROO.

These two supply line merchant ships were to become embroiled in ever-increasing controversy. Maritime unions and anti-war groups targeted the involvement of merchant ships and merchant navy personnel in the Vietnam War to such an extent that the Government decided it would no longer tolerate trade union interference, civil unrest and the disruptions to sailing schedules and commissioned both ships into the Royal Australian Navy.

MV JEPARIT, an Australian National Line (ANL) vessel, completed five (5) voyages to South Vietnam between June 1966 and February 1967 with an all civilian crew as a merchant vessel on charter to the then Department of Shipping and Transport (DST).

After the fifth voyage the Seaman's Union of Australia (SUA), now the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), refused to man the ship unless a claim of outrageous wage increases and workplace conditions were met. This ambit claim was rejected by ANL and the DST and the seaman's union component of the ship's crew was replaced by naval personnel. The ship then completed a further 21 voyages to South Vietnam with a mixed naval and civilian crew. The then difference between a SUA seaman's daily wage and that of an RAN sailor averaged \$24.20 and this money was paid into the RAN Trust Relief Fund for the benefit of all RAN personnel.

On the 10th of December 1969 members of the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) refused to load the

vessel and in response the then Minister for Labour and National Service, the Hon Billy Sneddon, MP, announced that the ship would be commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy and would be loaded and unloaded by Service personnel. The ship was commissioned HMAS JEPARIT the next day on the 11th of December 1969 and completed a further 17 voyages to South Vietnam flying the Australian White Ensign (AWE). The then and future ANL Masters of the ship were commissioned into the RANVR and the administrative responsibility for the RAN members of the ship's company passed from the RAN Detachment officer to them as a consequence. The ship returned to Sydney from her last voyage to South Vietnam on the 11th of March 1972 and was decommissioned as an RAN ship. On the 15th of March 1972 the ship was returned to her owners; the Australian national Line.

The MV BOONAROO was an Australian National Line coastal merchant ship of approximately 4000 tons and completed a military cargo sea charter from

Sydney to Vung Tau and return in May/June 1966, manned by merchant navy personnel and without any incidents. On the second voyage in late February 1967, whilst loading further cargo of RAAF explosive stores in Melbourne the SUA refused to sail the ship to Vietnam. Swiftly the vessel was taken over by the Royal Australian Navy with the Master of the vessel, Captain P Grimanes being replaced by Commander P R Burnett, RAN and except for two of the ship's engineers, who held RANR commissions, the merchant navy crew was replaced by RAN officers and sailors and the ship was commissioned into the RAN. HMAS BOONAROO was the first ship to be commissioned into the RAN under the new distinctive Australian White Ensign (AWE) on the 1st of March 1967.

These two ships provided almost 200,000 deadweight tons (DWT) of logistic support for Navy, Army and RAAF personnel serving ashore in Vietnam. MV/HMAS JEPARIT made a total of 43 voyages to South Vietnam ports and MV/HMAS BOONAROO two (2).

HMAS SYDNEY - FAA Squadron Detachments

Detachments of 4 Westland Wessex 31A ASW helicopters from FAA Squadron HS725 and HS817 were embarked in HMAS SYDNEY during seven deployments to Vung Tau from operational deployment number five in April 1967. Three detachments were from HS725 Squadron and four from HS817 Squadron.

These detachments served two purposes; one they provided forward ASW and Surface screening and operational training and flexibility for HMAS SYDNEY and her escorts and two, provided vital seaborne operational training for the FAA aircrew and maintenance personnel whilst HMAS MELBOURNE was undergoing an extended refit and modernisation.

Miscellaneous RAN Groups.

Ten RAN officers and senior sailors served on the HQ staff of the Australian Force Vietnam, at Nui Dat between February 1967 and August 1971. RAN medical officers (MO's) and other RAN medical personnel were attached to the 1st Australian Field Hospital at Vung Tau and US hospitals between October 1968 and June 1971. RAN Medical Officers were also involved in the Medical Civil Action Program, which provided medical support to the local Vietnamese civilian population.

In early 1966, the then Department of Shipping and Transport deployed departmental officers to South Vietnam as Sea Transport officers. Their duties were to supervise the unloading and back-loading operations of stores and equipment from the supply line ships JEPARIT and BOONAROO and the Army chartered

HARIMA MARU. A total of five officers filled these deployments most more than once. Initially these officers were deployed to Vietnam on long term postings but later were only despatched to Vietnam to coincide with the arrival of the supply line ships.

Departmental officers who were not already serving in the RANR were commissioned into the RANVR for the duration of their service in South Vietnam. The first Sea Transport officer was deployed in 1966 and the last returned to Australia in HMAS JEPARIT in October 1971.

A total of ten RAN Chaplains provided pastoral care to Australian Service personnel serving ashore and afloat during Australia's commitment to the War in Vietnam. Also, whenever there was an opportunity RAN Chaplains attended to the pastoral needs of Service personnel from other nations serving in Vietnam.

The RAN Fleet Band made up of twenty musicians and led by the Fleet Band Officer, toured Vietnam in May and June 1970 entertaining Australian and Allied Service personnel. Concerts were also arranged for the entertainment of the civilian population, particularly in Saigon and Baria. The tour was rated as an outstanding morale boosting success.

During the War years ten naval officers spent varying periods in Vietnam on special assignment.

Reduced participation

In April 1971 the (then) Prime Minister, the Rt Hon William McMahon, MP (Sir William-1977) announced that Australia's commitment to the War in Vietnam was to be reduced. This led to the withdrawal of the clearance divers (CDT3) in May and the RANHFV in June 1971.

Four months later on the 18th of August 1971 he announced the termination of Australia's combat role in Vietnam. It was not unexpected.

Due to the disruptive tactics of the Australian Waterside Workers union the MV HARIMA MARU, which had just delivered Australian Defence Aid to Cambodia was back-chartered by the Australian Army to return the Centurion tanks of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps and Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) of the Army Cavalry Squadron from Vietnam to Sydney in September 1971. This ship had a self-loading (unloading) heavy lift capability, which excluded the use of unionised dockside labour.

In September 1971 HMAS SYDNEY embarked 3RAR from Vung Tau for return to Australia and on her next deployment from Sydney in late November she embarked RAAF 9 Squadron helicopters in Vung Tau. These aircraft flew off HMAS SYDNEY to RAAF

Amberley, via Maroochydore Airport, as the ship anchored off Caloundra on the Queensland Sunshine Coast on the 19th of December 1971.

The RAN destroyer on the gunline, HMAS BRISBANE, returned to Sydney on the 15th of October 1971 and was not replaced.

Australia's combat commitment concluded

By late February 1972 all Australian combat units had been withdrawn from Vietnam. HMAS SYDNEY departed Vung Tau on the 29th of February with 457 Army personnel on her last trooping run between Vung Tau and Australia. After HMAS SYDNEY departed Vung Tau only a small component of AATTV personnel and an even smaller number of miscellaneous ADF personnel remained in Vietnam to complete the final withdrawal process. Most of these were progressively withdrawn until in December 1972 less than 30 ADF, mostly AATTV personnel, remained in Vietnam.

HMAS JEPARIT returned to Sydney from her final voyage to South Vietnam on the 11th of March 1972. She was de-commissioned as a Royal Australian Navy ship on the 15th of March 1972 and returned to her owners.

HMAS SYDNEY - Last deployment

In November 1972 on her last operational deployment of the Vietnam War HMAS SYDNEY carried a Defence Aid cargo to Vung Tau for the South Vietnam government and back loaded the remaining Australian Military equipment and stores for return to Australia. Leaving Vung Tau on the 24th of November she set course for Hong Kong. En route she went to the assistance of the disabled Panamanian merchant vessel, KAIWING, and towed her to Hong Kong where they arrived on the 30th of November 1972. The arrival of HMAS SYDNEY in Hong Kong officially ended the RAN's involvement in the Vietnam War.

On completion of her visit to Hong Kong she sailed for Sydney, via Subic Bay, on the 4th of December 1972. HMAS SYDNEY completed her 25th and final voyage to South Vietnam when she arrived in Sydney on the 18th of December 1972.

Change of Government

There was a change of federal government with the election of the Whitlam Labor government on Saturday, the 2nd of December 1972. On the 11th of December the newly elected Prime Minister, the Hon Edward Gough Whitlam, MP announced that he was expediting the return to Australia (RTA) of the remaining Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel in South Vietnam. By then the total number of ADF personnel in Vietnam had fallen to below 30 and were scheduled to RTA in January 1973. However, on government

orders they were uplifted from Tan Son Nhut (Saigon) at 0600 on the 18th of December 1972 when two RAAF C130 aircraft (A97-167 and A97-189) completed Australia's military (Army and RAAF) commitment to the war in Vietnam. The new federal government also stopped military aid to the South Vietnam government and with that Australia's 10 year involvement in the Vietnam War officially came to an end.

HMAS SYDNEY - Swan Song

HMAS SYDNEY sailed from Sydney on the 20th of February 1973 and after visiting PNG, Indonesia and Singapore in March returned to Sydney. At the end of March 1973 HMAS SYDNEY sailed on what was to be the final trooping run of her illustrious career, carrying Australian Army personnel to an exercise in the 'Land of the Long White Cloud'. After returning to Australia from New Zealand the ship took part in a major Joint Service exercise off the East Coast of Australia in late April and May. HMAS SYDNEY sailed from Sydney for the last time on the 25th of June for training cruise to Hervey Bay in Queensland and when she returned to Sydney on the 6th of July 1973 her engines fell silent for the last time.

On the 20th of July 1973 the ship's company was informed that it had been decided to de-commission HMAS SYDNEY instead of proceeding with the planned refit.

On Thursday, the 16th of August 1973, the RAN was granted the Freedom of the City of Sydney during a street parade and ceremony consisting of 1200 officers and sailors from 14 RAN Ships. Rear Admiral Anthony Synnot, CBE, RAN, the then Flag Officer Commanding the Australian Fleet (FOCAF) and a previous Commanding Officer of HMAS SYDNEY, led the parade. HMAS SYDNEY provided the Scroll Party and the armed escort and a significant number of sailors in the Guard of Honour for the parading of the RAN Queen's Colour and in the main marching body. This was the last parade of the ship's company of HMAS SYDNEY (III).

On the 12th of November 1973 HMAS SYDNEY was 'paid off' for disposal. The ship had steamed 395,591 miles since re-commissioning as a fast troop transport and since first commissioning in the UK on the 16th of December 1948 she had steamed a total of 711,549 miles. On the 28th of October 1975 HMAS SYDNEY was sold for scrap to Dongkuk Steel Mill Company Limited of Seoul, South Korea. The ship left Sydney under tow for South Korea on the 23rd of December 1975. Not much of a Christmas present for all those thousands of Officers, Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen who had sailed in her and remembered her with great affection.

War statistics - Casualties

During the 10 years the RAN was involved in the Vietnam War, eight officers and sailors were either killed in action or were non-battle fatalities with a further 48 either wounded in action or suffered non-battle wounds or injuries.

It should also be noted that two other RAN officers died whilst deployed in Logistic Support Task Group ships en route to Vung Tau. Lieutenant E G Kennell, RAN was presumed killed as a result of the Sea Venom aircraft, in which he was flying from HMAS MELBOURNE, crashing into the sea when on a surface probe sortie on the 28th of April 1966, whilst part of the escort group for HMAS SYDNEY. Lieutenant Commander K A Ferguson, RANR died from natural causes on the 6th of December 1971 whilst a member of the ship's company of HMAS SYDNEY, which was during the 23rd operational deployment of the ship to Vung Tau.

Australian Honours and Awards

CBE - 3 DSO - 1 OBE - 1 MBE - 4
DSC - 9 DFC - 6 DSM - 4 BEM - 4
MID - 48 Naval Board Commendation - 254
Commendation for Distinguished Service - 4 (See below)

In 1998 the Government gazetted the Vietnam 'End of War List', in which 78 awards were made to Australian Defence Force personnel for service during the Vietnam War. In Gazette No S252 dated the 3rd of June 1998, four (4) RAN personnel were awarded the Commendation for Distinguished Service.

United States of America Awards

It is not possible to accurately record the number or designation of US awards to RAN personnel as many were awarded when it was forbidden to accept foreign orders, decorations or awards without the express permission of HM the Queen. Suffice to say the number of awards to RAN personnel was significant.

United States Navy Meritorious Unit Commendations

HMAS PERTH CDT3 (First Contingent)

United States Navy Unit Commendations

HMAS HOBART HMAS PERTH

Republic of South Vietnam Awards

It is not possible to accurately record the number or designation of decorations or awards made by the Republic of South Vietnam to RAN personnel for the same reasons as mentioned in the paragraph headed United States of America Awards. Again the number of these awards to RAN personnel was significant.

One RAN officer, who served with the RANHFV, is considered to be the most highly decorated Vietnam veteran from any of the Australian Services.

Campaign Medals

The Australian government issued three campaign medals in recognition of active service in South Vietnam between 1962 and 1973. The Australian Active Service Medal and the Australian Service Medal were also issued for particular service in South Vietnam, between 1962 and 1975.

Originally the (Imperial) General Service Medal 1962 (GSM) with clasp 'South Vietnam' was awarded to qualified ADF personnel for service in South Vietnam between the 24th of December 1962 and the 28th of May 1964.

After a number of years the government of the day was persuaded to authorise a distinctive Vietnam campaign medal. The Vietnam Medal was established in 1968 and superseded the GSM 1962 with clasp 'South Vietnam' and was awarded to qualified ADF personnel for service in South Vietnam between the 29th of May 1964 and the 27th of January 1973.

