



VIETNAM VETERANS PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.

DECEMBER 2016



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

THE DVA HAD NO DUTY OF CARE? THE STORY OF GARY McCOLLEY'S SUICIDE

REDGUM MUSICIAN HUGH McDONALD DIES

VICTORIA STATE PRESIDENT RON CARGILL PASSES ON

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT CHRISTMAS 2016

As a working advocate it has been another busy start with about 16 VRB and 3 AAT cases developing. The VRB cases these days are nearly always settled in discussions with the conference registrars. Two AAT case were satisfactorily settled before hearing and one is continuing.

In my role as President of the Federation I have had productive talks with Soldier On re a closer relationship however an agreement is probably some way off.

There have been two working groups set up after discussion at the Ex Service Organisations Round Table (ESORT). We sit across from the Secretary DVA and his staff and exchange views. This sometimes results in robust discussions!

The two groups concern hearing issues arising from the excision of part XI from the Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 and the use of medical specialists by DVA. I sit on both groups. Due to the nature of conversations I am unable to advise any outcomes until they have been referred back to the ESORT and a decision is made. However you can rest assured that I have put forward a strong case in the veterans' favour.

It has been a busy year for travel, I attended the ramp ceremony at Richmond Air Base for the return of the remains of soldiers and children from Malaysia and Singapore in May. I travelled to Granville for discussions with the President and committee on issues arising since I have become National President. We held the National AGM in June at Nerang Qld.

I also attended the AGM of the Peacekeepers and Peacemakers in Townsville in September and had fruitful discussions with three of their very capable Advocates. I spent a day in Sydney in an Advocate's workshop conducted by Mr Greg Isolani (a solicitor with extensive knowledge of veterans' law) and Mr Les Young (a VRB member with similar wide ranging experience).

We have made a submission to the Senate Inquiry into suicide by veterans which is also looking at how DVA operates. There have been a lot of submissions – here is the link:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Veteran_Suicide/Submissions

So all in all a busy year and no doubt next year will be the same.

For your information the National Secretariat, comprises – Ray Colburn, Secretary/Treasurer – John Godwin, Senior Researcher – Jules Wills, Researcher – Cheryl Camp, Personal Assistant.

They have worked willingly and tirelessly for the good of the Federation and I thank them for being such a good team.

Christmas Message

I wish all of our members and their families a Happy and Holy Christmas and a safe New Year with special mention to the volunteers and their families who work so tirelessly for the VVF.

Please enjoy yourselves and come back refreshed from a welcome break.

Best Wishes

James Wain

National President



Gary McColley's Suicide

(and the Department claimed it had no duty of care???). How did DVA get it so wrong? **See page 8.**

Ron Cargill, Victorian State President passes on.

New President John Arnold in his first State Report dedicates it to Ron, the inaugural President of Victoria.

..... **See page 11.**

Allan Griffin bows out

We thank him for his magnificent contribution. As the Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs and then the Minister, Hon Alan Griffin MP oversaw perhaps the most important and generous improvements in veterans' benefits in memory. **See page 12.**

Stop Downplaying Military Suicides!

It is grossly misleading to compare the suicide rate of military personnel with the suicide rate of their peers in the general community — so why are politician and bureaucrats doing it?

..... **See page 14.**



**SPECIAL
FEATURE—PART 1.
BEGINS ON PAGE
34.
The Vietnam War
An Australian
Perspective.**

What else is making news

At page 6 we reflect on DVA's service or lack thereof.

We reflect on the passing of three Vietnam veterans. **Ron Cargill** on **page 11**, **'Doc' Dobson** on **page 52**, and **Ed Margetts** on **page 57**.

WA President, **Milton Kirk**, helps us navigate around the intricacies that is aged care on **page 16**.

The AWM asked **John Schumann** for the guitar he composed the song **"I was only 19"** on. They got their wish as reported on **page 17**.

These and much more can be found on our full index at page 5.

STOP PRESS

HUGH McDONALD original
member of *Redgum*
Fine musician and veterans'
friend and supporter
Passed away on
19 November 2016

**WE PAY TRIBUTE ON PAGES 26
AND 27**

MEMBERSHIP

**Belonging
Advocacy
Success**

Membership is due on 1 January each year.

Membership to our organisation empowers a team to achieve much within the veteran community, by assisting veterans with claims and applications on a wide spectrum of government provided avenues of compensation and benefits across 3 Acts of parliament.

Each as an individual is ineffective when lobbying governments for change, or to amend an injustice. Together as an organisation, with a strong membership we are able to, and have done, improve pathways for better treatment of veterans.

We survive as an organisation on the strength of our membership, and even if you have won the battle with Veterans Affairs (DVA), there is always the risk of changes in Government policy which may erode benefits and pensions or changes to eligibility entitlements.

We encourage membership from all who support our objectives, veterans, service and ex-service members, as well as war-widows and their families. You don't have to be a member or ex-member of the Australian Defence Forces (ADF). In most instances, anyone may join our organisation, with few exceptions, so why not enquire today.

It is through our membership subscriptions, fund raising activities and many kind donations from our members, and general public, that we are able to continue supporting our fellow Veterans and Service members in need, and meet our increasing welfare and pension workload.

Should you be able to help with a donation, or leave a bequest in your Will, it would be extremely beneficial and greatly appreciated.

We thank you for your kind support.



VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION of AUSTRALIA Inc.

Incorporating

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Queensland Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans & Veterans Federation ACT Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Victorian Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation South Australian Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Federation of Australia (WA Branch) Inc.

Vietnam Peacekeepers Peacemakers Federation of Tasmania Inc.

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ACT State President	Ian Thompson
Vic State President	John Arnold
SA State president	Mal Thiele
WA State President	Milton Kirk JP
Tas State President	TBA
National Research Officer	Graham Walker AM

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COVER DESIGN & IMAGERY
Concept and layout by The Editor
Imagery courtesy of Bamboo Printing.

FREE PENSIONS & ADVOCACY SERVICE

- We represent former as well as current members of the defence force.
- We represent veterans of all conflicts from World War II to Afghanistan.
- We have many years of experience helping with claims in all the Military Compensation schemes.
- If your initial claim has been unreasonably rejected we have experienced Advocates to prepare and present an appeal to the Veterans Review Board.
- Should an appeal to the Veterans Review Board be unsuccessful we can, for entitled veterans, arrange legal representation and legal aid for Administrative Appeals Tribunal hearings.
- These services are free.
- Neither is there any obligation to join our Federation although you would be welcome to do so.

Contact any of our Branches or Sub-Bran­ches from the lists elsewhere in this Journal. Alternatively, visit our website, www.vvfa.org.au, and email from the lists included.

Tasmanians wishing assistance are asked to call Dennis Hanmer OAM from our Outreach Program at our Sydney Head Office on 02 9682 1788.

What's inside & Regular features

1. Presidents Christmas message
2. Making News in this issue
3. Other news—membership
4. Affiliates List
5. Our Services & Index
6. Editors Desk & DVA Service?
7. NSW Presidents Report
8. Editorials
11. Ron Cargill Obituary
12. Editorials
16. WA President Report
17. Editorials
22. SA President Report
23. Generic Membership Form
24. Editorials
26. Vale, Hugh McDonald
- 28 29. NSW Election Forms
30. Travel Pass information
32. Crossword & Unknown Comic
33. New Merchandise
34. Merchandise
36. Special feature Part 1
45. Outreach Program
46. AVCAT Scholarships
48. Reunions & Notices
49. Operation Life
50. Branches Listings
53. VVCS & Wesley Hospitals
54. 'Doc' Dobson Obituary
55. Last Post
59. Ed Margetts Obituary
60. Members Discounts

PAID ADVERTISEMENTS

- Inside Front Cover NJF VIDA
Inside Back Cover Bamboo Printing
Outside Back Cover iRehab



FROM THE EDITORS DESK

I rarely use this column to comment on articles in our Journal. However, this time I feel I must vent my rage at DVA's attitude leading up to the suicide of our valued member, Gary McColley.

DVA claimed it had no duty of care to its client, Gary, who it knew was a 'veteran at risk'.

Really? Take a look at their website. There it states clearly: "The Department of Veterans' Affairs provides support for a range of clients including veterans and their dependents, and Australian Defence Force personnel. We provide our clients with services including pensions and compensation, health care, rehabilitation, counselling services and more. In addition, our commemorations program promotes understanding of Australia's wartime history."

What irks me is that the department making these claims sent its goons out to accuse a very sick veteran of making false claims on the strength of an anonymous phone call. Nothing more than hearsay by a disgruntled and possibly sick telephone caller brought out DVA's henchmen without even considering the veracity of the telephone call or the effect of their accusations on the accused veteran.

Government's declare that sending troops to war brings on the responsible care of those troops upon their return.. We Veterans, naturally assume that the various Acts for veterans and service personnel are there to protect us, because of the uniqueness of our service; not be bludgeoned about the head with them.

DVA once had the motto "DVA - Cares???"

What a mockery the Gary McColley suicide made of that claim.■

DVA Service?

Have you telephoned DVA recently? Were you kept waiting a long, long time, being told periodically the delay was being caused by an unusually large number of callers?

Did you feel your frustration rising as the wait extended and extended?

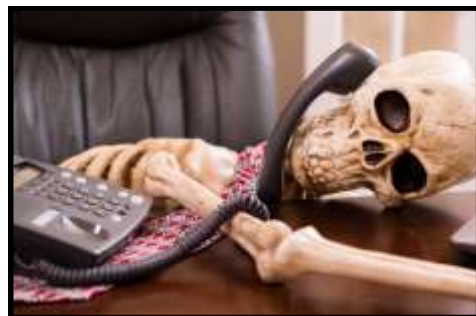
Have you ever called when you were not told there were delays caused by an unusually large number of callers? (something of a rare event it would seem)

When you eventually got through and were put onto the person's telephone you wanted to talk to, were you advised by a message to leave your details so that the person would call back later?