After a long and at times acrimonious campaign by thousands of naval personnel for their operational service in Vietnam to be recognised the Vietnam Logistic and Support Medal (VLSM) was established in 1993 and awarded to all ADF personnel, QANTAS Aircrew, Entertainers, Civilian Medical Teams, Journalists other Australian civilians who served in a logistic support role in South Vietnam between the 29th of May 1964 and the 27th of January 1973. The issue of this medal directly affected the status of approximately 10,000 RAN personnel by officially recognising their Vietnam operational service.

In December 1997 the clasp 'Vietnam' was added to the Australian Active Service Medal (AASM), (established 1988) and was awarded to ADF personnel who were in receipt of any of the three campaign medals mentioned above.

In 1990 the Australian Service Medal (ASM) (established 1988) with clasp 'Vietnam 1975' was awarded to certain RAAF personnel involved in UNCEF operations in South Vietnam and the recovery of the Australian Ambassador (HE Mr G J Price) and ten Embassy staff from Saigon airport in April 1975.

Regulations do not allow for a veteran to be issued with both the Vietnam medal and the VLSM. In a double qualifying situation the Vietnam Medal takes precedence over the VLSM irrespective of the order of the qualifying service.

Republic of South Vietnam – Campaign Medal

A Directive issued by the Vietnamese Department of National Defence on the 1st of September 1965 and as amended on the 22nd of March 1966 authorised the issue of the Vietnamese Campaign Medal to Foreign Service personnel under certain conditions.

The (then) Minister for Defence, the Hon Allen Fairhall, MP in an address to the House of Representatives

on the 19th of May 1967 indicated the qualifying service required by Australian Service personnel for the issue of the medal and also that it could be worn in Australia as a foreign award.

Personnel

On the 10th of November 1964 the (then) Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, MP, announced the re-introduction of a National Service for lottery selected 20 year old males from July 1965. The scheme was for the benefit of the Army and did not extend to the RAN or the RAAF; both these Services continued to rely on volunteers to keep their numbers to the allowed establishment. The government also decided at the time that it was not necessary to mobilise the reserve forces. However, the RAN made good use of its naval reserve personnel whenever and wherever it was possible for them to fill a sea-going billet and as a result many served in ships on operational service during the Vietnam War.

In 1965 at the outset of the RAN's involvement in Vietnam the authorised strength of the RAN was 1,465 Officers, 11,780 Sailors (13,245) and increased steadily during the war until in 1972, at the cessation of the RAN's involvement, the personnel strength stood at 17,192 (Officers 2,235, Sailors 14,957).

In 1969 the RAN had a very well balanced inventory of personnel, ships and aircraft. Its fleet was very highly rated by friends and adversaries alike and was possibly the most powerful and versatile, measured in firepower, mobility and capability than at any time in its history outside World War II. The government at the time was not slow in highlighting the preparedness and capabilities of the ADF in adding weight to their foreign policy and international stature.

Approximately 13,500 RAN personnel served either ashore in Vietnam or entered Vietnamese waters between the 25th of January 1962 and the 30th of November 1972. Currently (late 2004), the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), the department responsible for maintaining the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans, has the total of RAN personnel at approximately 13,500, with a small number still to be positively identified as Vietnam veterans. However, the DVA in parallel with the third Vietnam Mortality Study is making a concerted effort to update the August 1997 Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans to a more accurate document.

Particularly inaccurate is the recorded details of many RAN and RANR personnel who served during the early period of the Vietnam War and who possibly separated from the RAN before Electronic Data Processing (EDP) had electronically recorded their naval service in detail. The task of accurately identifying number of RANR personnel who served in Vietnam as a group is Herculean and an accurate count may end up being no more scientific than a calculated guess.

With the best of intentions it may never be possible to define the number of RAN/RANR Vietnam veterans more accurately than to within a 100 or so as there are a number of insurmountable factors that prevent a more precise count.

Every RAN Vietnam veteran who served in a gunline ship or ashore in any capacity or who has applied for medals or has sought assistance from the DVA has had his name included on the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans. However, as sailors' records, prior to the introduction of EDP on the 1st of January 1967 were manually kept those records will not have been accessed if the veteran, or in the case of a deceased member, his family has not applied to the RAN for his medals or if he has not sought any type of pension or repatriation assistance through the DVA.

A high percentage of RAN officers and sailors served in Vietnam more than once and many of them in quite different circumstances.

The diversity of Vietnam service is exemplified by the fact that over a quarter of the 198 RANHFV personnel completed other Vietnam service besides their primary 12 months allotment with the RANHFV as follows:

1 sailor served two consecutive 12 month postings with the RANHFV,
 15 served in HMAS SYDNEY,
 30 served in HMAS MELBOURNE,
 7 served in a ship escorting HMAS SYDNEY,
 2 served in two different ships escorting HMAS SYDNEY, whilst
 3 had service in HMAS SYDNEY and also an escorting ship.

In another example the 49 personnel who served six months ashore with CDT3 no fewer than 29 had other Vietnam service as follows:

2 sailors served a tour of duty in a gunline destroyer,
 8 served in HMAS SYDNEY,
 13 served in a ship escorting HMAS SYDNEY,
 3 served in two different ships escorting HMAS SYDNEY,
 2 served in HMAS SYDNEY and also an escorting ship, whilst
 1 served in HMAS SYDNEY and two escorting ships.

Hundreds of officers and sailors saw service in two or more ships; one sailor completed three deployments on gunline ships whilst one officer saw service in five different ships deployed on escort duty. There are also many hundreds of RAN veterans who completed multiple trips in an escort ships as well as HMAS SYDNEY. One senior sailor in particular served in HMAS SYDNEY from the 14th of July 1964 until the 12th of November 1973 and completed every deployment of the ship to Vung Tau during the Vietnam War.

Over the 10 year period the RAN was involved in the Vietnam War the Service was required to fill almost 30,000 billets at sea and ashore in Vietnam. The fact that all these billets were filled by approximately 13,500 officers and sailors indicates the devotion and determination of Navy personnel to complete any assigned task professionally and with the minimum of fuss.

The dedication and professionalism shown by members of the RAN in Vietnam earned the Service the admiration of our comrades in the other two Services and the respect of our allies and continued the fine tradition the Senior Service established by RAN officers and sailors in other wars and operations.

For the RAN the Vietnam War was an all male affair as unlike the other two Services, no female personnel were allotted for operational service during the conflict.

Ships and other RAN units

In total 20 RAN ships were deployed on operations during the Vietnam War, most more than once.

On the Gunline four ships completed nine deployments, whilst amongst the escorts the Daring Class destroyers HMAS DUCHESS and HMAS VAMPIRE both completed six operational escorts of HMAS SYDNEY to and from Vung Tau.

The following is a list of the Royal Australian Navy ships, Fleet Air Arm Squadrons and White Ensign merchant ships (deployments in brackets), which were involved in the Vietnam War:

Gunline Ships - HMA Ships HOBART (3) - PERTH (3) - BRISBANE (2) - VENDETTA (1)

Fast Troop Carrier - HMAS SYDNEY (25)

Escort Ships - HMA Ships ANZAC (1) - DERWENT (3) - DUCHESS (6) - MELBOURNE (3) - PARAMATTA (3) - STUART (2) - SWAN (2) - TORRENS (1) - VAMPIRE (6) - VENDETTA (3) - YARRA (5)

Diplomatic Visits - HMA Ships VAMPIRE (1) - QUICKMATCH (1) - QUEENBOROUGH (1) - (Defined Operational 1997) QUIBERON (1)

Supply Line ships - MV / HMAS BOONAROO (2) - MV / HMAS JEPARIT (43)

Fleet Air Arm Squadrons - HMAS MELBOURNE (3) - VF805 - VS816 - HS817

RANHFV - HS723

HMAS SYDNEY (7) -

HS725 (3) - HS817 (4)

RAAF 9 Squadron -

HS817

Chartered Merchant Ship - MV HARIMA MARU (1)

Other Operations

During the Vietnam War the following ships were allotted for operational service in another theatre of operations besides Vietnam:

HMAS VAMPIRE completed six escorts of HMAS SYDNEY and was part of the task group for the first operational deployment of HMAS SYDNEY in 1965 and was also the escort for the last deployment of HMAS SYDNEY in 1972. In 1966 HMAS VAMPIRE was also involved in offensive operations in Borneo and Malaya during the Indonesian Confrontation. HMAS VAMPIRE also completed an operational visit to Saigon in 1962 and therefore has the longest involvement of any RAN ship in the Vietnam War.

HMAS VENDETTA completed one Seventh Fleet attachment (Gunline) three escorts of HMAS SYDNEY and in 1964/65/66 was involved in offensive operations in Borneo and Malaya during the Indonesian Confrontation.

HMAS DUCHESS completed six escorts of HMAS SYDNEY and in 1965/66 was also involved in offensive operations in Borneo and Malaya during the Indonesian Confrontation.

HMAS PARRAMATTA completed three escorts of HMAS SYDNEY and in 1965/66 was also involved in offensive operations in Borneo and Malaya during the Indonesian Confrontation.

HMAS YARRA completed five escorts of HMAS SYDNEY and in 1965 was also involved in offensive operations in Borneo and Malaya during the Indonesian Confrontation.

HMAS DERWENT completed three escorts of HMAS SYDNEY and in 1964/65/66 was also involved in offensive operations in Borneo and Malaya during the Indonesian Confrontation.

HMAS ANZAC completed one escort of HMAS SYDNEY to Vung Tau in June 1968 and also paid a diplomatic visit to Saigon in October 1956.

HMAS ANZAC's visit to Saigon was followed in December 1957 by HMAS TOBRUK. When President Ngo Dinh Diem visited the ship he offered his private aircraft to the Commanding Officer and 15 other officers and senior sailors, including the author, for a sight-seeing flight to Cam Ranh Bay and back.

The RAN can therefore rightly lay claim to having had the earliest direct contact with the Republic of South Vietnam.

History preserved

Of all the RAN ships deployed on operational service during the Vietnam War only HMAS VAMPIRE remains; she is maintained by the Australian Maritime Museum at Darling Harbour as a museum ship and is open daily for public inspection.

The fickle finger of fate

The Panamanian registered merchant ship EASTERN MARINER, which was holed by a Viet Cong mine and beached in the Saigon River in 1966, was in a previous life the WWII RAN Minelayer HMAS BUNGAREE. The ship was owned by the Adelaide Steamship Company and was requisitioned by the RAN on the 10th of October 1940 and converted to a minelayer to carry up to 467 mines. The ship was commissioned as HMAS BUNGAREE on the 9th of June 1941.

During her service with the RAN she laid approximately 9000 mines and survived the War without an enemy action casualty. The ship was decommissioned on the 7th of August 1946 and after restoration to her original state was returned to her owners on the 5th of November 1947. Under the circumstances her ultimate loss in the Vietnam War by way of a mine is ironic for an ex-minelayer.

Conclusion

No matter where or in which ship, FAA Squadron or unit they served all RAN personnel considered that their contribution to the War in Vietnam was meaningful and appreciated by the Service, their comrades in the other two Services and the Nation; all were proud to have served.

STATISTICAL DATA

US Seventh Fleet Destroyer Deployments (Gunline)

HMAS HOBART:

1st Deployment - 07 March 1967 - 27 September 1967
Captain G R Griffiths, DSC, RAN

2nd Deployment - 22 March 1968 - 11 October 1968 -
 Captain K W Shands, RAN
 3rd Deployment - 16 March 1970 - 17 October 1970 -
 Captain R C Swan, RAN

HMAS PERTH:

1st Deployment - 02 September 1967 - 10 April 1968 -
 Captain P H Doyle, RAN
 2nd Deployment - 19 September 1968 - 20 April 1969 -
 Captain D W Leach, RAN
 3rd Deployment - 14 September 1970 - 08 April 1971 -
 Captain I M Burnside, RAN

HMAS BRISBANE:

1st Deployment - 20 March 1969 - 13 October 1969 -
 Captain A A Willis, RAN
 2nd Deployment - 16 March 1971 - 15 October 1971 -
 Captain R G Loosli, RAN

HMAS VENDETTA:

Single Deployment - 15 September 1969 - 11 April
 1970 - Commander E E Johnson, RAN

Between the first deployment of HMAS HOBART, 07
 March 1967, and the last deployment of HMAS BRIS-
 BANE, 15 October 1971, the ships steamed almost
 400,000 nautical miles and fired over 100,000 5 inch
 and 4.5 inch shells.

HMAS HOBART

1st Deployment - Rounds fired 9,240 - Nautical miles
 steamed 52,529
 2nd Deployment - Rounds fired 16,270 - Nautical
 miles steamed 44,579
 3rd Deployment - Rounds fired 16,901 - Nautical miles
 steamed 43,915

HMAS PERTH

1st Deployment - Rounds fired 13,351 - Nautical miles
 steamed 64,750
 2nd Deployment - Rounds fired 7,648 - Nautical miles
 steamed 44,820
 3rd Deployment - Rounds fired 9,712 - Nautical miles
 steamed 59,857

HMAS BRISBANE:

1st Deployment - Rounds fired 7,891 - Nautical miles
 steamed 40,465
 2nd Deployment - Rounds fired 7,760 - Nautical miles
 steamed 27,011

HMAS VENDETTA:

One Deployment - Rounds fired 13,295 - Nautical
 miles steamed 39,857

RAN Helicopter Flight – Vietnam (RANHfV)

1st Contingent - 15 October 1967 - 16 October 1968 -
 Lieutenant Commander N Ralph, RAN
 2nd Contingent - 9 September 1968 - 9 October 1969 -
 Lieutenant Commander G Rohrsheim, RAN

3rd Contingent - 9 September 1969 - 8 October 1970 -
 Lieutenant Commander D Farthing, RAN
 4th Contingent - 9 September 1970 - 16 June 1971 -
 Lieutenant Commander W P James, RAN

During the period 15 October 1967 to the 16 June 1971
 a total of 35 RAN pilots were assigned to the 135th As-
 sault Helicopter Company and between them com-
 pleted a total of 33,725 flying hours.

BACK TO THE BUSH BRUCE ROCK 2011

Camping on the oval will be available from Tuesday
 2nd November 2011.

Saturday the 6th of November is the special day, with
 Street markets, a town hall full of info booths covering
 a wide range of health issues, Flag Association, PVA,
 TPI etc. 10th Light Horse museum, Historical military
 vehicles, Brass Bands and much more.
 At 2:45pm all veterans and interested persons are
 asked to form up outside the town hall for a march
 through the town to St Peter's Church for a relighting
 of the memorial candle at the Vietnam Veterans
 PEACE Window. Followed by a free bbq, drinks and
 entertainment at the Recreation Centre.

A free Sunday morning breakfast will follow for those
 having to leave us, but we hope you will stay and en-
 joy the Brass Band entertainment at the Shire Hall.
 Take a leisurely drive to the Ardath Pub for lunch, then
 rest a while for an evening around the Bards Pit, where
 you entertain us!

So come prepared to enjoy great Country hospitality,
 have a good time, catching up with old mates and mak-
 ing new ones!!

For further info contact:
 Colin Turner on 08 9061 1773
 email: bkvet@bigpond.com

or
 Chris Pickering on 08 9061 1604,
 email: crpick@bigpond.com

The VVAA Burdekin Sub Branch have acquired a recrea-
 tional lease on a 7 hectare site situated on the northern side
 of the Burdekin river some 45 Klm's up from the bridge
 crossing.

The campsite overlooks the river with about 2 hectares of
 mowed grounds. Male & female toilets, one shower and
 BBQ area & fire places. Fishing in the river is close at hand
 but one has to keep an eye for crocodiles.

The camp has a locked gate and is only available to local &
 travelling Vets and responsible community groups with a 3
 day limit.

A key deposit is required and money refunded on return of
 key.

Details available from:

Barry & Lynete Spelta 07 4783 1735P 0428 983 435 M

THE EMU AIRCREW

Politics aside, that exciting ride
Of life and grim expectations,
Showed me how (and even now
I know) I had limitations.

Twelve long months, and more than once
I'd sat in the hands of Fate;
Why was I there? Why should I care?
Just rely on your mate.

Aussies and Yanks, of various ranks,
We were a mixtured crew;
From one of each we learned to teach
Each other of what we knew.

Fear and pride, both taken in stride,
Humbled me...that's for sure;
I felt aloof and bullet-proof...
While death hovered right next door.

At times I'd fly, at times I'd cry...
Frustration reigned supreme;
Friend or foe?... 'twas hard to know...
For both wore black or green.

Back at base, sometimes I'd face
Questions from a mate;
"How'd it go?" and words would flow

While drinking beer 'til late.

He also flew, that's how he knew
The right words so to speak;
And words so said erased the dread
Of future flights so bleak.

It made me proud I was allowed
To call this bloke a mate;
I knew him well and I could tell,
To me, *he* could relate.

A gentle man from a southern land,
I got to know him well;
A willing bloke who loved a joke...
Who'd fly with you through hell.

At times we flew in a four-man crew
O'er lands of trees and rice;
'CHARLIE' would hide and our luck would ride
With 'Death'... and the throw of his dice.

When holes appeared, (then tape adhered),
Like a badge... our 'ship' was honoured;
We hadn't heard strikes to our bird...
"Lucky again!?"... we pondered.

When we put down in a mud-surround
'Twas a place not meant to be;
Miles from home and all alone...
It scared the hell out of me!

When we set down in a dry-surround
Our choppers numbered ten;
When mortars rained our engines strained
To get airborne again.

While six flew on, the rest prolonged
Their stay upon the ground;
In injured state they could but wait...
With wounded men all round.

"What rotten luck", for a pilot struck
In the head while flying high;
These words you'd think...and *dare'd* not sink
To thinking *your* time was nigh.

Five 'ships' set out and went about
Their duties for the day;
Four 'ships' returned... that's when we learned
That one was not okay.

'Twas a mission 'hot'... 'CHARLIE' had shot
A crew and a 'ship' that day;
In an old bomb crater, I learned much later...
That upside-down they lay.

The daily plan for 'ship' and man
Was making a safe return;
But then again, "of mice and men"
The "best laid" takes a turn.

Should someone say, "a quiet day,"
And, "missions should be short;"
'Twould often play the other way...
And peacefulness abort.

Some daily flights stretched into nights...
The "quiet day" was wrong;
And in a bind our crews would find
Their strengths and carry on.

I'll not repent the whole year spent
At war in a foreign land;
I'm *proud* I flew as an EMU crew...
And I'm *proud* of the EMU man.

© Terry Brooks

Scholarships for Children of Veterans intending Tertiary Studies in 2012

Closes on 31 October 2011 for Scholarships & Grants being offered in 2012

AVCAT flyer re Scholarships and Grants in Tertiary Studies in 2012 are available at
Web address is www.avcat.org.au
Email address is avcat@dva.gov.au

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**Any change of address is to be sent to
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The Man O'War Steps.

Since early days, Man O'War steps have played an important part in the history of Sydney and sailors of many nations and I think, deserves a place in our memories.

I mentioned this point to our Vice President Bill Baylis and in his usual manner, still went about the business of collecting as much information from books, documents and other sources as he could.

To the Royal Australian Historical Society for their information and to Bill Baylis for his help, my sincere thanks.

My interest in Man O'War Steps started during the 1930's when as a Telegraph messenger with the then PMG Dept. at the age of 14/15, it was quite common to have to deliver a telegram addressed to some Naval Ship or Sailor which we delivered to Man O'War Steps. During that period also, I remember the sad sight of a lady dressed all in white, dress, shoes, stockings, hat and handbag in the fashion of the 1914/1920 period, walking south up Pitt St, past the G.P.O.

The story behind this Lady was that she had farewelled her son at Man O'War Steps as he sailed off to the First World War 1914/1918 from which he did not return. This lady, who came from Glebe had not accepted the fact that her son was not coming back and each night, walked from Glebe to Man O'War Steps hoping to greet her son on his return. She would walk up Pitt St. and then home to Glebe again. Such was the routine of this lady that she passed the G.P.O. in Pitt St. at exactly 8.45 p.m. each night on her long walk home.

This is the sad part of the history of Man O'War Steps but alas not the last time that Man O'War Steps was the last touch of Australia for too many.

Those who have "stepped ashore" at Man O'War Steps or caught the duty boat back to their various ships from there, will remember that this was the stone jetty on Bennelong Point on the western side of Farm Cove and was the landing point for Naval Personnel visiting Sydney since early days.

For most of us it was a moment of great joy as we "stepped ashore" and later a moment of reflection as we departed Man O'War Steps for our various ships, "swinging around the buoy" or alongside at Garden island which in those days was still an island.

Cattle Point where the first cattle were landed in Australia and later named Bennelong Point was the sight of the first fortification of Sydney.

In 1788, the redoubt was completed and was armed with two brass six pounder cannons.

Among the many buildings authorised by Governor Major General Lachlan Macquarie (1st January 1810 – 1st December 1821) was a stone fort on Bennelong Point for which he laid the foundation stone on 17th December 1817.

Just prior to the commencement of the new Fort Macquarie, Governor Macquarie had a private landing place built for himself and the small sandy beach to the north of this landing place was for a time known as Port Lachlan and later as "Watering Place". Port Lachlan became the birth place of the watermen of Sydney who plied their trade as water taxis throughout Port Jackson and even as far south as Botany Bay. These watermen were the forerunners of our present water taxis and small ferry owners. Probably the best known families of watermen that we know was Stannards.

Fort Macquarie was demolished and in 1903 was replaced by an imitation fort built for a tram shed which was itself demolished for the erection of the Sydney Opera House which commenced on 5th May 1959.

Whilst all this activity was going on around it, the stone jetty except for the erection of a wooden shelter and an iron fence to keep undesirables away, remained the same.

During the 1859's, female immigrants were landed at this stone jetty and gradually the place became known as Man O'War Steps.

Since Governor Macquarie's time, most Governors, Admirals and Naval personnel used Man O'War Steps as their private landing place although towards the end of the 1890's, a dispute between the then Sydney Harbour Trust, State Government and the C I C Royal Navy as to the right of use and the responsibility for the upkeep of Man O'War Steps arose. It appears that this dispute finally found its way into the "Too Hard" basket and the "status quo" remained.

Man O'War Steps was the only permissible landing place within Farm Cove and in fact, still is to this day.

When the Sydney Opera House was officially opened on 28th September 1973, the then State Department of Public Works and Maritime Services Board restored the Man O'War Steps by adding a ramp and a pontoon to the jetty.

On 20th October 1973, a bronze plaque on the right pillar at the entrance to the ramp was unveiled and the inscription reads

Man O'War Steps

In conjunction with the official opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973, the stone jetty known as Man O'War Steps, was restored jointly by The department of Public Works and the Maritime Services Board

when a ramp and berthing pontoon were added to the structure.

The stone jetty is situated near the site of the private landing steps built during the administration of Major General Lachlan Macquarie Governor (1810-1821) and for a period formed one of the walls of a small boat harbour named "Watering Place" and no doubt was used by vessels at anchorage in Farm Cove, to obtain water supplies.

The use of the jetty for the movement of personnel and stores to and from Naval vessels moored in the Man O'War anchorage nearby began early last century and the facilities continued to be used by The Royal Australian Navy until work on the present reconstruction commenced.

The Maritime Services Board
Minister for Public Works N.S.W. 20th October 1973.

On 30th January 1983, a bronze plaque was unveiled on the left pillar at the entrance to the ramp and the inscription reads

Man O'War Steps.

This landing area, erected by the Royal Navy was taken over by The Royal Australian Navy in 1913. For 150 years, Man O'War Steps served as a landing and embarkation point for the men of the British and Australian fleets in peace and war.

From these steps 2215 officers and sailors of The Royal Australian Navy left to serve their country in the Great War 1914 – 1918. The second World War 1939 – 1945, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, never to return to enjoy the fruits of their labour in their native land.

Ye who tread their footsteps, remember their glory.

**Erected by Naval association of Australia
30th January 1983.**

I recently visited Man O'War Steps to see how things had changed over the years and was pleased to see a clean bare jetty ringed by Standard Lights about 1 metre tall and with two pontoons moored alongside.

The next time that you are around the Circular Quay area, walk past the Opera House, stand and read the two plaques, have a look at Man O'War Steps and over to Farm Cove and if you were ever lucky enough, remember those days "Swinging Around the Buoy" and "Stepping Ashore" at Man O'War Steps.

By Dave Tibbitts

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In recent months the Western Australian State Branch, has had a similar problem to a number of our Eastern State counterparts, with resignations from the State Executive and not being able to fill those vacancies. Fortunately this situation is being resolved.

The W.A. Branch is maintaining its membership numbers, with 310 members at the end of 2010. Renewals for 2011 are down at this time, a usual trend but these numbers should increase as the year progresses.

On the 12th of February, a function was held at Anzac Cottage, in Mt Hawthorn, to celebrate the 95th anniversary of the building of the Cottage in 1916. Open day's at the Cottage, continue to draw interest and support, from the public. At a recent opening, by appointment, saw a visit by family members, decedents of William Downs, one of the workers, involved in building the Cottage in 1916.

Looking ahead the W.A State Branch, has lodged a submission to the Centenary of Anzac Committee, for funding to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Anzac Cottage, in February 2016, a Memorial to the Gallipoli Landings. At this time it is a matter of wait and see our submission is successful, then the planning and hard work can begin.

You will be aware of the Meentheena Station Veterans Retreat, being developed in the Pilbara Region of W.A. The Retreat is open for use, with limited facilities at this time, it is in a reasonably isolated area, if you consider visiting Meentheena, travel prepared. Who can use the Retreat, Veterans and families, of all conflicts and Peacekeeping operations, including Federal police, State police and Ambo's. Due to its geographical location, in a tropical cyclone area, the best time to visit the retreat, would be from late March , until October/November. Visit the Veterans Retreats W.A. website for more information.

Following the 10th Anniversary, Back to the Bush Reunion in 2010, dates have been announced for the 2011 Reunion, save the dates, 31st of October to the 6th of November. All the usual week's activities are planned again. Plenty of time to plan a trip, if you want to make the trek over from the East, to be part of the Bruce Rock experience in 2011.

For more information, e-mail, bkvets@bigpond.com .
That's it from the West.

Richard Williams.
State President.

GOVERNMENT REVIEWS AND OTHER BUSINESS

Over the last few months we have had some results from different reviews conducted by the government. The particular reviews referred to are:

- a. Military Compensation Review,
- b. Pharmaceutical Review,
- c. Review of DVA funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services,
- d. Fairer indexation of DFRDB/DFRB Superannuation, and
- e. Review into VVCS

Military Compensation Review

This review of Military Compensation was established in response to concerns expressed by the veteran and ex -service community. An examination was also timely as the MRCA 2004 had been in operation for six years. In 2009 a call for submissions to the review resulted in 68 being entered and in June 2009 a steering committee of six members was formed. The results of this review were published early this year and as a result there is a 34 page executive summary together with a 12 page list of recommendations. The full review summary can be found at www.dva.gov.au . The government has asked all ESO to study the report and have any submission required into DVA by the end of June this year.

Pharmaceutical Review

The government announced in the 2011/12 budget that the \$30.1 million Veterans' Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Scheme will assist around 70,000 veterans with out-of-pocket costs for medications, and delivers on an election commitment to introduce a fair solution that provides veterans with war or war-like service relief from pharmaceutical costs.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Warren Snowdon, said many veterans have complex health needs arising from or compounded by their war service and face increasing costs from the medications they need.

"This is a positive outcome for many veterans who have additional costs from the pharmaceutical co-payments not covered under existing entitlements to veterans," he said.