Are you still waiting for that person to call back?

If you answered 'yes', at least take consolation that you are not alone.

If it wasn't for the pleasant people who answer when you eventually get through, VVCS might have a lot more business.



Have you recently applied for SRCA Household Services, a service provided to keep disabled veterans at home rather than in Aged Care facilities at great government expense?

Don't hold your breath. There is a more than two month backlog.

So much for DVA's much vaunted 'client centric' service.■

NSW PRESIDENT REPORT

Members may be aware that the Federal Government provides limited funding to Ex-Service Organisations in the form of the Building Excellence in Support and Training Grants program (the BEST program).

These Grants are vital to the continued success of our Association. Through this program we are entitled to claim part of the salary paid to any employees. Obviously we are essentially a volunteer organisation therefore our paid employees are few.

BEST Funding also rewards the Association for the number and type of claims processed with a set dollar figure for each. Unfortunately, our BEST Funding for 2016 has been reduced by approx. \$30,000 despite no decrease in our workload. The Minister has informed us that the reason for the funding decrease is that there are more applicants for a share of the funding and the size of the funding “pie” has not increased.

Other funding sources are through membership subscriptions, donations (both Club and personal) and raffles. Whilst our membership base continues to age we are proud to claim that more than 50% of our workload is for the ‘younger’ ADF personnel and that they have the assistance available to them which was not available to Vietnam Veterans all those years ago. Very few of the ‘younger’ veterans join ESO’s however we are privileged to assist them in their time of need.

We recognise that there is also limited availability to community and NSW Club grants, however, despite rigorous campaigning, we have as yet been unsuccessful in recent times. Although we do hope that 2017 will see an improvement albeit due to a change in local council mergers.

I wish to make two points out of the above. The first is an appeal to members to ensure you renew your membership each year. Your membership is certainly valued by us and your subscriptions are utilised to help others. Should you be able to do so you may also wish to make a donation which will be spent on servicing current and former ADF personnel.

The final point is to look out for your fellow veteran. 87% of those who have served in our military have never made a claim on the DVA. Should you be aware of any veteran or ex-service person who has a medical issue which may have been caused during that person’s period of military service please advise that person to call our office and make an appointment to discuss the issue with a qualified and experienced pension officer.

Above all remember, there is never ever any fee or charges for our services to Veterans or their families.

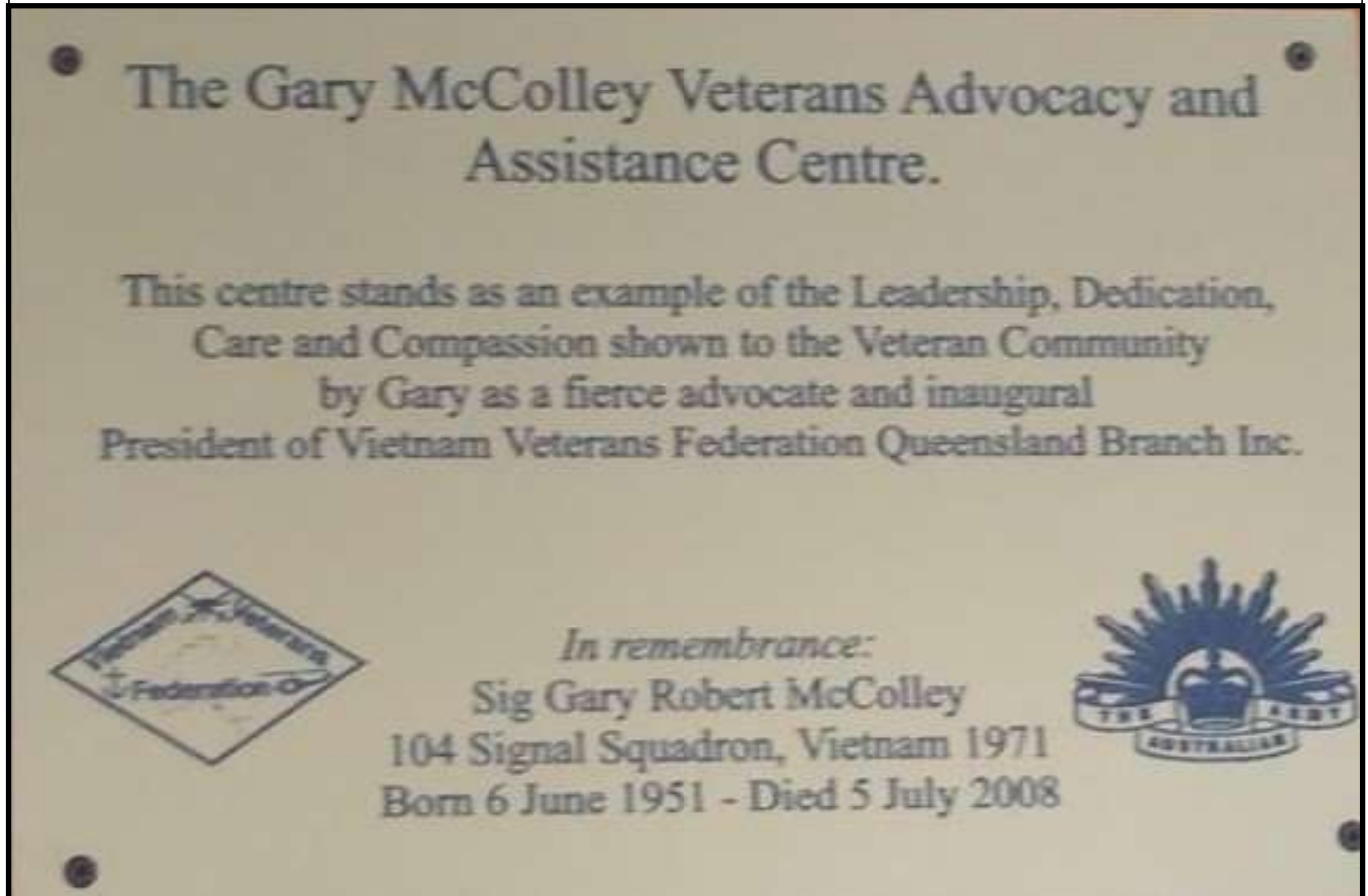
Nor, are you required to become a member in order for us to provide those services.

Wishing all Granville Volunteers, our staff, and all we assisted during 2016, especially you, our valued members, have a Merry Christmas, and a prosperous and healthy 2017.

Frank Cole
NSW President

Gary McColley's Suicide

(and the Department claimed it had no duty of care???)



The VVFA Queensland Branch Headquarters named in honour of Gary McColley, inaugural President of the branch

On 5 July 2008 Gary McColley, Vietnam veteran and inaugural President of the Queensland branch of the Vietnam Veterans Federation, committed suicide.

The Office of the State Coroner concluded that 'it would appear that on the day of his death, Mr McColley reached the end of his tether in relation to the Department of Veterans

Affairs and sadly at 20.45 hours he poured fuel over himself, and immolated himself. He collapsed and died suffering extreme and severe incineration of 100% of his body'.

It was clearly a protest in the style of the Vietnamese Buddhist immolations during the Vietnam war.

So what caused Gary to be at the 'end of his tether in relation to the Department of

Veterans Affairs' and make such a horrific protest?

The story began with the Department receiving an anonymous telephone tip-off that Gary committed fraud by providing misleading or false information when he applied for a disability pension. Even without any evidence to corroborate this anonymous tip-off, the Department began an official fraud investigation.

Gary was advised by phone in October 2006.

Whilst Gary believed himself innocent, he also knew that the findings of such investigations are unpredictable. And that if the investigation had an unfavourable outcome he would lose his TPI pension and consequently his house and much more.

This concern was magnified by Gary's fragile mental state.

The Department had in Gary's file the details of his psychiatric condition. They knew Gary suffered from severe PTSD and other psychological illnesses and that he had made four previous substantial suicide attempts.

It would have been obvious to a drover's dog that Gary was a veteran 'at risk'.

But the Department made no allowance for this in its investigation methods; quite the reverse.

Having told Gary by phone he was under investigation, it was several months before he was interviewed.

After that he was 'hung out to dry' for well over a year during which he tried to contact the investigators to find out what was happening with little success.

These long periods of little or no contact were verified by Professor Dunt in his enquiry into a number of veterans who committed suicide while dealing with DVA. He found that the "handling of ...[Gary McColley's] case was unduly extended from the first contact in October 2006 and not finalised at the time of his death in July 2008. There were long periods when there was no communication by DVA with the McColley's'.

These long periods of 'no communication

by DVA with the McColley's' were more than enough for Gary's fragile state of mind to reach breaking point; a possibility the Department should have foreseen.

By July 2008 Gary's anxiety had built so he could stand it no longer.

Gary's treatment by the Department surely cannot be classified as other than negligent.

Gary's widow, Karen, had understandably suffered severe trauma because of the way Gary died due to this negligence. It was a horror that deeply effected her.

She approached the Department.

In a meeting Karen was advised to apply for an Act of Grace payment as compensation for the results of the departmental negligence. After her lawyer wrote to the contact person at the Department of Finance to query whether the Act of Grace Payment would cover her family, no response was received and nothing further was heard from either Finance or DVA.

Karen was therefore forced to take the matter to court as the time to issue proceedings was going to expire and she could not take the risk that DVA would come good on any Act of Grace payment.

DVA's initial response was to challenge whether they even owed a 'duty of care' to Gary during their investigation.

No duty of care???

The idea that DVA owes no 'duty of care' to a client it knows is a veteran 'at risk' seems absurd. But on technical grounds the first court hearing upheld DVA's claim.

But on appeal, the Full Bench of the Supreme Court found that whilst there may be no 'duty of care' in investigations carried out by insurers and others, there may be in Karen's case.