Veterans who have qualifying service and are in receipt of a disability pension (or equivalent under other Department of Veterans' Affairs administered entitlements) will receive this additional support towards their health care needs.

The Scheme will be effective from 1 January 2012, with the first reimbursements to be made in early 2013. For eligible veterans, the reimbursements will cover the gap between the pharmaceutical allowance component of the Pension Supplement and the pharmaceutical safety net.

On examination of the VVAA Policies you will see that this is no- where near our policy which is *'DVA concession card holders to be deemed to have reached the Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net threshold at the commencement of each calendar year Where a RPBS item is priced above the lowest priced brand or product in a therapeutic group of medicines the concession card holder may seek reimbursement from DVA where:*

*(i) the illness or injury is an accepted disability; and
(ii) the treating physician affirms in writing that the higher priced item is the only appropriate item for th treatment"*

The VVAA feels that this action by the government does not meet our requirements and that most veterans will still be out of pocket as the maximum rebate is only \$160. Under this scheme which commences on 1st January 2012, veterans will still pay the same as there is no rebate until 2013 which means that the veterans will only be receiving some of their own money back in the form of the rebate.

Review of DVA funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services

The report on this review has been released and we would advise all Pension and welfare practitioners to study it very closely. Some of the major problems that we can see are the quarantining of funds for Paid Advocates etc. and the cost of consumables. It is felt that by this quarantine it does not allow any flexibility. Although the VVAA does agree that ESO have to be responsible for some of the finances needed to run a successful Pension and Welfare section we do not agree with the recommendation that the ESO have to pay for their paid employees superannuation, sick leave etc. We do not agree with the deletion of utilities and rent from the allowable expenses as it is felt that this will be to the detriment of the smaller centres plus those that maybe stand alone and operating out of shop fronts etc. The VVAA does consider the introduction of a means test but we are still waiting to see how this will be done.

If any Practitioners have any comments what so ever in relation to this report could they please forward them to John P Smith, NVP email yvaanvp2@gmail.com and Ken Foster Nat Sec yvaa.sec@bigpond.com

Fairer indexation of DFRDB/DFRB Superannuation.

There has been a lot of talk but no action on behalf of the government on this matter for some time but finally there may be light at the end of the tunnel. Just recently this matter was tabled in the senate as a private members bill and the result of that was that it went back to yet another senate enquiry with the result that there were two dissenting reports one being from the government not recommending any changes and the other from the opposition recommending the change. This latest result is still to go before the senate.

In the meantime there was a private members bill submitted to the House of Representatives which was approved by the whole house and that is also to go to senate so we can only wait and see. The action required by the members until this is heard again is to lobby your local senators because as you all know it is not over until the fat lady sings. The bill was defeated in the Senate.

Review into VVCS

This was another review asked for by the government but as of yet we have not heard of any results. We were informed at Congress that the report on this review will be out shortly. Latest on this is that it may not be until November.

Media Release 25/4/2011

Australian gunners on final mission in Afghanistan

With only three weeks remaining before the Australian Army concludes its unique attachment of artillerymen to British operations in Helmand Province, the 'gunners' have continued their efforts by providing fire missions in support of coalition and Afghan National Security Forces.

Fifteen gunners from the Brisbane-based unit, the 1st Field Regiment are attached to the British 7th Parachute, Royal Horse Artillery (7 Para RHA) and are currently operating from a new patrol base at Lashkar Gah Durai, in northern Helmand Province.

Commanding Officer of 7 Para RHA, Lieutenant Colonel Gary Wilkinson, said that integration had been seamless and the Australian troops had been remarkably flexible and shown absolute adaptability to any mission.

"Personally, it has been an absolute pleasure to have the Australians here. I have worked with the Australians on a previous HERRICK operation and now for this final deployment. It has been an effective example of multi-national integration on demanding operations," LTCOL Wilkinson said.

The Australian gunners of 105 'Tiger' Troop have lived and worked alongside their gunner colleagues of 7 Para RHA in remote Patrol Bases in Helmand for the past five months.

While the security situation in Helmand Province has become increasingly stable, during an early stage in their deployment, at a Forward Operating Base in Helmand Province, the Australian and British position was attacked by insurgents with rocket propelled grenade launchers and small arms.

The men were forced to defend their position by using the 105 mm light gun in a direct fire role, a rarely used technique for artillery.

The Australian Detachment Commander, Captain Mick Cook, said the deployment had been challenging but the growth of peace and stability had proved the worth of the commitment.

"The warm and friendly reaction of the Afghan civilians to us is a key indicator that our work here is making a difference and worthwhile," Captain Cook said.

The Australian gunners will make their way home to Australia next month after what has been a long but rewarding final mission on Operation HERRICK.

The first Royal Australian Artillery contingent deployed to southern Afghanistan in March 2008, having conducted training in the United Kingdom for six months prior to joining Operation HERRICK.

The first contingent, from the Darwin-based 8/12 Medium Regiment, were the first Artillerymen to deploy in that role since the Vietnam War.

Three Australian Artillery Regiments have each provided two deployments to southern Afghanistan.

The British 105mm L118 light guns provide indirect fire support to troops on the ground many kilometres away.

Troops can call for offensive support to provide additional fire power when in contact with the enemy and often request illumination rounds to be fired to provide vision at night and to deter the enemy.

"The Huey Pilot"

Casually he walks to the slick, a helmet with dark visor in his hand, stepping from the skid into the cockpit, the switches and dials at his command.

He may be tired from many runs, it seems he lives under this plexi dome, but with the stick between his legs and the pedals at his feet, he feels once again at home.

He fires up that turbine as the pre-flight is performed, the Jesus nut begins to turn, that machine begins to rock and now starts that steady "Whop", and air begins to chum.

As those massive blades begin to claw the air he skillfully lifts his baby off the ground, the tail begins to rise and the front seems slow to follow but no better pilot will be found.

I never saw his face,

**Used with Special Permission by the Author
I. S. "Bob" Parrish**

NEW SOUTH WALES.

As we approached the 2011 Federal Budget I held no great optimism that it would hold any great surprises for the veteran community other than perhaps the ex-Prisoners of War and even they will have to wait some time for their payments to eventuate.

In a financial climate post-GFC (global financial crisis) where the Federal government has thrown money away on hare-brained scheme after hare-brained scheme and saddled Australians with the biggest ever national debt, there is no will to provide legislated dignity for veterans and ex-Service people. Super-annuation payments and general rate pensions continue to be indexed by CPI alone, and as a consequence they continue to lag behind the Australian living standard which others enjoy.

It would be easy to become bitter when we realise that this is happening in an environment where politicians of every political complexion continue to bask in the reflected glory of gallant acts and tragic deaths in Afghanistan, making the most of the constant “photo opportunities”.

Some of that glitter rubbed off when Skypegate hit the media. It was one of the ADF’s least glorious moments, but we can only hope that it will be the catalyst for stamp out for all time the inappropriate behaviour which has dogged ADFA and Duntroon for so many years.

In April I received an unsolicited call from an advocate in South Australia who told me that he was dealing with something in the order of 100 individuals who had been bastardised, physically abused, beaten up, assaulted or sexually abused in these institutions. Further revelations broke in the media and a six investigations have been instituted.

Now that some of the details of those reviews have been revealed, my only concern is that those conducting the reviews seem to be those whose business it is to deal with those problems. I would have preferred to see investigations where the investigator goes in with no pre-conceived ideas and will not benefit from the outcome.

Defence Minister Smith is accused of acting inappropriately, but that really hasn’t been something that I’m concerned about. I’m more concerned about creating an environment where abusive behaviour cannot be condoned, where it can no longer be said that those behaviours are part of the culture of the Services. If

Smith can act as a circuit breaker then he can be as inappropriate as he likes as far as I’m concerned.

It’s not only Sub-Branches of the Association that are having trouble filling executive positions. At least one State Branch is facing the same situation. I think it’s a combination of an aging population and a diminution of the sense of urgency which drove the Association in the early days.

There are still battles to be fought however, and we are better equipped than we have ever been to take our issues forward. We are better educated, better presented, more articulate and more informed. Science has proven that many of our concerns are valid and science itself is also moving forward at a faster rate.

I think that means that we need to identify and focus the issues which are most important and those which will provide the greatest return for those the VVAA represents. To do other-wise is to betray their trust. Frankly, I believe we are losing sight of those goals. It’s a reminder for all of us that we are human and fallible, and therefore able to be distracted and diverted.

I hope that in the year ahead we can take stock of where we are now, and where we need to be, think through the steps we need to take to position ourselves where we should be, and get on with the job of getting there.

So, when I start pestering the Sub-Branch Executives and our members to tell me what they want this Branch to do, then I hope you’ll understand and give us the benefit of your experience and your vision.

Clive Mitchell-Taylor OAM
State President

All you ever want to know about Vietnam

This site is very good for research

<http://www-static.cc.gatech.edu/fac/Thomas.Pilsch/Vietnam.html>

Finding assistance:

Phone numbers:

Dept of Veteran Affairs	
Metropolitan area	133 254
Callers from regional Australia	1800 555 254
Veterans & Veterans Families	
Counselling Service	1800 011 046
Lifeline	131 114
Suicide Helpline	1300 651 251
Carers counselling Line	1800 007 332

Web sites

VVCS	www.dva.gov.au/health/vvcs
Beyond Blue	www.beyondblue.org.au

Media Release
Australian Gunners receive Afghanistan medals in Colchester

14 Apr 2011

Australian Gunners who 'fired side by side' with the British Artillery in southern Afghanistan have received their campaign medals during a ceremony at Colchester's Merville Barracks.

A total of 15 Gunners from 105 Battery, 1st Field Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, based in Brisbane, completed a six-month tour in Helmand province alongside Colchester-based 7th Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery (7 Para RHA).



Brigadier James Chiswell, Commander of 16 Air Assault Brigade, speaks with some of the Australian Gunners on parade at Merville Barracks. [Picture: Corporal Ross Fernie RLC, Crown Copyright/ MOD 2011]

7 Para RHA was on parade at Merville Barracks on Tuesday 12 April as the Australians received their medals from Brigadier James Chiswell, Commander of 16 Air Assault Brigade.

Speaking of the contribution made by the Australian Gunners, Brigadier Chiswell said:

"I am immensely grateful for the fantastic support and commitment you have given to the brigade. There is a strong bond between the UK and Australia, which you have shown to be unbreakable during the course of operations in Afghanistan."

Lieutenant Colonel Gary Wilkinson, Commanding Officer of 7 Para RHA, presented each of the Australian Gunners with an engraved shell case as a memento of their time with the unit. He said:

"We have fired side by side, with the only difference between us being the accent and uniform."

"In Afghanistan you were based in many different locations and personnel configurations, but you have always served with great fighting spirit, determination and professionalism."

The Australians arrived in Colchester in February 2010 after completing a six-month training package in Australia.

They went on to complete conversion training to

enable them to use British equipment, including the L118 Light Gun, and then completed the usual six-month British pre-deployment training.

In total they have been away from Australia for 14 months, which contingent commander Captain Mike Cook said had been a 'real challenge':

"We have had to adapt ourselves to a new culture, but the lads have integrated themselves very well and had a very friendly welcome from 7 Para RHA."

"It was a difficult time when Brisbane was flooded in January. I was home on R&R [Rest and Recuperation] and spent most of the time in the car with my emergency kit, wife and cat. It gave me the opportunity to see what was happening and give a genuine insight to the guys when I got back to Afghanistan. Our families were really well looked after through the tour by our welfare teams."

Sergeant Major Paul Chapman, from Australia's Gold Coast, said:

"It's been a great tour for me, as I've finally been able to do my core business of firing guns on an operational deployment after 22 years in the Army."

"There's been a great amount of banter between us and the Brits. One particular incident stands out when we were playing cricket and then called on to fire the guns. The chat stopped and straight away everyone was pulling together to do their job."

"It's a very proud moment to receive this medal, particularly with the Brigadier presenting it and showing his personal appreciation."

Bombardier Christopher Reeves, from Brisbane, said:

"It's been a really challenging and interesting experience to work with the British, who are a great bunch of blokes."

"Our drills are similar but just slightly different and it was great to have six months together to get everything just right before we deployed and everything worked really well in Afghanistan."

"I've been to East Timor on operations twice, but this tour has given me the chance to fire guns in anger, which is what I joined up for."

105 Battery is the sixth and final contingent of Australian Gunners to serve with their British counterparts in Afghanistan. The arrangement started in 2008 with Darwin-based 8th/12th Medium Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, serving alongside 7 Para RHA. It is coming to an end as the Australian Army focuses on re-equipping its artillery with new guns.

VIETNAM VETERANS FRIENDLY RETREATS

Queensland

Standown Park: 91 Radke Road, Kia Ora (halfway between Gympie and Tin Can Bay). Power, water, pets, open fire, showers, toilets, disable facilities, coin laundry, secure off the highway, restful surrounds. No cabins/onsite vans. Discount for veterans.

Contact owners Rod (ex 9RAR) and Pam Elkington (07) 5486 5144 or 0417 718 127

Cockscorb Veterans Camp: Located only 23km from Rockhampton, camp kitchen, showers, toilets, no power, \$ 5 donation.

Contact Allan Evans (07) 4934 4941 for directions

Pandanus Park: Follow the three red stripes from Mareeba, no facilities, take all and remove your rubbish. This is an isolated retreat in Cape York

Sapphire Gemfields: Located behind the post office at the RSL, power, toilets, showers, water, and barbecue. The Club bar is open Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. \$5.00 per night Contact Peter Johnson (ex 6RAR) 0439 797 175

Alaric Homestead Veterans Retreat at Quilpie: The Homestead is fully furnished and managed by a Veteran Duty Officer. Very low nominal fee charged per day. Caravans and camper trailers can be parked at a low daily fee. Booking essential for the Homestead (not necessary for caravans/campers) Contact the Duty Officer (07) 4656 4740. Email: alaricretreat@activ8.net.au C/O PO Quilpie Qld 4480

Rocky Creek War Memorial Park: This camp spot is located at Tolga. The Atherton Shire Council maintains it. There is a 72-hour limit and a gold coin donation. There are toilets, barbecue, and non-potable water. It is a memorial site to all soldiers, who trained on the tablelands before being sent overseas. There is a caretaker on site.

Zac's Place: Located on 715 Ross River Road, Kirwan, Townsville, run by VVAA Qld Branch. There is accommodation for up to 11 people with all facilities. Tariff is \$25.00 Accommodation, Breakfast and Light Lunch. Contact manager Mrs Margaret Standfast Ph. (07) 4773 6980 or A/H (07) 4723 7022

Homestead Caravan Park: , located along the Landsborough Highway at Barcaldine Queensland Every day in the late afternoon during winter your hosts Ben and Th h prepare the campfire with damper and billy tea proved e-pared the old bush way. Entertainment nightly. They always have something special on for Vietnam Veterans Day 18th August. Cabins available.

For Reservations ph. Ben or Thanh on (07) 4651 1308

South Australia

Bublacowie Military Museum:

Located between Stansbury and Giles Point Yorktown. Three Veteran Museums - \$5.00 admission, \$2.00 children accommodation enquiries: Contact owner Chris Soar (ex vet of Malaya) (08) 8853 4379 or 0419 853 294

Camp Andrew Russell: in South Australia is located 35km Sth East of Loxton along the Murray Bridge Road, turn left (or right if coming from Adelaide) onto the m-eroo Road, taking the right fork along the road. The e e is marked with a cream tractor tyre, just past a road sign. You will need a key for access and thus need to contact [John Hough](mailto:John.Hough@vvaanvp2@gmail.com) mobile 0409 098 093

New South Wales

Ramon Deed Veterans Retreat: This retreat was named after Ramon John Deed, of 1Fld Sqn, Vietnam. The retreat is located at Dareton, 17Km from Mildura & 16Km from Wentworth and is open to all Veterans, serving & ex-service personnel & their families. There is power & water. Un-powered (\$10.00 per night) powered (\$20 per night) Phone: Barry & Di Langan (03) 5027 4447

Email rdveteransretreat@bigpond.com

Murraguldrrie Veterans Retreat: It is situated on the edge of the Murraguldrrie State Forest about forty minute drive from Wagga Wagga, and approximately seven kilometres from the Hume Highway turn off point to Tumbarumba on the Tumbarumba Road. To arrange to meet Jimbob Peat at the gate call (02) 6931 6261 or 0429 414 909 or phone Les White 0428 226 097 or Gordon Irvine 0428 381 292 Email murraguldrrie@gmail.com

Tasmania

Tasmania Veterans Retreat: Offers House accommodation in the remote Central Highlands area, 20 minutes from Bothwell. \$30.00 per double + \$5.00 per extra person. Bookings made through the State RSLA Headquarters, Hobart.(03) 6224 0881. Open to all APPVA members.

Western Australia

Camp Hart: Camp Hart is a combination of private and crown land vested with the Shire of Kulin. It is situated 3.5 hours south east of Perth, 14kms east of Kulin, Camp Hart is a memorial park located next to Lake Jilakin and in the shadow of Jilakin Rock. It offers shade, ablution block, sheltered barbecue and bush kitchen. Donations are welcome. Open to all ADF Veterans. All inquiries are to be made to Roger Lingard (08) 9527 8000 or 0419 944 627.

Bruce Rock: situated 254 Km from Perth in the wheat belt. Vets always welcome but each year in November they conduct a Vietnam Veterans activity. Most stay at the Bruce Rock Caravan Park Ph. (08) 9061 1070

Northern Territory

Roper Retreat: Same as for Pandanus Park, take only Photos. Leave no footprints, Located 31 Klm along the Northern Territory Highway turn north at Eley Station sign. 3 Klm along you pass the Manager's House and just 5km you reach the Roper. PH Tony 0401 100 514 or Jimbob 0419 414 209

Coral House: Located 107 Bagot Rd, Ludmilla run by VVAA NT, shared kitchen facilities, laundry and bathroom, linen, TV in common room three shared bedrooms providing seven beds. Contact manager Jack Hamilton on Ph. 8948 0050.

For any further information on any of these retreats please visit our website www.vvaa.org.au

If any of you Grey nomads know or hear of any other veteran friendly retreats please let us know by notifying John P Smith, Email vvaanvp2@gmail.com or Warwick Luttrell

Email: vvaataspres@aussiebroadband.com.au together with details

NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Northern Territory State Branch Executive team remains unchanged this year with the re-election of Danny Meredith as President with Darryel Binns the Vice Presidents and of course, Peter Mansell and Sue McCallum remain as Secretary and Treasurer.

Last year our association achieved many goals. One of which was our membership reached the magic 90. This year we are back up to 76 and hope to increase that to outdo last year's total. Three of our members reached 10 year continuous membership this year and nine members reached 5 year continuous membership.

The NT State Branch Executive continues to raise matters to Federal and Territory Politicians that affect members such as Military Superannuation, disparity in funeral expenses and the payment for flu vaccinations.

The bulk of Pension and Welfare Officers work in the NT still remains with Vietnam Veterans but we are seeing an increase in the areas of serving and ex-service men and women who are veterans from other conflicts and non-veterans like defence members who are on operations to prevent illegal immigrants from reaching our shores.

It is pleasing to note that the VVAANT still remains determined to carry out our core business of helping our members and other veterans.

This year's ANZAC Day in the Top End was as good, if not better than last year. There was approximately 80 Vietnam Veterans who attended the Dawn Services and marches across the Territory. The number of young veterans and their families attending the Dawn Service in Darwin is very much on the increase. It is important to note that there are many people who attend the Dawn Service at numerous remote venues across the Northern Territory.



It is with much sadness that I mention the sudden and untimely death of a Vietnam Veteran here in Darwin on ANZAC Day. To Peter Ryan on behalf of all members of the VVAANT I offer our sincere condolences to you and your family for the loss of your brother.

The monthly meetings at Reg Hillier House are still being enjoyed by our members and the volunteers are doing a great job in keeping the grounds looking good. The facelift to the building is now completed, with the entire hall re-tiled, the kitchen replaced with stainless steel benches, new pantry shelving and the kitchen repainted. We are waiting on an application for Community Benefit Fund \$5000 to replace the old stove and fridges. The building of the Veterans Memorial Wall is also completed and has been blessed by Chaplin John Marshall, RAN.

The Rural Associations Saturday Afternoon get-togethers at Reg Hillier House were a success last year and will resume on June 11. Our first event will be a Bali afternoon. So to all Vietnam Veterans or other Veterans who have become Grey Nomads and are travelling in the Top End feel free to give us a call and join us for a good afternoon.

The Rural Association has been actively involved in fund raising activities from running weekly meat tray raffles to cooking the BBQ at the Noonamah Rodeos. It is also planned to continue handing out information on the association and about Welfare, Health and the Well Being of Veterans in conjunction with VVCS at many events held in Darwin during the Dry Season. This year we plan to participate in all the events we did last year and many more so that we can let the people of the NT know that the Vietnam Veterans are still here not only to help each other but to help all Veterans from all conflicts. Although the State President and the Rural Sub Branch President will not be entering the veterans cook off this year as they have chosen to retire as undefeated champions.

Coral House is running along fine under guidance of the State Branch executive committee and continuing to supply good quality accommodation to Vets and others in need, last year a total of 65 clients used the facility. SAAP funding is still being used to improve the living conditions of the residents. The Operating Procedures Manual has been completed and we have also been given a \$10,000 grant for staff to attend Domestic/Sexual Violence Training – to be acquitted by June 2012

NT's application for 2011/2012 BEST funding has been lodged and acknowledged.

We continue to expend our Emergency Relief Program monies for assistance to veterans and others in the Community. A Grant of \$11,122.65 over 2 years to be expended 31 December 2011.

Clients are recommended to us through our Welfare Officers, Coral House, VVCS and other charity organisations assistance is given in the form of food vouchers, bill payments, assistance with transport etc.

During the past year two of our members have passed away, Chung Dang and Duc Truong. Duc was a long-time member of the Association – 18 years - and served in the SVN Navy for 14 years. Duc died early this year after a long illness, aged 69.

Chung was an early member of our Association and had lately re-joined to ensure the Vietnam Veterans and Vietnamese Society kept in contact. He was killed in a tragic farming accident 3 days before his 66th birthday.

D.T.MEREDITH

President

VVAA (NT)

Help wanted

I am currently writing a thesis exploring the future Commemorations of Peace Operations.

My thesis aims to examine, through the analysis of a survey, the attitudes of current and retired Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel toward the Commemoration of Peace operations; if and how they currently commemorate and if and how they would like to commemorate peace operations.

The survey audience comprises serving and former serving ADF members who have in the past, or are currently serving in peace operations. I aim to examine and contextualise the issues surrounding how this cohort currently or may in the future, commemorate the service of Peace Keepers/Makers/Monitors through analysis of responses to the general questions contained in the survey.

Each survey response is treated as in-confidence and is anonymous.

As a result of the information received, I hope that my findings and Subsequent thesis is placed within a situational context; that is from the points of view of current and retired ADF members. Further, the project aims to provide a fundamental and original basis for ongoing discussions of the more diverse operational roles of the ADF, and commemoration of such activities by veterans and the broader community.

The thesis will append the questionnaire, the confidential responses, and survey statistics.

The survey is two pages and should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

I am hoping to access as broad a group possible and a good tri-service cohort, is especially important..

Regards

Estelle Muspratt

PO Box 113

Campbell ACT 2612

Those Were The Days

(For the NCO Corp who despite the odds, trained us to be fair dinkum soldiers)

I remember those soldiering days from not so long ago
Where maniacs wore stripes and bellowed to and fro
Their first words on seeing each generation of recruits
"God help Australia if we have to rely on you coots"
"Concentrate. This is you left foot, that is your right"
"Horrible, pathetic, extra training for you tonight"

As the weeks went by, it was do or die
Tough and miserable enough to make young recruits cry
Bashing dixies, latrine duty, stand by your beds for inspection
Reading routine orders signed by God to ensure the right direction
Too often the cry "weekend leave's cancelled, you're not good enough
We're gunna do it all over again and by God, it will be rough"

Finally we qualified and sent to units where it started again
It didn't matter if 100 in the shade or thunder, lightning and rain
The sergeants ranted and raved and were clearly quite mad
But compared to the sarmajor they weren't so bad
In time we banded close together to avoid detection of our sins
Not without loss as the RSM yelled "march the guilty bastards in"

They were the days in preparing for a war soon to come
By now we knew the importance of working as one
When the colours went past we stood fast with pride
To the beat of drums with heads held high marched side by side
At other times we forced marched throughout the night
Dug in and though desperate for sleep, attacked at first light

Still familiar are those phrases once heard with dread
"I need two volunteers, you and you" the sergeant said
"Hurry up and wait" and "Tonight, this swamp is your bed"
"Resupply's cancelled so tighten belts cos you're not being fed"
"Stop feeling sorry for yerself, now get off your arse"
"You idle bastard, I'm canceling your leave pass"

As time goes on, the ranks grow thinner
My bones do ache and the eyes are dimmer
But nothing will erase what are now fond memories for me
I still hear the familiar chorus wherever I may be
All of us singing "we're a pack of bastards-- bastards are we"
How fortunate that soldiering phase of life was for me

George Mansford © January 2011

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The past three months have been relatively busy, especially with welfare enquiries relating to Bastardisation – Barry Heffernan our Welfare Co-coordinator has received approx. 100 enquiries. These will be investigated and passed on to Senator Nick Xenophon for possible further action.

Anzac Day went well, weather was perfect, but it must have been cold for some, as they would not take their hands out of their pockets to donate any money for our collection tins,

There was a lot of complaints regarding the Walkerville RSL being closed for Anzac Day. However it was a one off situation due to the extra long weekend and things will return to normal next year and thereafter.

The Alliance of Defence Force Organization are still pushing for a fairer indexation for DFRB and Comm. Super.

Speaking of action - I have been getting a lot of enquiries regarding my letter "A Fair Go" which related to the "Alone" criteria of the Veterans Entitlement Act 1986 and the General Rate which does not compensate for economic loss – the main complaint is that the gap between the "Have" and the "Have Not" in the Veteran Community is widening. What Veterans want to know is why National has not seen to be doing anything about this problem, as the issue has now been on their book for 5 years?

This issue was raised at the National Congress, held in the Hunter Valley NSW from the 18th – 29th May 2011. The result was a full endorsement of the proposal to be slightly rewritten and forwarded to the National Secretary Ken Foster for distribution and inclusion, in the Defence Advocacy and Ex Service Organised Consultancy Issue Paper.

Merchandise is selling well with new items coming on line from time to time. For purchase enquiries contact Graham Dunstan on 0418 819 530.

The issue of Membership (especially about the inclusion of non Vietnam Vets) was raised and debated. It was agreed that no change would be made to the Name of the Association or the Constitution. However, it was agreed that each State and Sub Branch could use their own initiative and take in Membership of ex-service men/women and their families as they seem fit. These new members could take up any position with the exception of President/Vice President.

The response to our letter relating to the Vet Post being put on line as a PDF File, we have had over 200

members who still wish to receive a hard copy posted to them. These members will continue to get the hard copy but the rest of the membership can now download a copy from our Web Site.

DVA are currently undertaking a Health Related Communication Research. This is being conducted by ORIMA Research of behalf of DVA. The research will address Mental & Physical Health and Wellbeing and may involve small group discussion with members of the Veteran Community and Individual interviews.