This meant Karen could progress the case to a full hearing to determine the matter.

And Karen dearly wanted to have all the facts brought out in a court of law for all to see.

But Karen's fight for compensation was adding to the toll already taken by Gary's suicide. Further legal action would add further emotional

stress to Karen and her family. And there was the uncertainty that attends any court action, no matter how confident one might be of the truth of one's case.

So Karen agreed to an 'out of court' negotiated settlement to bring the matter to an end.

And what of the question of Gary's guilt or innocence?

Of course, whether or not the Department was legally guilty of being 'negligent' will not be finally determined by the courts. However, Garry was never guilty of fraud and, as it happens Professor Dunt found he was fully entitled to his TPI pension. In other words, Garry was innocent.

Sadly, the Department will now avoid the public scrutiny it so much deserves.

More's the pity.

The VVFA's Queensland Branch HQ has been named 'The Gary McColley Veterans Advocacy and Assistance Centre'. ■

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RESEARCH REQUEST

Letter to the Editor

We are a team of historians who are researching the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) participation in the Australian Defence Force since the end of the Second World War. We are examining shifting policies and practices and, most importantly, the lived experiences of current and former Defence members who identify as LGBTI.

While it was not until 1992 that the ADF lifted the ban on gay, lesbian and bisexual service and 2010 for transgender personnel, we know that there have always been LGBTI service personnel among the ranks, including in the Vietnam War. Our research so far has already uncovered interesting stories of service personnel struggling with their sexuality or gender identity in secret, and we wish to speak to more people.

If you are an ex-serviceperson who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex and are interested in participating in an interview, please register your interest at <http://www.lgbtimilitaryhistory.com.au/>, email Noah.Riseman@acu.edu.au or ring 03 9953 3226. We can offer you anonymity in an interview if you wish.

Associate Professor Noah Riseman

Dr Shirleene Robinson

Dr Graham Willett

Victoria laments loss of State President—Ron Cargill

I knew Ron Cargill for around 20 years or so and first met him when he and Iris used to do pensions for our Vietnam veterans on the table in their dining room in the home at Ocean Grove. I had cause to see them about some health and behavioural problems I was suffering at that time.

Ron was conscripted sometime in 1970 and served in South Vietnam, in Army Ordnance Corps with RAEME 106 Workshops from January 1971 until he was RTA on 25 September 1971 when the Whitlam government cancelled the National Service call up. He had joined the Vietnam Veterans Federation (Victoria Branch) Inc., (from the disassociation with the VVAA* ED), as a result of the long battle he had with the Department of Veterans Affairs for his own health problems. He was the first and only president of the State Branch for as long as I have known him and it was only due to his untimely death on June 27 2016 that saw a new regime having to replace him.

In his presidency Ron always amused me as he would frequently say that he didn't do much in his position so you could be forgiven for thinking that improvements in facilities and recondition of the state office just grew as if by magic. He was the most humble man in his accomplishments and achievements I have ever met. There was never any hint of ego in all of his work and he would just go about his tasks without any fuss or fanfare and things just seemed to get done. At meetings we would discuss things that we needed (or would like to have/do) for the veterans and their families and Ron would always come through. He just seemed to know everybody around Geelong that he could/would approach to obtain what was needed at the time.

Over the years of his presidency he and Iris worked very hard to improve our office facilities, establishing the half way house in Geelong for veterans who needed time to get themselves straightened out and this is called BOWDER HOUSE and it has been fully occupied since its first opening.

Over the years the reputation of the state branch grew and a relationship with other ESO's and government authorities grew to a stage where we were not only assisting our Vietnam veterans but older veterans even from WW11 & Korea were being referred to this office for help. Now we are starting to see younger veterans from more recent deployments approaching for the help they need. I strongly believe this is a direct result of Ron's dedication to his office and the way he and Iris have worked so hard over the years to gain results and build the reputation the branch truly deserves.

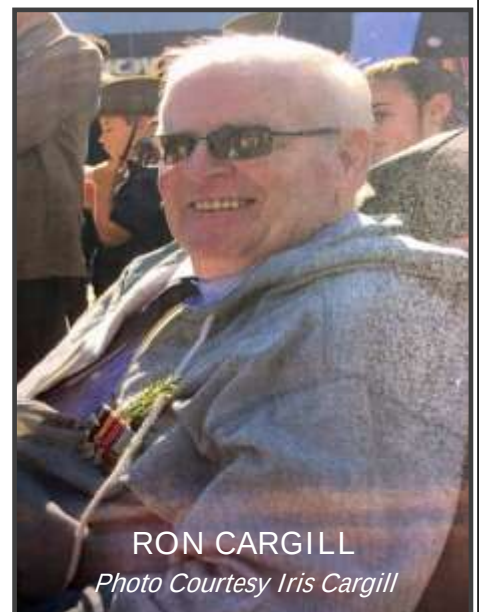
Ron was given an official recognition for service to the veteran community when he (and Iris) was presented with a certificate of Merit from the DVA. Over the years Ron & I developed a really good relationship and I learned a lot from him, even if we were sometimes referred to as The Terrible Twins and other "complimentary" names. I enjoyed his company, I miss him a lot and can only hope that what I learned from him will assist me to do the best I can for this branch and the veterans who come to us.

John Arnold
State president (the new bloke)
Vietnam Veterans Federation (Victoria) Inc.

*THE EDITOR COMMENTS

Ron Cargill was Victorian State President from the inaugural group that broke away from the VVAA in 1981/82 to become a member State of the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia.

As Editor I first came into contact with Ron in 2001 and very much appreciated his warm words of encouragement and advice.



RON CARGILL
Photo Courtesy Iris Cargill

Allan Griffin bows out

We thank him for his magnificent contribution

As the Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs and then the Minister, Hon Alan Griffin MP oversaw perhaps the most important and generous improvements in veterans' benefits in memory.

For ten years the government had been saying that fairly indexing the whole of the TPI pension was impossible; something no government could ever do.

Before the 2007 Federal election, Alan Griffin, then Opposition spokesperson for Veterans Affairs, thought otherwise. He promised that, should Labor win the election, the whole of the TPI pension would receive the fair indexation it deserved.

Labor won and Alan Griffin presided over not only the fair indexation of the TPI pension but also the fair indexation of all other veterans' disability pensions (a change which had also been declared impossible by the previous government).

It was a monumental moment; the culmination of ten years of campaigning by Blue Ryan of the TPI Federation and ourselves, the Vietnam Veterans Federation.

But that was not all Alan Griffin did for us; not by a long shot.

At that time, any cost of medicines over and above the pharmaceutical allowance paid to disabled war veterans was borne by the veteran. In other words, the sickest war veterans were financially contributing to the medical treatment of their war wounds. This was a clear wrong that the government had also claimed could not be righted.



Again, Alan Griffin thought otherwise and promised to fix it.

Alan Griffin also honoured that promise. Now the cost of pharmaceuticals exceeding the allowance is reimbursed.

And there was so much more. Here are just a few of the promises Alan Griffin kept:

- Established the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters.
- Increased funding for the Applied Suicide and Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) program
- Conducted an independent study into suicide in the ex-service community.
- Established an inter-departmental working group to help deal with multiple agencies [very important].
- Began free basic medical and dental care to the

immediate families of Australian Defence force (ADF) personnel.

- Provided extra financial support through 'Making Ends Meet'.
- Instituted automatic granting of War Widow's Pension to widows of TTI and Intermediate Rate pensioners.
- Increased financial assistance for Ex-Service Organisations [this was of great assistance to the VVFA which was able to upgrade office equipment as well as increase the number of veterans it helped].
- Conducted an inquiry into former F-III Deseal/ Reseal workers.
- Formation of an Independent Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal.
- Provided funds to maintain the Ballarat Prisoner of War Memoria.
- Increased the Domestic Allowance component of the War Widow's Pension.
- Extended the Income Support Supplement to widows without dependents.

And the list goes on and on.

Compare this with the present government's attitude to veterans' benefits.

It introduced legislation into the Federal Parliament to reverse the granting of fair indexation to the TPI and other veterans' disability pensions, a reversal that would, over time, reduce the living standards of veteran pensioners substantially.

The only reason the legislation was not pursued further was that it became clear the Opposition and cross-benchers in the Senate would block it.

What the government was able to pass through the Senate, however, was legislation affecting veterans whose Part Service Pensions are subject to the Assets Test. This change will knock some 2,800 Part-Service pensioners off their pensions and reduces payments to about 10,000 more. And over time this number is likely to increase.

We wish Allan Griffin all the best for his new life. ■

NSW BRANCH SAYS THANKS

Vietnam Veterans Day 2016.

The Vietnam Veterans' Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc, in affiliation with the Vietnam Veterans Federation, would like to thank the following organisations for their very generous donation of prizes in aid of our raffle on Vietnam Veterans Day, 18 August, 2016.

- *Our very special thanks go to the Bankstown District Sports Club directors, management & staff for their ongoing very generous support.*
- *Bankstown District Sports Club, Bankstown RSL sub-branch, Bankstown RSL Community Club, Auburn RSL, Cabravale Diggers,*
- *Bunnings Blacktown, Fairfield RSL, Hong Ky Meat Wholesalers, Ingleburn RSL & one anonymous donor.*
- *The combined generosity of these organisations enabled us to raise \$1,210 on the day & these funds will greatly assist us in providing the much needed assistance to not only Vietnam Veterans but Veterans of all conflicts.*

Once again, thank you all.
Terry Corcoran
(Organising Committee)

Stop Downplaying Military Suicides!

It is grossly misleading to compare the suicide rate of military personnel with the suicide rate of their peers in the general community — so why are politician and bureaucrats doing it?

This year and last, departmental spokespeople and Ministers have been making public statements that, tragic as the suicides of military personnel and veterans are, their rate of their suicide is no more than, even less than, that of their peers in the general population.