This research had been approved by DVA's Human Research Ethics Committee and will take place from May to September 2011.

Participation will be entirely voluntary and confidential.

For more information or if you would like information about participating please contact Liz Duniec, Director Orina Research, Melbourne on (03) 9526 9000 or Kym Connolly at DVA on (02) 6289 6222.

Michael Benyk JP
State President

ARMY APPRENTICES SCHOOL

I am an ex Army Apprentice (Balcombe - 28th Intake, 1973) Many of our instructors were one and two tour Vietnam Vets. Those men shaped our lives, were only 15 - 16 year old boys.

The instructors were mainly Infantry, some Sigs, Armoured, Artillery, RAEME, RAE, Ordinance, SAS and even a PIR Captain BQ.

These men would now be in their 70s and 80s and 90s. After talking to other apprentices, it would be a delight to make contact with these men and/or their immediate families. I am looking for staff who were posted to Balcombe Army Apprentices School, especially in the early to mid 70s? I would now amend this to all Vietnam Veterans posted to Army Apprentices School, Balcombe, Victoria and Bandiana as Staff/Instructors.

We are holding another reunion in Canberra this year for ex Army Apprentices and their partners, 27th - 31st October, 2011.

If any Vietnam Veterans, ALL corps, and Vietnam Veteran ex - Apprentices who served as Staff/Instructors at the Army Apprentices School, Balcombe or Bandiana, or their immediate next of kin, would like to contact me with their details and posting period at either of these places.

This is with a view to making a database and possibly having a reunion, some time in the future

Kevin Forster
28th Intake 1973

PO Box 804
Tennant Creek
NT 0861
Mob: 0409 639 005
Ph: 08 8962 3081

BULLETIN BOARD

4th x 10th INTAKE REUNION 5 SEPTEMBER-11 SEPTEMBER 2011

It's on again ... Same, same but different. That's right folks, the dates are a week earlier than previous reunions but the place is still at Sawtell Beach Caravan Park. The standard procedure of people handling their own bookings remains, using the group booking No: #70549: Toll Free No. 1800 729 835 with a deposit required and a discount will apply.

The program of daily Happy hours at the camp kitchen, a Memorial service, a Dance at the Park Hall, a complimentary breakfast provided by the Van Park, Raffles, a "State of Origin" sports day, and a Saturday Luncheon is once again planned. The WHITE BOARD situated in the Camp kitchen will record all the necessary information on a daily basis. There is also a possibility of a return performance by "The Sawtell Follies", a secret women's business meeting and a trivia quiz.

At this early stage, anything and everything is possible!!! If you have any suggestions or really, really want to organise something, please do so. The idea is to show up, provide support to each other, catch up on the news and have a wonderful, wonderful time. Contact Carol Dahler (07)5494 5136 dahler@bigpond.com or Sandie Snape (07)4981 0127 bill.snape@hotmail.com

104 SIGNAL SQUADRON NATIONAL REUNION 4th to 6th November 2011 At Twin Towns Services Club (Coolangatta/Tweed Heads)

The 104 Reunion is being hosted by Twin Towns Services Club and Resort on the Gold Coast, celebrating 40 years since the unit returned from war service in Vietnam. This reunion is 104 Signal Squadron *past* and *present* members, their families plus Veterans who supported the Squadron, drank with a Squadron member or would have liked to have been a Squadron member. It would be great to have the guys who worked with us and supported us in Vietnam attend, especially from 110 Signal Squadron, 547 Signal Troop and other Vietnam Signals including the 103 Signal Squadron guys that dug our original Nui Dat holes. Also the *new* 104 and ICSR Veterans that have and are still serving our country.

Cost is \$125 per person for the three functions which includes administration costs.

Reunion Shirts available via registration form only.
Other merchandise at Reunion by SVVA (Qld).

See Reunion Web Site at <http://2011.au104.org>
Email: reunion2011@au104.org
Peter Thorne 0409 833 353

All Correspondence:
104 Sig Sqn Reunion
PO Box 115
Glass House Mountains Q 4518

ALL RANKS NAVAL STORES REUNION GOLD COAST Nov 11th-13th

Contact Dave Cassidy 0414 511 115
Email d.cassidy@southportworkers.com.au

Bookings close 30th Sep

Vietnam Veterans Jervis Bay
Charity Fundraising Golf Day
Sunday, August 21, 2011

St Georges Basin Country Club Golf Course

The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Jervis Bay sub-Branch is holding its **Annual Charity Fundraising Golf Day** at the St Georges Basin Country Club, 11 Paradise Beach Rd, Sanctuary Point, on Sunday 21 August, 2011.

The game is a two person ambrose and the entry fee is still \$20, with that you will receive two sausage or steak sandwiches plus 2 drinks.

92.7FM radio will be on hand to play some great music and as usual there will be a monster raffle with loads of great prizes. This has become one of the most popular events on the golfing calendar.

Of the monies raised 20% will be donated to the Havenlee Special School and 20% to the Noahs Ark Centre. Additionally four disabled children will be sponsored to attend the Wollongong Special Childrens Christmas Party.

Player booking may be made closer to the day at the pro-shop or telephone 02-4443 0836.

This event is sponsored by local businesses.



The next Hobart Reunion will be held in Canberra from the 10th to 16th November 2011.

*For details check the HMAS Hobart website
<http://www.hmashobartassn.com/reunion.html>
or call Gareth Watts 0429965658.*

Reunion

B Coy 2 RAR/NZ ANZAC Battalion
South Vietnam 1967-1968. Reunion 2012.

23rd—26th April 2012

Nanango Qld

Contact:

Peter Gurney

0419 649 774

Email siren33@bigpond.com

A 2010 study found that the average Australian walks about 900 miles a year.

Another study found that the average Australian drinks 22 gallons of beer a year.

That means the average Australian gets almost 41 miles per gallon.

Bloody good value that!

6 RAR Honoured with Unit Citation for Gallantry

The forty fifth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan will be commemorated in Brisbane at Enoggera Barracks on the 18th August 2011. The parade will commence at approximately 0930 hrs and finish no later than 1200 hrs. All former members of 6 RAR are invited to attend.

The commemoration will take place with a Vice Regal Presence as a Trooping of the Colours with surviving members of D Coy 18th August 1966 being invited to march through the ranks of the Battalion behind the escort company, D Coy 2011.

On 31st March 2010 it was gazetted that D Coy 1966 be honoured with the Australian unit award, the Unit Citation for Gallantry (UCG). That award will be officially presented at this parade.

As a unit citation, the UCG (without the Federation Star) will in future be worn by all members of D Coy whilst they serve in D Coy. The UCG will be worn by those surviving members of D Coy 1966, 18th August '66, or their next of kin.

Long Tan 45th anniversary commemorations will also include a Regimental Dinner to which the Battalion Officers and Senior NCO's, entitled UCG recipients and the NOK (or representative) will be invited.

(Note: Entitled recipients are those survivors of Long Tan currently entitled to wear the U.S. Presidential Unit Citation.) This event will be held on 16th August at the Gallipoli Barracks Combined Mess.

The Long Tan Veterans Association are also organizing a Reunion Dinner for all D Coy 1966-67 members and representation from members of A, and B Coy 6 RAR, plus other arms (Artillery, Cavalry, RAAF, that

participated in support of D Coy at Long Tan. For further details of this latter event, please contact John Heslewood at (07) 3410 7734 or retiredonbribie@gmail.com.

6 RAR are also in the process of arranging a Battalion Ball and Cocktail Party which will be held in the evening of the 18th August at the Brisbane Convention Centre. At time of writing, further details are not known however it is understood that present and past members are eligible while limited tickets are available. Please check our website at www.6rarassociation.com/noticeboard.htm closer to the event.

This article courtesy of 6 RAR website.

PROGRESS ON AUSTRALIAN MEMORIAL IN NEW ZEALAND

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Warren Snowdon, welcomed the New Zealand Government's commitment to establish an Australian Memorial in Wellington, announced today by New Zealand Prime Minister John Key.

Mr Snowdon said the memorial will be part of the New Zealand Memorial Park in Wellington and it will recognise the significant relationship between the two countries.

"Australians and New Zealanders have served alongside each other from South Africa more than a century ago, through Gallipoli, France and Belgium in the First World War, Second World War, Korea, and Vietnam to Afghanistan today.

"The bonds of mateship established in war and on operations in support of the United Nations are today a pillar of one of Australia's strongest relationships. However the relationship is not just a military one: the ties of history, people, culture, trade and sport are also deep and lasting.

"This project reciprocates the New Zealand Memorial on Anzac Parade, in Canberra, that was a gift from the Government and people of New Zealand for the Centenary of Federation in 2001," Mr Snowdon said.

Mr Snowdon said the Australian Government previously provided \$5 million for the construction of the memorial, with design work to begin shortly.

"The memorial will provide a significant focus for commemorations marking the centenary of the First World War in 2015.

"As we approach the centenary of the landings at Gallipoli, the Australian Government will continue to work in partnership with the New Zealand Government to coordinate the delivery of Anzac Day commemorations."

In Australia, a new Anzac Centenary Advisory Board is also being established to progress the work initiated by the National Commission on the Commemoration of the Anzac Centenary.

20/6/2011

A042

Apply for lost medals
Click on the website below and apply for any medals which you may be entitled to and have not yet received.
<http://www.lostmedalsaustralia.com/>

Do Canberra Suits Think It's All A Game?

I heard the news that the Senate had given old soldiers the flick
 Clearly, those past promises were a cruel trick
 It seemed there has been betrayal from the Greens who vowed trust
 And Senator Lundy who not so long ago preached that the cause was just
 The war drums are beating and there's anger in the air
 All the military wanted was a fair go and this result is far from fair
 The ire is growing and I doubt if it will subside
 The warrior fraternity has been taken for a ride
 They're not asking for riches, perks, or what they haven't earned
 Nor like others, seeking new bridges to replace those they've burnt
 Don't Canberra Suits really understand that it's about "a fair go"
 Diggers young and old are fair dinkum; this ain't a one week show
 Let me relate some truths from days gone by
 Youngsters volunteered to wear the sacred cloth and eager to try
 They believed in each other and their leaders never lied
 As soldiers they were ready to fight and knew some would die
 With no union rules they followed orders and no questions asked
 Even though there were sometimes doubts about the Canberra Brass
 Soldiers were told things that were not very nice
 "The fresh rations aren't coming so eat what's left of the rice"
 "Sorry fellas, saddle up, there's no time to rest"
 "We're outnumbered and the enemy to our front is their best"
 "No matter what happens, stand fast, cos we're here to the very last"
 "Leave's been cancelled" or "your bed for the night is this Marsh"
 Diggers have been used to tough times and even worse
 They have always obeyed and got on the task, albeit with a curse
 Not enough family giddays and far too many sad hoorays
 Over the years, a nomadic life and let's face it, poor conditions and pay
 All of this was accepted and there was never hesitation to serve
 Now the bloody Senate turns it back on what is their just deserve
 The irony of all of this is very clear and far from sweet
 Instead of soldiering and compulsory retirement payments to meet

They could have surfed every day and doled for many a year
 Then, like the Canberra suits and others, received a better indexation
 Is it any wonder that among the warriors there is growing vexation?
 By the way, as well as super, the military too pays personal taxation
 So as old soldiers prepare for the final phase of life
 Many hope that the first to go will be the beloved wife
 Cos the reduced pension which a widow officially deserves
 Is pathetic recognition of women who kept home fires burning and quietly served
 Given Canberra's double standards of them and us; is there no shame?
 Or do the Canberra Suits think it's all part of some bullshit game?
 Speaking of which; let me close with the words a recent Prime Minister said
 "We must always honour those who wore the proud national thread"

George Mansford June 2011

PS. Diggers embraces Matelots, Blue Orchards, Shielas and Blokes and I reckon they'll be still bloody angry long after they're dead.

3rd BATTALION
 ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT
 2nd Tour Vietnam 1971

40th Anniversary National Reunion
 14th 15th & 16th October 2011

The reunion to mark the 40th Anniversary of the 3rd Battalion RAR return from Vietnam in 1971 will be celebrated in Canberra, ACT.

An open invitation is extended to all former members and their families, friends and Allied personnel who had an association with the Battalion in 1971, to attend.

Individual companies will plan their reunion activities. The formal Battalion gathering will occur at the Vietnam Veterans National Memorial on Sunday 16th October 2011 at 10 AM.

For the latest reunion information and updates please visit: <http://www.3rar.com/> and proceed to the Reunion Page by using the index.

Registration forms shall be located on the Reunion Page on the website.

Further information:
 M 0412 377 884
 E webmaster@3rar.com
 W <http://www.3rar.com/>



2011 Program Guide

See the website for updated group news

www.dva.gov.au/health_and_wellbeing/health_programs/vvcs

HOBART - New Programs

Partners Self- Care Wed 27th July – 28th September – 10 weeks, 10:30am -12:30pm

Building Better Relationships Thursday 23rd June – 11th August - 8 weeks 12:30 – 3:00pm

Sons & Daughters One evening a month

Communication and Conflict Resolution September - Tuesday Evening Program 6 weeks 6:00 – 8:30p

Stepping Out : A 2 day program for assisting members in making the transition from the ADF to civilian life. 29 & 30th September

Veteran Stress Management Fortnightly 10:00am - 11:30am

Yoga for Stress Management Monday Weekly 8:30 (beginners) 11:00 (advanced)

Woodwork Daily workshop, open Mon to Fri 8:00am - 12:00noon

Operation Life ASIST: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training
8th & 9th August 2 - day skills program

RESIDENTIAL LIFESTYLE PROGRAM – 5-Day Residential Program
Monday 10 – 15th October 2011

North

Partners Self- Care: Monday 27th June – 29th August 10 weeks, 10- 12:00pm

Beating the Blues Friday 22nd July – 23rd September 10 weeks 10:30 – 12:30

North West Coast -Devonport

PTSD Post Treatment Program Fortnightly on Thursdays, 11:30am - 1:00pm

Contact VVCS on 1800 011 046 for more details about programs



Vietnam Veterans' South West NSW and Wagga Inc



Murraguldrrie Veterans Retreat

<http://www.southwestnsw.tripod.com>

Contacts Les White - Retreat Manager
02 69 226097 or 0428226097
Gordon Irvin - Visitor Coordinator
0269712488 or 0428381292
Jimbo Peat - Webmaster
0269316261 or 0429414909

The retreat is located in the Murraguldrrie State Forest area. The entry is sign posted and is 7 km east of the Hume Highway on the Wagga – Tumbarumba Road and is only 100meters off the main road.