The implication seemed to be that, whatever is happening to troops in their military service including fighting the war in Afghanistan, it is not the cause of their suicides.

Such statements are misleading because comparing military personnel with their peers in the general population is statistically unsound. The comparison groups are too dissimilar.

The recruiting process for the military filters out those with even a hint of physical or psychological problems. Then in recruit and further training, the filtering continues.

(If focusing on veterans of the war in Afghanistan, it should be remembered that Australia's war was fought to a large extent by Commando and SAS units. They are recruited mainly from the already filtered infantry battalions then had to pass yet more demanding tests.)

Because of this 'filtering', military groups could be expected over time to have much lower rates of mortality including suicide than their peers in the general community.

This difference is a well-known statistical phenomenon known as the 'healthy worker effect' or 'healthy soldier effect'.

The effect was well demonstrated in the Department of Veterans Affairs sponsored study, *Australian National Service Vietnam Veterans: Mortality and Cancer Incidence 2005* (Australian government, Department of Veterans Affairs, Australian Institute of Health Welfare).

The study compared the mortality rate of all National Servicemen with that of the general community. The result, as expected, was that this group had a lower mortality rate.

But so as the study would not be misleading and meaningless, those National Servicemen who served in the war in Vietnam were compared with National Servicemen who served in Australia only.

The study reported:

“The two populations appear to have been very similar at the time of recruitment. Hence any differences in their mortality ... are likely to be related to whether or not they went to Vietnam. Both groups were composed of equally healthy, fit soldiers who at the time of entry into the study differed essentially only by their Vietnam service.’

So what does this valid comparison of the two categories of National Servicemen show?

- National Service who served in Vietnam experienced a 23% higher overall mortality than the National Service group who did not, ...”
- Deaths from suicide was elevated for the group who served in Vietnam by a staggering 43% whilst motor vehicle accidents (often suicide attempts) were elevated among the group who served in Vietnam by a similarly staggering 31%.

What it means is this: as a group, those who fought in the Vietnam war have had a higher suicide rate than a comparable group who did not.

This finding will be true for recent wars because the same kind of military selection process has been used.

It follows that each individual who experiences the trauma of war or other military related trauma, has an elevated risk of suicide.

This means that the government, the Department of Defence and the Department of Veterans Affairs bear responsibility to do everything possible to reduce that elevated rate.

For a start, politicians and bureaucrats should stop trying to downplay military suicides link with military service by misleadingly comparing the rate of military suicides with the suicide rate of their peers in the general community. ■

ARE YOU THIS MEMBER?

MEMBER WITHOUT A NAME

Our Granville office received a membership renewal on 14 November together with an Australian Money Order for payment.

Unfortunately the member sent only the bottom portion of the membership renewal form which means that we have no way of identifying the member.

We urge this member to contact our Granville Office and identify the Post Office from which the Money Order was purchased to enable us to process your renewal application.

Please call 02 9682 1788.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

The best way to prevent suicide is to recognise warning signs and know how to respond if you spot them. If you believe that a friend or family member is suicidal, you can play a role in suicide prevention by pointing out the alternatives, showing that you care, and getting involved.

Signs are many but most include words of warning telling people that they will kill themselves, purchasing or possessing weapons or drugs, withdrawal from family and friends.

What you can do is;

Be yourself and talk calmly. Listen and let them talk. Be sympathetic not judgemental. Offer hope, but above all, take them seriously.

For more immediate advice or assistance, contact

LIFELINE AUSTRALIA 13 11 14

Navigating the Aged Care system can be challenging

Here's some help from our **Western Australian Branch.**

Its **President, Milton Kirk,** is also the VVFA's representative on **Aged Care matters**



We're all getting older. Indeed some of us could even be called 'old'.

So we should start thinking about 'Aged Care' and respite services.

The Commonwealth Home Care Services is available to all citizens and there is extra assistance the Department of Veterans Affairs can provide eligible veterans and war widows.

For information on the generally available services go to:

- My Aged Care—Website
- National Call Centre line. Phone: 1800 200 422. Opening hours 8am to 8pm weekdays and 10am to 2pm Saturdays (local time).

For information on the extra assistance DVA can provide eligible veterans and war widows, go to:

<http://www.dva.gov.au/about-dva/dva-factsheets>

Or ring 133 254 for metropolitan callers and 1800 555 254 for regional callers and say you wish to make enquiries about Aged Care. ■



The guitar from 447 Station Street, North Carlton



The Australian War Memorial asked John Schuman for the guitar with which he composed *I Was Only 19*.

It is a custom-built left hand guitar, bought at 447 Station Street, North Carlton.

John Schumann, passed it over to War Memorial director Brendan Nelson, who noted the song's significance to the memorial and its impact on Australian society.

'Occasionally an artist writes and produces a song which changes the nation and this is exactly

what this song did,' Mr Nelson said.

The song's themes, of a soldier's continuing struggle to cope with what war had done to him, brought a new sense of perspective to the nation's views on self-sacrifice, heroism and suffering during conflict.

John composed the song after a long session with his Vietnam veteran brother-in-law-to-be Mick Storan. It is Mick's story made into song by John's composing genius.

At a time when PTSD was not being handled well by the Department of Veterans Affairs, John's song put it into the national conversation.

Lyrics such as, "And can you tell me, doctor, why I still can't get to sleep? And night time's just a jungle dark and a barking M16?" highlight the horrors of PTSD.

John has not only done veterans the great service of composing '19', he has also advocated for veterans in many arenas including the political.

More recently he has done a project for the Mental Health Directorate for the ADF to destigmatise and alert young diggers to PTSD, and to point out that it's an honourable battle wound.

"They need to put their hand up and not bury it because that's when it gets really nasty," John says.

Although the song was written in 1983 and of the experiences of Vietnam veterans, the timelessness of the song's message is evidenced in similar experiences of soldier's today.

"I just watch these young guys come back from Iraq and Afghanistan and [it's the] same thing. We've lost more from suicide after service in Iraq and Afghanistan than the battlefield there," he said.

"It is a really serious issue and we, as a nation, have got to grow up and treat PTSD as a battle wound ... you can't expect human beings to go and do those things and not be affected." "The handover of the guitar was part of the War Memorial's commemoration of 50 years since the Battle of Long Tan.

The guitar will be on permanent display at the memorial. ■

(Partly based on an article by Callum Marshall in the Sydney Morning Herald)

A MESSAGE FROM NSW STATE SECRETARY

Once again we say THANK YOU to our many members who have made a financial donation to their State Branch. Without these donations we would find it much more difficult to cater to the needs of our war veterans, service and ex-service persons generally. Periodically, we will publish a list of individual NSW Branch donors of amounts of \$200 or more. Whilst all donations are gratefully received, and combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are too numerous to list. Donors to the NSW Branch of \$200 or more since the last Journal were:

10,000	Ray Hopkins
\$4,000	Anonymous
\$500	Patrick Toman
	Anonymous
	Bruce Robertson
\$300	Howard Clark
\$250	Geoffrey Graham
\$200	Sam Panarello
	Graham Cooke
	Graham Lee
	Stephen Ellis
	Harry Ford
	Anonymous

Whilst the above refers to, mostly, individual donations only, we are also indebted to the many RSL sub-branches and other licensed clubs who generously contribute to our cause.



'The Minefield' becomes a classic

(Ten years on it's still selling)

It's ten years since our Honorary Historian, and Vietnam veteran Dr Greg Lockhart published his book about the notorious minefield laid by the Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy Province.

The initial run has sold out and more have and are been printed to meet a steady demand.

Readers will know that the enemy lifted some thousands of those M16 'jumping jack' mines from that minefield, placed them in the path of our troops and used them to defend their hide-outs in the Long Hai Mountains.

The reason 1ATF laid the minefield was to keep the Viet Cong in the jungles away from the villages and the rice harvest.

But the enemy was not only in the jungle away from the villages, they were in the villages themselves. It became a minefield with the enemy on both sides of it.

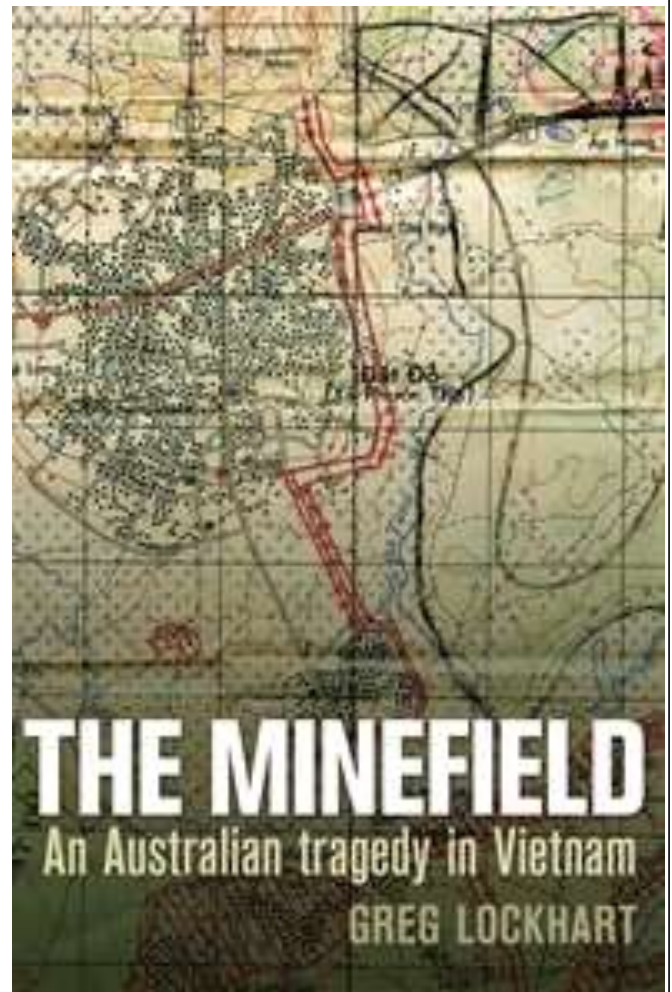
In short it was a disaster.