There is a tree grove adjacent to the shelter shed which provides shade for campers as well as groups of scattered pine where caravans can park around. We have also just cleared and levelled a large area that would suite the larger rigs.

The shelter shed contains a kitchen area with tables, chairs and a bench and sink area.

The shelter shed and the toilet block both have lights; but to operates these you will need to plug a generator into the power socket which is located on the west side of the storage container (1KVA generator for lights). The toilets and showers have a hot water 'Donkey' system operating on twigs and small pieces of wood which is readily available on site as it only takes about 15 minutes with a small fire to heat it up enough for showers.

Our water supply is from rain water tank so please use it sparingly.

We have provided Fire rings for cooking and a wood heater in the shelter shed for the cooler months; some wood is available again please consider the vets that have to cut and transport the wood.

The retreat is available to veterans and their families and offers good bush camping with basic facilities for both caravans and tents. You can get TV reception and mobile service in most of the area.

We operate on "bring it in – take it out" policy so please clean up the kitchen area and take any rubbish with you as we do not have any garbage facilities. We also ask for a donation; all of which goes to help to run this retreat; there is a donation box and envelopes on site for you convenience.

Please enjoy the peace and tranquillity offered by our retreat and only leave you foot prints behind.

Letter to the editor.

Feel Like Getting Away?

Recently my wife Nancy, I and the dog (Cain) spent some time in our caravan at the MurraguldrrieVeterans Retreat. The retreat is situated in the Murraguldrrie State Forrest half way between Wagga Wagga and Tumbarumba, 7 klms off the Hume Highway.

What a fantastic retreat; but only if you like peace and tranquility, an abundance of wildlife, beautiful surrounds, plenty of walking tracks on 30 acres of State Forrest, security, (the area is fenced with a combination lock on the entrance gate) and magnificent facilities.

The bush kitchen is brilliant, a wood combustion stove, sink, large table and seating, and a 4 burner bar-b-q with hood. The amenities are first class; showers, (at the time w yed there was only cold water showers, however, hot water showers will be available in the not too distant future), sinks and mirrors and flush toilets.

There is an abundance of wood for the combustion stove and fire rings for the cooler months.

Work is currently underway to improve the facilities and to provide more caravan sites.

All the work to improve the retreat is done by local Vets, the only thing they ask is that you leave the Amenities clean, be aware of the amount of tank water you use, take your rubbish away with you and leave a donation to assist them in maintaining and improving the retreat.

If you are travelling in the area we fully recommend a stay at the retreat, **well done** South West and Wagga Wagga Viet Nam Vets, you are doing a marvelous job in providing a great retreat for all Vets and their guests.

Bob Ison
Lake Macquarie, NSW

Prayer.

one less terrorist this world does keep...
with all my heart I give my thanks...
to those in uniforms regardless of ranks...
you serve your country and serve it well...
with humble hearts your stories tell...
so as I rest my weary eyes...
while freedom rings our flag still flies...
you give your all, do what you must...
with Servicemen we live and Servicemen we trust...

Debrief articles.

Any articles, poems, stories, correspondence etc re Debrief to:

Debrief Sec. Warwick Luttrell.

Email: vvaataspres@aussiebroadband.com.au

Or Editor Kath Coxon:

Email: rkcoxon@netspace.net.au

If you are receiving more than one copy of Debrief per household but only require one, please notify Debrief Sec

TASMANIA

Tasmania is renowned for its temperate climate which is often the basis for the exchange of some interesting banter between various States. This year however has seen Tasmania through what can only be called an extended and very wet autumn. At the same time in past years when I would have been out tearing up the asphalt on my bike, this year it has hardly left the confines of the garage. Setting aside my personal gripes at the lack of a summer down here, our thoughts must and have gone out to the rest of the country which have endured the calamities of torrential rain, floods and fires. I have seen very little through our association networks of how the veteran community fared in general. One can only hope that the lack of information is a positive sign and reflects a minimal effect.

The health and well being of our aging veteran population continues to be of paramount importance to the Tasmania Branch, and more so for the future following the recent BEST funding guidelines review. Implementation and interpretation of the new guidelines is seriously flawed and will have disastrous implications for not only Tasmania but nationally as well. They do not reflect any understanding of the consultative needs that exist between client and representative. Tasmania has enjoyed a unique position through its joint venture applications in previous years however the current round almost certainly spells the end of this innovation and will see the closure of several veterans' centres throughout the State in the coming year or so. The State Government through its 'shop front' inappropriately referred to as the Tasmanian Veterans Advisory Council, has no substantial concerns towards addressing the actual needs of veterans. Representations made by the Tasmania Branch over the past three years foreshadowing the impending situation have fallen repeatedly on deaf ears in that direction. It will not only be a tragedy to see these centres compelled to close but a backward step in the general advancement of veteran welfare, health and well being.

Throughout Australia, many Vietnam Veterans opted for a career in a police force at the completion of their military enlistment. The reasons for this step obviously varied from individual to individual but could generally be put down to an unconscious need for the camaraderie felt in the services supported by a range of idealistic aspirations. I know this for personal experience. In March 2011 the AAT handed down a landmark decision in Hobart when it ruled that a Vietnam Veteran had aggravated an existing war caused disorder (PTSD) through his service with the Australian Federal Police that had eventually led to his incapacity to work. Although a compensation figure has yet to be determined the Commonwealth has been ordered to cover the plaintiff's legal costs. The case which lasted for 17 years will now serve as a precedent for others

who are in the same position and have long known and suppressed a belated awareness that the unique nature of their police duties combined with an existing PTSD condition led to their eventual incapacity to continue working.

Organisation of the RAN reunion and Vietnam Veterans Day in Hobart this year is well underway, and it would be remiss of me not to thank Mike Perrott (RANHFV) for his invaluable assistance and support over the past months. Numbers wishing to attend took a hit following the floods and fires but nevertheless are still shaping up well as we fast approach August. From a personal level I think one of the happiest moments was when my telephone rang one morning recently and a booming voice said to me,

"Young Luttrell, do you remember me?"

No name was given but after 42 years the unique resonance of that voice was unmistakable and recognisable. Although I hadn't seen Chief since I was a young 17 year old OD on the PERTH, impressionable and with all my illusions intact, I replied "Yes Chief – not so young anymore but I remember you well."

The voice boomed back, "Important question – How do you remember me?"

"With great affection Chief." "Right answer son now I want to register for your do in Hobart." I suspect that long gone are the days when a crusty old CPO imprinted himself indelibly into your mind and even after 40 odd years remains a revered, respected and unforgettable character.

I have no doubt that all those attending will to some extent share similar experiences and memories.

I would like to add also that while the reunion is essentially RAN, this in no way precludes Vietnam Veterans from the Army and RAAF attending. All three arms worked closely in conjunction with each other as many will know, so even though you may only have a loose association with Jack Tar, a cordial welcome is extended to all.

At a recent meeting of the VVCS Regional Consultative Forum one of the issues discussed was how to more effectively promote the Group Programs run by VVCS annually. I suspect this may not just be peculiar to Tasmania and would encourage the other States to consider a similar solution as I've recommended.

DEBRIEF is the one sure way of reaching our entire membership and picks up those who have fallen through the cracks by being unable to attend Sub-Branch meetings.

The Tasmanian Office of VVCS will produce its 2012 calendar of Group Programs prior to the release of our summer edition of DEBRIEF. These will be inserted into those magazines on the Tasmanian mailing list with the VVCS Regional Office meeting additional handling costs involved inserting the flyers. This may well be an option for individual states to consider and I would urge consultation with your respective VVCS

Regional Offices. It is important to effectively get message out and to the widest possible target audience.

A few years ago a good mate and I were wandering around Launceston together when we both decided to visit the local Harley Davidson dealership. After carefully looking at some of the offerings we both came to the conclusion that our bike riding days were behind us. I resolved in my own mind as part of my plan for life after the VVAA that my next major purchase would be a yacht so that I could cruise where ever and whenever I wished.

But my plans and dreams of going back to the sea in the immediate future were relegated to the backburner when 'Cyril' casually informed me that he was going to buy another bike. Just one small problem - would I ride it the 200 k's home for him. I did and of course the seed was sown. I had my own machine again within two weeks of that ride.

In 2009 I returned to Vietnam and rode from Saigon to Hanoi then back to Saigon. It was something I had decided to do while I was there in the previous year. That ride would soon tell me if my impulse decision had been the right one. Challenging, but in the end, immensely satisfying and a feat that I will repeat in 2013 at a more leisurely pace. That aside one of the most meaningful moments in recent years has been my acceptance into the Tasmanian Chapter of the VVMC.

Among these guys I have seen, felt and experienced first hand that special bond of genuine mateship born from a common interest and purpose. A dedicated core of crusty old Vietnam Veterans buoyed by a strong number of equally committed Associate members.

Their total and absolute commitment towards each other, the veteran community, and the broader community is little known as they quietly make a difference in their own way.

For the past two years I have been privileged to experience first hand the respect and esteem of the Launceston community towards the VVMC in Tasmania as it acknowledges and honours the contributions both in war and in peace made by those men who proudly wear the "Spook" on their vests.



To Slew, Hodgo, Rick, and all the other members of VVMC Tasmania, and the many Chapters throughout Australia, you are all special men both individually and collectively in representing those qualities and ideals that we as Vietnam veterans everywhere should consistently aspire to.

Warwick Luttrell
President

Local members of the VVMC Tasmania Chapter leading the 2011 ANZAC Day Parade in Launceston.

DViets Second Tour of Duty

This was DViets second "tour" of duty at Dago Point, Interlaken. Alas, we always seem to find a time when Lake Sorell is closed! Better that way anyway, because on our first tour, one of the group narrowly missed serious injury when he was nearly poked in the eye by a fishing rod!

Whenever a "tour" is proposed, the previous veterans are given first dibs-this year we had two withdrawals and competition for the places was fierce, and the "apprentices" were watched closely to ascertain their fitness for further tours.

Greensborough RSL tossed in the minibus saving us close to \$1000 in hire costs. All up about 375 per head for the week incl. ferry, rent, food and refreshments-not bad! Stand to and flag raising religiously attended to, and a formal dining in night second last night in country.

Bob Elworthy



Above. Wonder what the rest of the world is doing?

Below. The Ole Red Rooster looking slightly worse for wear after a visit by Bob and the DVIETS



Above. 'Victorians' in the snow.

Below. Suck em in lads.



**VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA
Tasmanian Branch Inc.**

**MEMORIAL BUSH RETREAT
DAGO POINT INTERLAK**



Offers House accommodation in the remote Central Highlands area, 20 minutes from Bothwell. \$30.00 per double + \$5.00 per extra person. Bookings made through the State RSLA Headquarters, Hobart.(03) 6224 0881. Open to all APPVA members.



ACT

Pensions and welfare work continue to be the core business in the ACT. While we are seeing fewer Vietnam Veterans with the former there is a larger call in the latter. The Branch currently has the resources to meet these demands.

Membership numbers are down a little compared to the same time last year. This, we attribute in part to members relocating following retirement from paid work.

Finances remain sufficient to continue our core operating for the foreseeable future. Like other jurisdictions we are a little thin on the ground with volunteers. That said, we have other avenues in which to seek help with fundraising and other activities.

We are gearing up for the 45th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan on Vietnam Veterans' Day this year. There are issues with the format of the Service due to representations made to the organisers in respect to the presentation of the awards for the Battle. We are trying to resolve these issues for the best outcome for all concerned.

Co-operation and a close, harmonious working relationships with other local ESOs is a mark of the respect in which the VVAA ACT Branch is held in the Capital Territory. We intend to maintain those relationships.

We are saddened by the loss of our "spiritual home" the Canberra Services Club in a catastrophic fire last month. VVAA ACT and many other ESOs used that venue as a meeting place. The "old girl" was also the scene for many memorable 18 August camaraderie afternoons. We are in the process of finding another suitable meeting venue.



Photo courtesy of Robin Parker VVAA ACT

Another loss was the unexpected death of VP Mike Coyle in January. His wise counsel and wide knowledge and experience will be sorely missed. Mike had a range of talents, many of which could have assisted in a most professional manner some of the VVAA National activities.

The ACT Government has called for applications for interested and qualified members of the Veteran community to form a Chief Minister's advisory committee on Veteran's issues. A key operation of this committee will be how the Centenary of ANZAC will be observed and commemorated in the Nation's Capital. VVAA ACT supports this initiative of our Government and will view the committee work with interest.

Like other jurisdictions the ACT is operating with fewer than the maximum committee member numbers. In the second half of the year we will review the Branch operations in light of these staffing levels.

ACT delegates to National Congress were able, with the concurrence of a majority of other State Branches, to advance a number of Veterans' issues.

We will be pleased to report in the near future to all Vietnam Veterans via their State Branches the progress that will now be made with these issues.

This Branch will continue to honour its commitments to work in its core business for the greater good of the Veteran community at large and the Vietnam Veterans and their families in particular.

Pete Ryan
ACT President

VIETNAM VETERANS REMEMBERANCE DAY 2012 1962-2012

As next year will be the 50th anniversary of the first Australian Military Forces being commissioned to the defense of South Vietnam.