The question has been asked for years just how such an error could have been made.

Greg has answered that question in this searching book.

It is the best book so far written about Australia's participation in the Vietnam war.

To get your copy simply ring the NSW Branch Granville Office on 02 9682 1788. ■





Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water.....

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water, another shark lurks.

On 1 January 2017, just a few weeks away, the government will strip the Part Service Pensions from round 2,800 veterans and reduce the Part Service Pensions and some 10,000 more.

This downgrading of benefits will result from the government making much harsher the Assets Test which determines pension payments for many veterans.

And whilst you may miss out on the downgrade now, as time goes on, the stripping and reducing will reach a wider and wider clientele.

We are told this downgrading of veterans' Part Pensions is about necessary sacrifice for the budget bottom-line.

But haven't veterans sacrificed enough?

This is the same government that introduced legislation into Federal Parliament to strip the TPI and other veterans disability pensions of fair indexation and substitute indexation that itself had previously declared 'unfair'.

The only reason the legislation was not progressed was that the Opposition, Jacqui Lambie and other cross-benchers made it clear they would vote against it in the Senate; enough votes to defeat it.

The excuse then as now for hitting veterans' pensions was a needed sacrifice for the budget bottom line.

But we said then as we say now:

'Haven't veterans sacrificed enough?' ■



GREAT READS

the best of the web from GriffithReview writers and editors



Barrier thinking, *from the archives*

This week, the gallant actions of ten Australian soldiers in the Battle of Long Tan were recognised by Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove, fifty years after what was the single-most costly battle fought by Australian soldiers in the Vietnam War. In this piece from *Griffith Review 48: Enduring Legacies*, Greg Lockhart describes the impetus behind his book *The Minefield: An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam*, and considers the tragic flaws of barrier minefields. The intention of both works is to tell 'a story that would give Australian Vietnam veterans, and others interested in their war, an independent context in which readers could judge for themselves what happened'. A fitting task for Remembrance Day.

Go to:

<https://griffithreview.com/articles/barrier-thinking/>

SOUTH AUSTRALIA REPORT

On the 29th October we held our delayed 21st birthday with a “Silly Night theme”. A great night with lots of crazy and well thought out costumes.

We had Zorro and his beautiful lady, Where’s Wally, a ballerina, Spanish lady, Jughead, cat in a hat, A ghastly clown, a witch, a Bogan, a fireman, and a couple of cross dressers just to mention a few. Our Compare (Robin) for the night (even though he was sick) did a terrific job moving things along. There were some silly games dancing and of course raffles. We have been asked when is our next one, organisers would like a bit of time to get over this one.

WACAS (We all care and support) Ladies Group went to Kangaroo Island on Sunday the 6th November for the day. Caught the bus from the club rooms to Cape Jervis then on to the ferry.

Visited the markets then on to Cape Willoughby where we had lunch before touring the lighthouse there. The lady doing the tour was brilliant and I feel we learnt a lot from her very informative spiel. Even though it was a long day it was worth not getting to have our normal Sunday sleep in.

With Christmas approaching at great speed we have lots going on and look forward to the doors shutting for about a month. We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2017.

Mal Thiele
SA State President





VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

And ITS AFFILIATED BRANCHES & SUB BRANCHES

MEMBERSHIP REQUEST FORM

I WISH TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE FEDERATION
AT THE NOMINATED BRANCH/SUB-BRANCH BELOW:

ALREADY A MEMBER? DO NOT USE THIS FORM TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP
CONTACT YOUR BRANCH AND ASK FOR A MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM.
DO NOT USE THIS FORM TO NOTIFY A CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR CONTACT.

NOMINATED BRANCH/SUB-BRANCH DETAILS:

BRANCH/SUB-BRANCH NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN/SUBURB: _____

STATE: _____ POSTCODE: _____

DETAILS FOR ALL BRANCHES AND SUB-BRANCHES CAN BE FOUND ELSEWHERE
IN THIS MAGAZINE OR AT OUR WEBSITE, <http://www.vvfa.org.au>

MY DETAILS:

SURNAME

GIVEN NAME

MIDDLE NAME

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/TOWN/SUBURB

STATE

POSTCODE

PHONE: (HOME)

(MOBILE)

(WORK)

EMAIL ADDRESS

SERVICE NUMBER

UNIT/CORP

AREA OF O'SEAS OPS

NEXT OF KIN: (NAME)

(RELATIONSHIP)

(CONTACT NUMBER)

SIGNED: _____ Date: _____

THIS IS NOT A MEMBERSHIP FORM ONLY A REQUEST TO BECOME A MEMBER.

PLEASE CUT OUT, COPY OR SCAN THIS DOCUMENT AND SEND THE COMPLETED FORM TO YOUR
NOMINATED BRANCH OR SUB-BRANCH. UPON RECEIPT THE NOMINATED BRANCH OR SUB-BRANCH
WILL FORWARD THEIR RESPECTIVE APPLICATION FORM AND PAYMENT REQUEST SHOULD YOUR
NOMINATION BE SUCCESSFUL.

The Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection - Lack of compassion and concerns to the needs of an Australian War Widow.

Many of our readers, particularly in New South Wales, would be aware that our late President, Timothy (Tim) McCombe OAM, a totally and permanently Incapacitated veteran, was married to a wonderful, loyal and supportive lady of Vietnamese descent.

Tram McCombe, as she is fondly known, provided support and care to Tim for nine years before his sudden death in January 2015. She was not only his wife, but also his Carer and looked after him in trying circumstances due to his severely restricted mobility (Tim lost his left leg when he trod on a mine in Vietnam), problems with his prosthesis and other war related illnesses. She had to overcome the problems and loneliness of living in a remote area and not having any other relatives living in Australia from whom to seek additional support. Tram, at the time, had to also cope with her own medical problems.

Despite all of this, Tram loved and cared for Tim during the last few years of his life, at a time when he really needed constant care with his mobility problems, health and wellbeing, until his passing.

The sudden passing of Tim, and also her mother in Vietnam, both in the same year, has taken a further toll on Tram's mental health and wellbeing as she also suffers from Diabetes Type Two and Cervical Spondylosis. She has no other relatives living in Australia who can provide the support and comfort that she now needs and a person in whom she can trust and relate to.

Tram has been assessed by her local Doctor/Specialist and "Bupa" who are the assessors for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection as having a requirement for a Carer and have issued her with a "Carer's Visa" Certificate of Satisfaction that would allow her sister in Vietnam to be considered for a "Carer's

Visa" to look after her.

An application for a Carer's Visa was lodged by Tram's sister in February 2016 and she has recently been advised by a Visas Advisor of the Department of Immigration that it can take up to eighteen months to process and some four years before it may be approved as there are a large number of similar applications to be considered before hers. One could reasonably assume that a significant number of these applications would have been lodged by those who had more likely, than not, initially entered Australia illegally or by other dubious means or as refugees.

I wrote to the Minister informing him of the Department's response and Tram's circumstances, and emphasized that she was an Australian War Widow whose husband had not only served his country during the Indonesian Confrontation and Vietnam War where he lost his left leg and with severe wounds to the other, but also suffered from other medical conditions as a result of that incident and his operational service. I also pointed out that Tim had devoted himself for more than thirty years to achieving and ensuring the entitlements, welfare and wellbeing of veterans and the services communities and their families. In 2001 he was awarded an "Order of Australia Medal (OAM)" and also a "Centenary Medal", for his services in this regard.

I informed the Minister that it was my view that widows and family members of those who had served in the Australian Armed Forces should be afforded due consideration and priority in applications of this nature, in preference to those who had entered Australia by questionable means, are refugees or who had not served in the Australian Armed Forces. In view of this, I asked if he could approve and expedite the Carer's Visa.

Having worked alongside Tim for many years, I was aware of many of his views on matters concerning veterans, the services communities and their families. I believe that Tim would have reasonably assumed that, with his passing, his widow would be properly cared for with regards to her entitlements, health and wellbeing. The Department of Veterans' Affairs has so far done their part in this regard, and for that we are grateful.

The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection should now consider doing his part in assisting Tram in ensuring her wellbeing by allowing her to be provided with the care she needs, which has already been approved by the Medical Officer of the Department of Immigration, in a timely manner.

The response I received from Peter Dutton's Office was "signed-off" by his Acting Director, Megan Scott. It would appear that my submission, which was addressed to the Minister, had only reached the lower level of administration, and I was given the standard response which virtually indicated that the application would start at the bottom of the pile, behind those that I have mentioned, in spite of having been informed of Tram's circumstances. Frankly I consider this response to be an affront, not only to me but Tram and veterans generally, to what I believe is an important matter concerning the health and wellbeing of an Australian War Widow.

If this is the official view of the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection to the status of an Australian War Widow, concerning issues of this nature, who, it would seem, is considered to have no more rights or priority than those who had entered Australia by questionable means or who had not served in the Australian Armed Forces or came to Australia as refugees, then it could be assumed that he has no compassion for widows and families of those who patriotically and proudly served. I believe this could be taken as an indication of where the Minister's priorities lie.

I have also written to Senator Jacqui Lambie, MLC for Tasmania, who had also served in the Australian Regular Army, seeking her assistance, but I have had no response to date.

I have spoken with the Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs and Defence Personnel and Federal Member for Kingston, Amanda Rishworth MP, who has offered to help in bringing this matter (again) to the attention of the Minister. Her offer is not only welcomed but appreciated, and is certainly refreshing. Whether she is successful does not matter at this point, but her offer of help is what really counts.

On 9 November 2016 I received a further response from the Minister's Office, signed off by the Assistant Minister, Alex Hawke, with what could be best described as being the typical standard reply, in other words, get in the queue with the others. He did not acknowledge or comment on her status as an Australian War Widow.

It would appear to me that the standing and status of Australian service personnel and war widows are of little concern or interest to many of our politicians. It seems evident to me that the rights of the minority, or the fear of being "politically correct", are foremost in many of their thoughts and actions.

William (Bill) Roberts OAM, JP
Senior Vice President

ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION

For new material, advertising and compliments, please Write, phone, or e-mail:

The Editor, VVPPAA Journal
C/- PO Box 170

GRANVILLE, NSW 2142.

Ph: 02 9682 1788 Mob: 0421 690 959

Weekdays before 5pm thanks.

Email: editor@vvfagranville.org

For comments about the articles please write to:

'The National Secretary'.

Email: racyjoyc@gmail.com

Vale

Hugh McDonald

Fine musician and veterans' friend



Hugh was a member of Redgum which, in 1983 recorded John Schumann's 'I Was Only 19'. It was a song that informed millions of Australians that all was not well with their Vietnam veterans. It was a song that changed public attitudes and raised veterans' morale.

Most recently Hugh and John played at the Australian War Memorial's 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan including a tribute performance inside the Hall of Memory adjacent to the tomb of the unknown soldier.



Hugh performed with John and the Vagabond Crew for Australian forces overseas. In 2009 he visited East Timor to play for Australian and New Zealand troops stationed there, in 2011 he played for Australian troops in Afghanistan and in 2013 he played for Australian troops and Australian Federal Police in the Solomon Islands. In 2014 he played for the Royal Australian Navy troops in Tanzania, Africa.

Whenever asked to do anything for veterans or serving personnel with John (and there were very many such requests), Hugh immediately put everything aside to do it - regardless of personal cost, inconvenience or loss of income. More recently this included bearing considerable physical discomfort from his illness.

For thirty three years Hugh selflessly supported us and our cause.



For many, many years till now, Hugh accompanied John in his many, many performances which always include ‘19’.

Here’s how the band saw the partnership on Hugh’s 62nd birthday.

“Happy Birthday to Bullet aka Hugh McDonald - 62 today - and 36 years of being handcuffed to each other playing music.”



Last year he joined John in a tribute at Tim McCombe’s funeral.

Hugh was a master guitarist and elegant vocalist and complimented John beautifully in their joint performances.

He wrote the unforgettable song, *The Diamantina Drover* .

Vietnam veterans are grateful to Hugh for his music, his support and his friendship.

Hugh died after a long fight with cancer on 19 November 2016.

He will be greatly missed.

We have sent our condolences to his family. ■

VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS

ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC.

2017 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - AGENDA

The 2017 Annual General Meeting of the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc., will be held at Merrylands RSL Club 10.30am Saturday, 20 May 2017.

AGENDA

Opening of Meeting by the Chairman

Apologies

Confirm the Minutes of the AGM 2016.

Business Arising from the Minutes of the AGM 2016

President's Report

Treasurer's Report

Secretary's Report

Membership Report

Election results (for Office Bearers)

President

Senior Vice President

Vice Presidents (2)

Secretary

Treasurer

Committee Members (10)

(see next page in this Journal for Nomination Form)

Appointment of Association Auditors

Appointment of Association Legal Representatives

Appointment of Life Members

Other Business by leave of the Chairman

Close of Meeting.

Any items for General Business must be in the hands of the Secretary by close of business on

Monday 4 May 2017.

Next AGM to be held on a date to be confirmed during May 2018.

Ron O'Connor

Hon. Secretary

NSW Branch

VIETNAM VETERANS', PEACEKEEPERS' & PEACEMAKERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC.

2017 ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Members wishing to nominate for one or more of the following positions on the NSW Committee are asked to indicate with an (X) alongside those positions, and remember appointment on the Committee is for a 2 year term.

President (1)

Senior-Vice President (1)

Vice Presidents (2)

Secretary (1)

Treasurer (1)

Committee Members (10)

*Members nominating for a position(s) must be financial for the year 2017.

Details of Nominee:

.....		
Print Name	Signature	M'ship No

Details of Seconders (2)

.....		
Print Name	Signature	M'ship No.

.....		
Print Name	Signature	M'ship No.

NOTE:

All nomination forms must be in the Secretary's hands by COB 3 February 2017.

Should an election be required personal profiles will be requested and ballot papers will be posted. The election results will be declared at the AGM anticipated to be on 20 May 2017.

Hadyn White writes;

Executive Officer to the Deputy Commissioner at Department of Veterans Affairs - Department of Veterans Affairs

From: White, Hadyn

Date: 19/09/2016 2:14:17 PM

To: undisclosed-recipients;

Subject: FOR INFORMATION ONLY - Ex-Member of the Defence Force travel pass [

The following is referred for your information and may be published in any association newsletters:

Newsletter item for veterans' agencies and organisations

New travel pass for eligible NSW ex-members of the defence forces

NSW ex-members of the defence forces with service-related disabilities are receiving a new travel pass (ticket) from Transport for NSW.

The Transport Concession Entitlement Card is replacing the Ex-Member of Defence Forces Pass (paper ticket) that expires on 31 October 2016.

The Transport Concession Entitlement Card is a valid travel pass (or ticket) for NSW ex-members of the defence forces with service-related disabilities.

Similar to the previous ticket, the Transport Concession Entitlement Card will be used as a proof of entitlement to free travel. Cardholders will need to show it to staff at train stations or wharves who will manually open wide access gates. Cardholders will also need to show it to bus drivers, light rail and private ferry staff. Revenue protection officers or NSW police officers may also ask to see it.

Travel entitlements and eligibility rules have not changed. For full details please go to transportnsw.info/ex-defence

New applicants have been receiving the cards since early September 2016. From mid-October 2016, Transport Concession Entitlement Cards will be mailed-out to around 15,000 existing Ex-Member of Defence Forces Pass holders.

The free travel Opal card is optional for NSW ex-members of the defence forces with service-related disabilities. Tapping on and off is also optional. Customers who use the free travel Opal card can open gates at train stations and wharves themselves. It's not too late to order a free travel Opal card. Details will be provided when the Transport Concession Entitlement Card is mailed out to existing customers. New applicants can download the application form at transportnsw.info/ex-defence



Caption:

The Ex-Member of Defence Forces Pass is being replaced by the blue Transport Concession Entitlement Card. NSW ex-members of the defence forces with service-related disabilities can also get a free travel Opal card.

MERCHANDISE ON SALE VIA NSW WEBSITE

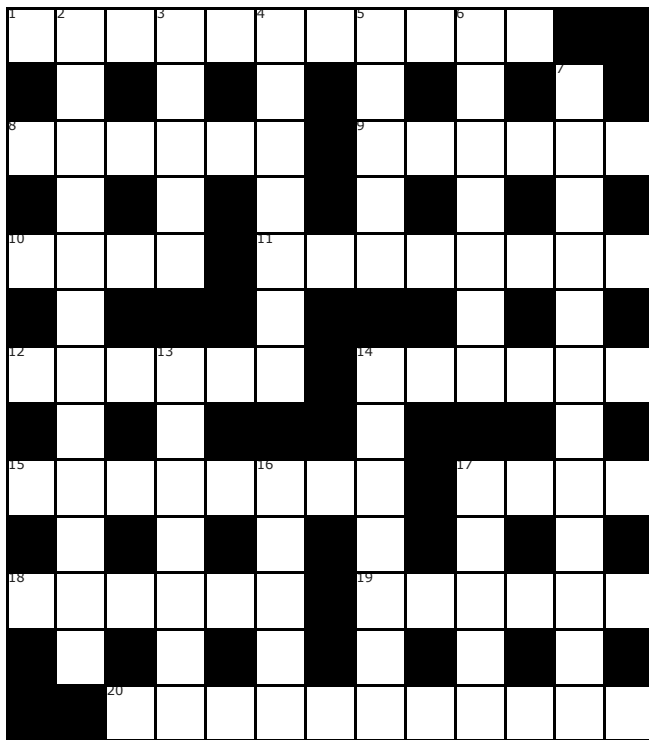
All merchandise that appears on pages 34 and 35, including the revamped number plate surrounds, are now available for on line ordering on NSW website www.vvfagranville.org. We strongly recommend that regular visitors to this site complete a clean up or resetting of their web search history to ensure the correct updated pages load.

When clicking on the Merchandise button in the top menu you will be directed to our new 'ecommerce' shop from where you can select items to purchase. There is no on line facility to enter your credit card details as yet. Instead you will find a cart and checkout that sends an email of your selections to the Granville office, and a confirmation of your order to your email inbox.

Action at Granville will be swift and by the first business day after we receive your order form. You will be contacted to organise delivery and payment method at this time, and your items delivered subject to your preferred payment method meeting banking criteria. We expect this system may be improved with a credit facility within a few months, but to keep costs down we prefer to find a supplier of online services who do not charge a fee for yours and our transactions.

And remember, all items are delivered free anywhere within Australia.

CROSSWORD CORNER



ACROSS

1. Puzzler
8. Fleecy animal
9. Film house
10. Italian hello
11. Adolescent
12. Concurred
14. Produce
15. Travel break
17. Crypt
18. Write illegibly
19. Dessert ...split
20. Teaching, direction

DOWN

2. Sets of locos and carriages
3. Marriage therapy
4. Burned bread
5. Passageway
6. Copy
7. Musical Genre 18th century
13. Go into detail
14. Large moose type animal
16. Man servant
17. Doctrine, ism

Solution next issue.

Apologies for July crossword fiasco, with missing clues, incorrectly numbered boxes, and an overall disappointing entry. I put it down to my old system taking a beating during a Windows cumulative update that finally took full toll in September. Hopefully, this issue's crossword is free from the gremlins...and my typing improves....ED.