There will probably be many anniversaries and reunions celebrated during the year.

For those who have remembrance ceremonies planned please contact the Debrief Secretary so that the details can be published in Debrief.

Debrief Secretary : Warwick Luttrell
Email...vvaataspres@aussiebroadband.com.au

How to Tell the Sex of a Fly

A woman walked into the kitchen to find her Husband stalking around with a fly swatter

"What are you doing?" She asked.

"Hunting Flies" He responded.

"Oh. ! Killing any?" She asked.

"Yep, 3 males, 2 Females," he replied.
Intrigued, she asked.

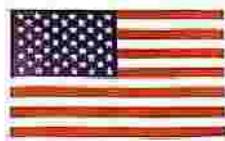
"How can you tell them apart?"

He responded,
"3 were on a beer can,
2 were on the phone.





Ravenshoe Torimba Festival Military Display
 In Memory of those Soldiers who trained in Ravenshoe in World War II



Come and see the military display of vehicles, armoured cars, bikes, memorabilia, and equipment. World War II Troop Train rides, as well as the Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club.

FREE ADMISSION

WHEN – 1st and 2nd of October 2011

TIME 10.30am – 3.30pm

WHERE – Ravenshoe Pony Club, Wooroora Rd

FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY



All you ever want to know about Vietnam
 This site is very good for research
<http://www-static.cc.gatech.edu/fac/Thomas.Pilsch/Vietnam.html>

G'day from the Jervis Bay Sub-Branch.

Thought I would give our fellow vets a heads up on this Sub-Branch, nestling on the shores of the great Jervis Bay.

Currently we have 82 members, and meet at the Huskisson RSL Sub-Branch on the third Thursday of the month at 1730. Thanks to our very active committee and members, and in particular Keith Murrell our social member, we enjoy a full social calendar with BBQ's or a sit down three course meal every month.

Since our formation we have donated \$25,000 to local charities, with \$5,150 donated in 2010.

Our major charities are Havenlee Special School and Noah's Ark, both caring for children with special needs. We support the community on many special occasions by providing our BBQ facilities and labour.

The primary fund raiser is the annual golf day held in August, and with raffles run at every meeting and social event.

Members of this Sub-Branch are also involved in Legacy, as Directors of the Huskisson RSL Club Ltd. and Committee of the Huskisson RSL Sub-Branch.

Our Patron Mr. Roy Cornford was in Vietnam during WW2 as a POW of the Japanese.

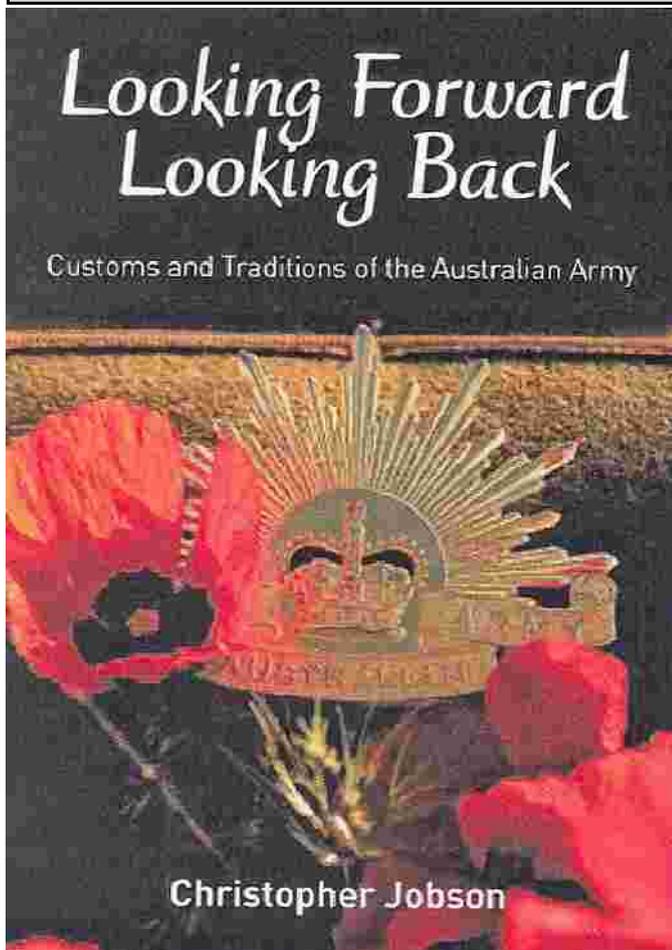


Some of the Crew at our Christmas Party 2010



Gold Coast War Museum
 42John Rogers Rd (off the Springbrook Rd.)
 Mudgeeraba 4213
 Open 7 days a Week
 9am to 4 pm
 Phone (07) 55305222

BOOK REVIEW



Looking Forward, Looking Back – Customs and Traditions of the Australian Army is a unique book that explores in detail our Army's rich and proud history. The customs and traditions of an army constantly evolve and adapt, but more than anything, they instil a strong sense of belonging and identity for those that serve in its ranks.

Written by Christopher Jobson, a professional soldier more than 30 years, a Vietnam Veteran and one-time Regimental Sergeant-Major Ceremony and Protocol, *Looking Forward Looking Back* is the first book of its kind to detail the culture and conventions of the Australian Army from inception to the present day. Written in an open and easy style, Jobson has created a book of great interest as well as an accurate historical document supported by photograph and illustrations.

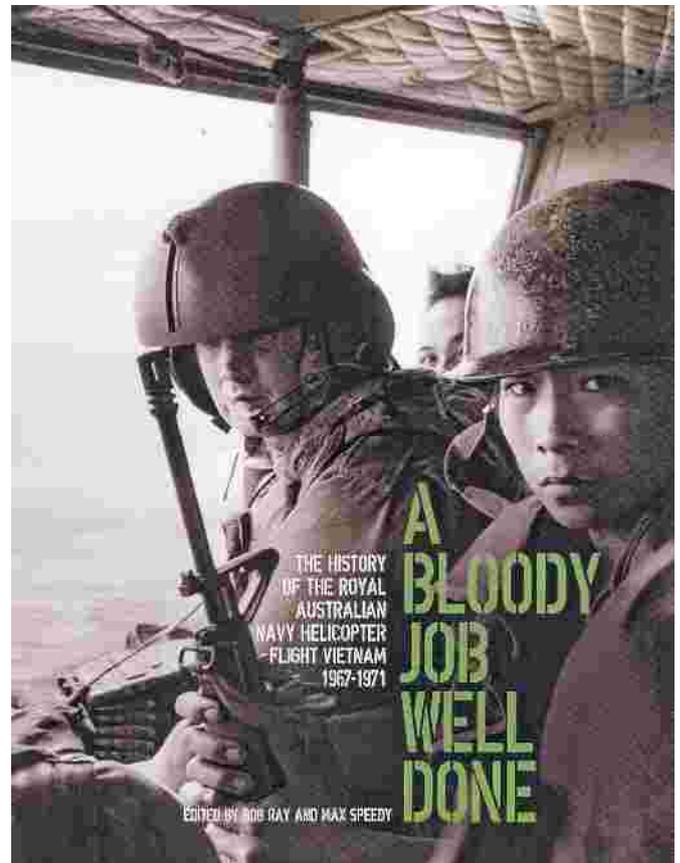
The Australian Army boasts a variety of particular conventions, some belonging to the service as a whole, others to a particular corps, regiment or rank. Some are solemn, others humorous, while incorporating the rules of social etiquette, manners and style. Many of the Australian Army's customs and traditions are derived from past battle tactics. Some drill movements of today's parade grounds were once practice by soldiers in battle.

The 11 chapters of *Looking Forward Looking Back* examine topics from ranks to emblems and dress accoutrements. One chapter, on soldiers' uniforms, explains the intriguing names such as the Aiguillette, Pace Stick and Gorget Patches. While some of these elements retain their original use, others are now purely ceremonial.

While an ever-changing military environment keeps soldiers looking forward, this view of past ways is an important reminder of our Army's history and how far we have travelled as a nation.

In the Forward, by the Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Lieutenant General David Hurley he comments, "this is book that celebrates the place of the Australian Army' customs and traditions and thus its military heritage, in shaping the fighting force of today".

Available through VVAA National Merchandise. Cost : \$30



A bloody Job Well Done was first launched in 2008 in A4 size but is now being reprinted in a smaller user friendly size and will be available soon .

At the height of the Vietnam War, some 190 members for the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Air Arm were integrate into the US Army's 135th Assault Helicopter Company, the first and only experimental military unit with Australian participation.

These officers and sailors provided helicopter lift and gunship support to predominately US and Republic of Vietnam forces. In

A bloody job well done these brave Australians share graphic accounts of their experiences, during a time where death and dismemberment was part of every day.

A BLOODY GOB WELL DONE will be available from VVAA National Merchandise at a cost of \$30.00

NATIONAL MERCHANDISE—NEW PRODUCTS



CP051 Red Rooster Cloth Patch \$8



CP048 Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club Cloth Patch \$8



CP049 RANHFV Cloth Patch \$8



CAP27 Dysfunctional Veteran 4 Ribbon Cap \$17.50



CAP28 Dysfunctional Veteran Plain Plain Cap \$17.50



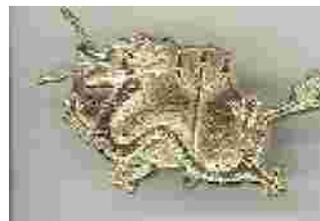
CP050 UCB Cloth Patch \$7



LP081 Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club Lapel Pin



LP082 RANHFV Lapel Pin \$6.50



LP085 Sea Dragon Lapel Pin-\$6.50



My Brother served in in Vietnam over Map of Vietnam \$6.50



Above. Vietnam Remembered T Shirt
Khaki green shirt with Huey on the front
Sizes S - 3XL & 5XL \$25ea



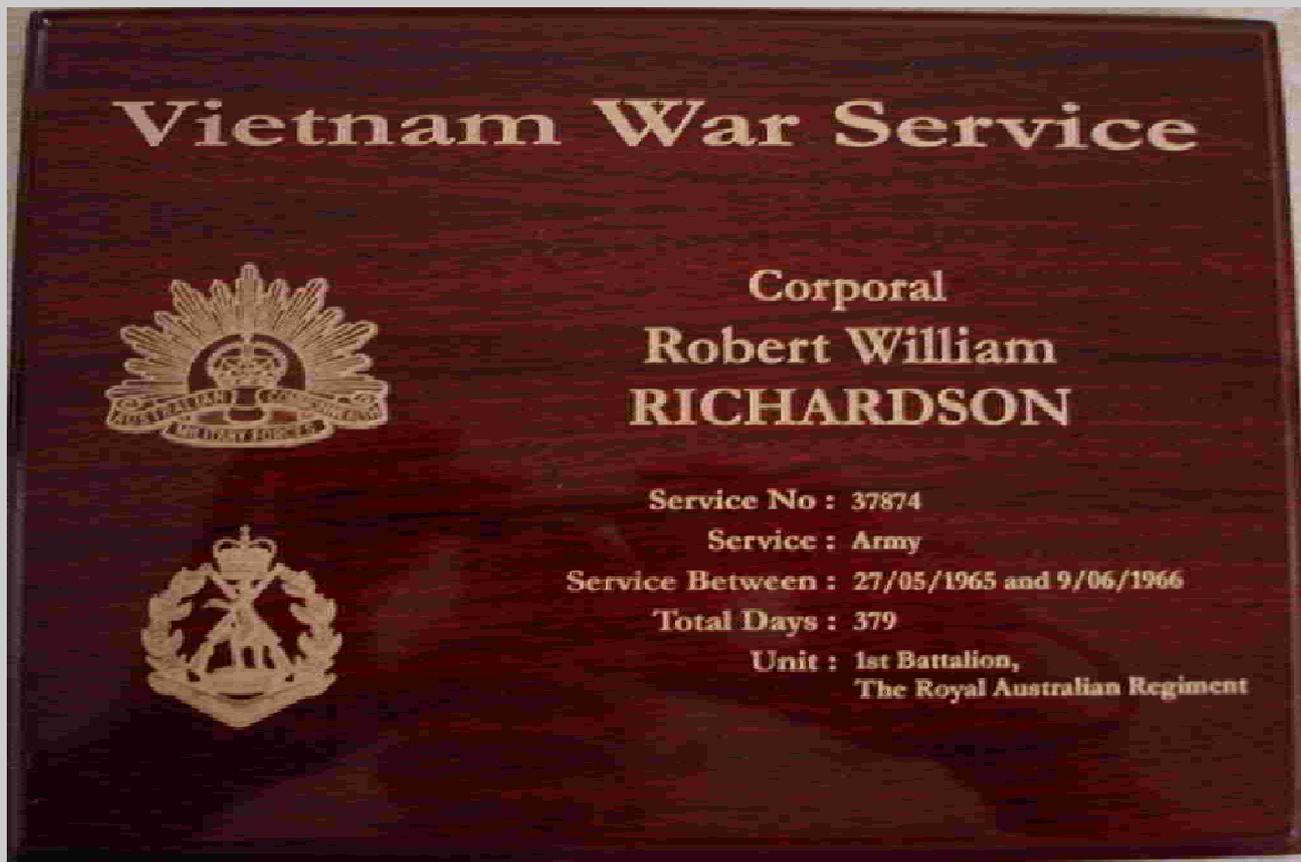
Above. Vietnam Remembered 4 Ribbon Reversible Vest
Black \$47ea
Vietnam Veteran 4 Ribbon on left hand chest and Huey on the back. Sizes S -3XL & 5XL

Above . Vietnam Remembered 4 Ribbon Polo Shirts
Vietnam Veteran over map of Aust on left had front. Chest. Huey on t he back. Black with gold trim
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