THE UNKNOWN COMIC

A week after he bought a bull, a grazier complained to his neighbour that, "All the bull does is eat grass. Won't even look at a cow."

The neighbour suggested, he call in a vet

A week later the grazier is much happier. "The vet gave him some pills, and the bull serviced all of my cows!" he told his mate. "Then he broke through the fence and bred with all my neighbor's cows! He's like a machine!"

"What kind of pills were they?" asked the mate.

"I don't know, but they've got a peppermint taste."

We'd finally built our dream home, but the contractor had a concern that the placement of an atrium window for our walk-in shower. "I'm afraid your neighbours might have a good view of you au naturel," he said.

My middle-aged wife put him at ease. "Don't worry," she said. "They'll only look once."

Have you noticed as you grow older things begin to click....yeah, like your wrists, elbows, hips and knees.

And another thing, my wife reckons I'm getting an SUV for Christmas. That's Sox, underwear and Viagra.....

For her 50th birthday, my wife said, "I'd love to be ten again." So that Saturday, I made her a stack of syrup covered pancakes, her favorite childhood breakfast. Then we hit the playground and a merry-go-round. We finished the day with a banana split. "So how did you enjoy being a kid for a day?" I asked.

"Great," she said. "But when I said I wanted to be ten again, I meant my dress size."

When I lost my rifle, the Army charged me my full fortnights pay. That's why in the Navy, the captain goes down with the ship.

I tried to throw my boomerang out... 6 times.

MORE MERCHANDISE FOR SALE ON PAGES 32 & 33.

MERCHANDISE GOES ON LINE

Selling merchandise is a valuable resource for our Branches and Sub-Branches to raise revenue that allows us to maintain our offices administration, pay rents, provide office equipment and volunteer staff amenities, and cater to the veterans that visit our premises around Australia for assistance.

By the time you read this we will have introduced web online purchasing at our NSW website (www.vvfagranville.org). Simply go to our website and click the 'Merchandise' button. This will take you to our ecommerce site from where you can select your product/s. On checkout you will automatically generate an email that sends an order form to the Granville office and a confirmation to your email inbox.

NSW Branch will contact you for payment, confirm delivery address, and process your order upon payment satisfaction, which can be via Credit Card, Cheque, Money Order, or by cash if collecting in person. Further details will be available from the website.

AND REMEMBER - DELIVERY IS FREE !!!

**INDIVIDUAL PURCHASERS ARE INVITED TO CONTACT THEIR CLOSEST
BRANCH/SUB-BRANCH FOR INFORMATION OR TO PLACE AN ORDER.**

**PRODUCTS
DELETED
ON PURPOSE**

SPECIAL FEATURE— SERIALISED HISTORY PART 1

BEGINNING THIS ISSUE WE BRING AN EXPOSE INTO ONE OF THE MOST DEVISIVE PERIODS IN AUSTRALIA IN THE 20TH CENTURY...

THE VIETNAM WAR — AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

Compiled from records, official reports, and historical accounts by Bob Freshfield.

Introduction

What is referred to as the Vietnam War began for the US in the early 1950s when it deployed military advisors to support South Vietnam forces. Australian advisors joined the war in 1962. South Korea, New Zealand, The Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand also sent troops.

The war ended in 1975 with a defeat for the US alliance.

But this was only the most recent chapter of an era spanning many decades, indeed centuries, of conflict in the region now known as Vietnam.

This story begins during the Second World War when the Japanese invaded Vietnam, then a colony of France.

1. French Indochina – Vietnam

Prior to WW2, Vietnam was part of the colony of French Indochina that included Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Vietnam was divided into the 3 governances of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochichina. (*See Map1*). In 1940, the Japanese military invaded Vietnam and took control from the *Vichy-French* government stationing some 30,000 troops securing ports and airfields. Vietnam became one of the main staging areas for Japanese military operations in South East Asia for the next five years.

During WW2 a movement for a national liberation of Vietnam from both the French and the Japanese developed in amongst Vietnamese exiles in southern China. In May 1941 *Ho Chi Minh* formed these exiles into the *Viet Minh*, a ‘united front’ for several nationalist groups. Utilising the teaching of Mao Zedong -Mao Tse Tung - in the art of guerrilla hit and run tactics, Minhs’ group became highly skilled in harassing the Japanese invaders.

The Chinese and Americans began using this group for intelligence gathering, of Japanese movements, and to assist in the rescue of downed pilots, relying more and more on the *Viet Minh* as the war progressed.

In March 1945, with defeat looking ominous, the Japanese disarmed and interned the French, who had cooperated with Japans’ occupation forces. *Bao Dai*, the last (French) appointed Emperor of Vietnam, was permitted to proclaim Vietnam’s independence and appoint a national government at Hue. However, all real power remained with the Japanese Army of occupation.

Meanwhile, in 1943, the *Viet Minh* had organised itself into a network of political agents and groups of guerrilla fighters, making themselves useful to the allies still fighting Japan. China and the USA gave financial assistance, and training, and weapons through the operations of the OSS (*Office of Strategic Services – the forerunner of the CIA*).



1945 the French began the reconquest of Vietnam, driving both communists and non-communists into armed resistance. This became known as the *Indochina War*, and lasted from 1946 to 1954.

The French could only maintain stability in the major cities with it becoming increasingly more difficult to control other parts of the country. Neither side could gain the upper hand until, in 1954, the *Viet Minh* overran an important base in the north at what became known as the *Battle of Dien Bien Phu*. All French troops then withdrew to the southern half of Vietnam, and soon after the French Government in Paris announced that the *Geneva Convention*, set up beforehand, was ready to reach a treaty agreement between the two parties.

The result of that treaty saw Vietnam divided, at the 17th parallel, into North and South

Vietnam. (See Map2.). The Hanoi government in the north was led by *Ho Chi Minh*, and a government acceptable to the French, was set up in the southern city of *Saigon*. The French Army remained in South Vietnam, training the new South Vietnam Army, fearing a possible resurgence of old *Viet Minh* units, still residents of the south, calling themselves the National Liberation Front of the Southern Region but often referred to as the *Viet Cong*.

With the fall of Japan in August 1945 the *Viet Minh* ordered a general uprising, taking power in Hanoi, northern Vietnam, that same month. *Bao Dai* abdicated as Emperor, after his Hue government resigned in favour of the Hanoi Government set up under *Ho Chi Minh*.

At the end of WW2, during the *Potsdam Conference*, (Set up by the Allies to settle land boundaries, and reparations, among other matters), France tried to regain control of her territories in Indochina. Under the arrangements it was left to the British to disarm the Japanese in the south of Vietnam, and China to disarm them in the north. China did not want the French returned to the region, and decided not to interfere with the established *Ho Chi Minh* Government in Hanoi.

The British on the other hand, not only rearmed the French that the Japanese had interned, but supported them to depose the southern Vietnam administration. In September



Ho Chi Minh & French leader Georges Bidault in 1946



(The French surrender at Dien Bien Phu)
(Pic. Courtesy Hanoi Library Refl0000497)

2. The 'Advisory' Teams

In 1956 the French had totally withdrawn from South East Asia, expecting that an election for a government of the whole of Vietnam agreed to at the Geneva Convention would take place. However, the South, led by *Ngo Dinh Diem*, did not allow the election to proceed,

instead inviting the USA to provide assistance.

The task of training the South Vietnamese forces fell to a USA Advisory Team. In the early 1960's it was reported that thousands of 'Advisors' were working in South Vietnam. It was at this time that western allies feared a communist takeover in the whole of the southern Asia region, putting forward the theory of the *Domino Effect*.



(PIC. – Australian Advisor with ARVN troops-Ctsy
Australia at War- ABC TV)

In August 1962, under the auspices of having the survival of the South Vietnam government as in Australia's national interest, the Menzies Government sent a team of Australian Military Advisors. The team became known as the *AATTV* – Australian Army Training Team Vietnam- and by 1965 numbered some 100. Not only did this group train the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam, *ARVN*, but went on combat operations, with their ARVN counterparts, against the *Viet Cong* and, eventually, the *Peoples Army of Vietnam (PAVN)* often referred to as the *NVA* or *North Vietnamese Army*.

There were 4 Victoria Crosses awarded to Australians during the Vietnam War; all going to members of *AATTV*. It was the most highly decorated unit in Australian military history.



3. Conscription

Conscription was introduced in Australia in November 1964, by the *Menzies Government*, to bolster the Australian Army troop numbers. All males were required to register for *National Service* as they turned 19 years of age. The accepted *modus operandi* was that numbered tiles, or marbles, representing birth dates were drawn, and all those whose 20th birthday matched the number drawn, were required to undergo physical and medical examinations, to ascertain acceptability for service in the Australian Army.

If a male passed the examinations they were 'called-up', or conscripted into National Service, for a 2 year term in the Army. there was no 'call-up' Services, for the Royal Australian Navy or the Royal Australian Air Force. Clearly, the government wanted to bolster the ground troops for commitment overseas.

Nearly 725,000 registered for National Service between 1965 and 1972. The total actually called up for service in the Army was roughly 60,000, with a third of that number, almost 20,000 *Nashos*, serving in South Vietnam.

In 1971, when 4RAR/NZ – 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (With a New Zealand Company on Detachment)- commenced a tour of duty, roughly 45 percent of the Regiment's battalions were National Servicemen.



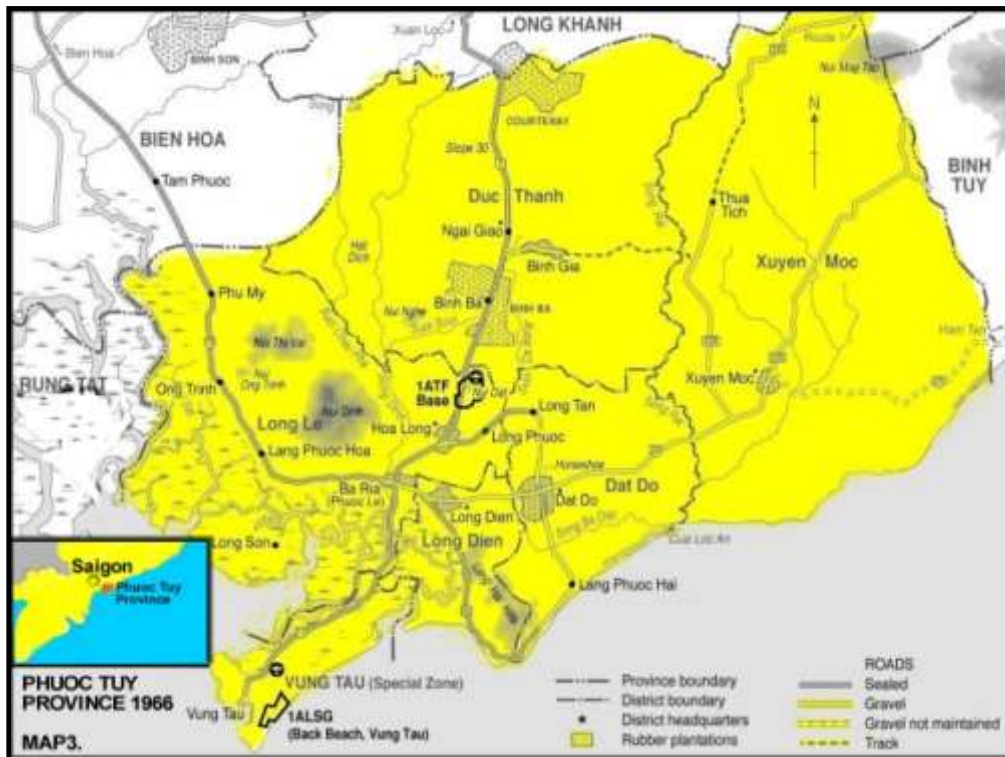
4. Australia commits troops

The *Viet Cong* were seriously threatening the South Vietnam Governments security by 1965, and the USA began committing military units. The PAVN, often referred to as the *North Vietnam Army* or NVA retaliated by bolstering its support of the *Viet Cong*, inserting troops in the north of South Vietnam, and supplying weapons and instructors to *Viet Cong* enclaves further south.

The Australian Government increased its commitment as well, sending an Infantry Battalion, *1RAR*, (1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment), along with Armoured, Signals and logistical support groups, totaling about 1200 men. The first Australian troops were assigned to a *USA Brigade* stationed at *Bien Hoa Air Base*, near *Saigon*. Other nations including *South Korea* began sending supporting forces as well.

In 1966 Australia increased its commitment to a task force, similar in size to a Brigade, with two (later increased to three) Infantry Battalions, supported by the *RAA* – Royal Australian Artillery-, Tanks and APCs' – Armoured Personnel Carriers-, Engineers and Ordnance corps, along with air support from *RAAF*, (Royal Australian Air Force), helicopter gunships, troop carriers, and *Canberra Bombers*.

The *RAN* – Royal Australian Navy – contingent included the converted aircraft carrier *HMAS Sydney*, as a means to ferry men and equipment to South Vietnam from Australia.



Given a Province as an operational area, *Phuoc Tuy*, 1ATF – 1st Australian Task Force – built an operational base at *Nui Dat*, (see map3.), and set up a large support base, 1ALSG – 1st Australian Logistics Support Group – at the port city of *Vung Tau*.

Each unit of Australian committed troops were expected to complete a 12 month *Tour Of Duty*, with each battalion rotating in a sequence that saw 7 Australian battalions touring twice, and 8RAR and 9RAR once over the next 6 years. Remember too, that the AATTV were still in-country and operating over the same period.

5. Guerrilla warfare

With superior firepower, and modern warfare utilising helicopters to provide mobility to ground forces, Australian forces could deploy in concentrated numbers where needed. However, this firepower and maneuverability relied on an enemy prepared to commit large concentrations of its own forces. The *Viet Cong* and *North Vietnamese Army* components were skilled in the tactical doctrines that *Mao Zedong* – *Mao Tse Tung* – used so successfully against the Japanese and during the *Chinese Civil War*. This doctrine taught them to avoid

remaining a static force, offering targets for a superior Army's means of mass destruction. Tactically then, the Australians, and our allies were confronted with *Guerrilla Warfare*.

This type of warfare requires troops to be quickly assembled for a specific task, then just as quickly, disperse before any retaliation, with force, can be made. There are no front lines or rear echelons as in conventional warfare, so there are no 'rear' safe areas; the enemy could be anywhere. In South Vietnam, civilians by day, would often become *Viet Cong Guerrillas* by night. They took active parts in ambushes, planting mines and erecting elaborate booby-traps. Sometimes they assisted in the movement of food and ammunitions and firearms from the villages to military units in the jungles.

The Australian Army quickly developed its own tactics to take the fight to the *Viet Cong*. The favoured conventions of firepower and maneuverability were given over with a preparedness to match the methods used by her enemy. It meant learning the skills of expert bushmen, reading the signs in dense jungle that told of the enemies presence. It meant keeping off worn trails, and being able to patrol for long periods without the need for a resupply, and setting our own ambushes to take on any enemy that broke the nightly curfew.

Australian soldiers employed these skills so successfully that it became the *Viet Cong* who feared being ambushed which was perhaps one reason why so few major battles actually took place in Phuoc Tuy Province in the 10 years of fighting and patrolling. (Some of the major battles that did occur will be addressed later).

There were however plenty of small scale engagements with the enemy while ambushing round the villages and in operations in the remote areas of the Province. Mostly, contact with the enemy came about because the Australians had located the enemy by forceful patrolling, and not through enemy initiative.

The guerilla enemy hid from view using the



jungle canopy and extensive tunnel complexes.. Some tunnel complexes were very large and included first aid stations, wireless listening posts, kitchens and ammunition pits.

While some tunnels discovered by Australians led to food, weapons and ammunitions caches, other more major complexes, like the tunnels of Cu Chi, near Saigon, were so vast, and connected with other complexes further afield, that the overall system was said to be more than 200 miles of tunnels. This particular system housed a hospital and class rooms, as well as war rooms where officers would plan their attacks from.

The tunnels were used by enemy soldiers as hiding spots during air attacks, as well as

serving as communication and supply routes, hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters for numerous North Vietnamese fighters. The tunnel systems were of great importance to the Viet Cong in their resistance to Australian forces, and helped to counter the growing military effort.

Guerrilla armies, like the *Viet Cong*, do not consider their immediate actions as the final solution, but as a way to wear down their enemy both physically and psychologically whilst remaining intact themselves. There will come a time, *Guerilla* armies believe, when they either become strong enough to concentrate and face their enemy or when their enemy's resolve, particularly a foreign enemy, will be so worn down that it will give up or leave. They consider that neither of these objectives may be realised quickly and therefore develop a philosophy of patience.

6. Australia's war



Previous paragraphs have given insights into the how, why and when the Vietnam War began, Australia's involvement, and some indication of how the war was fought. This section looks into the war machinery available and how troops reacted to events.

The *RAN* used the *HMAS Sydney*, a converted Carrier, to transport main force units to and from South Vietnam. It was often escorted by its sister ship, the Aircraft Carrier *HMAS Melbourne*. Warships such as *HMA Ships Vampire, Brisbane, Hobart, Perth and Vendetta*, to name a few, had multiple roles.

As well as escorting the *HMASs' Sydney* and



(9 RAR Boarding HMAS Sydney at Adelaide, SA, for Vietnam .Pic Crtsy AWM)

Melbourne, they also provided off-shore shelling in support (of ground artillery. The *RAN* lost 8 killed and 20 wounded during the conflict.

The *RAAF* contingent included *No2 Sqn*, (Squadron), *Canberra Bombers*, *No35 Sqn Caribou* Transporters, and *No9 Sqn* with its famous *Bell UH-1 Iroquois 'Huey' Gunship* and Troop carrier and *Casevac* (Medevac) – Casualty or Medical Evacuation - ready helicopters being the workhorses. By November 1971 *No 9 Sqn* had flown over 230,000 missions, or 'sorties'; carried more than 400,000 passengers, 4,000 Casevacs, and 12,000 tonnes of freight. The Squadron suffered 7 aircraft destroyed or written off and



2 SQN RAAF Arrive at phang Rang 1967

37 damaged, (23 by ground fire). 4 members of the unit were killed in action. In all, the *RAAF* lost 12 killed and 30 wounded in action.

Of course, war by its very nature dictates the need for troops on the ground to, in the end, engage and overcome the enemy. So it is



RAAF 'Huey' Troop Carrier
UH-1 Iroquois in action 1970

paramount that these ground troops be deployed in sufficient numbers, and with ground support, to successfully complete its task. There is much debate over whether 1ATF was given such resources.

The *Army*, as mentioned before, deployed with rotating Battalions and support units each completing a 12 month tour of duty. 1ATF

included *SAS* and Infantry Troops, Artillery units, Armoured units, Signalers, Engineers, Ammunition Ordnance units, Transport units, Stores and Supply units, to name some.

The soldier sent to South Vietnam was very highly trained.

The conscripts, or *Nashos*, added another dimension to the mindset. They were a carefully selected lot, 50% of all those called up being rejected on medical or psychological grounds. All who signed on as Regular soldiers, and those who were called-up, were first required to undergo a 10 weeks of Basic training. This was followed by, for most, a further 10 weeks training in the corps (such as infantry corps or engineer corps) to which they were allocated.

Each corps unit, once warned for service in *South Vietnam*, was then put through another 3 weeks training in jungle warfare. Some completed this final course with a unit that would then deploy complete to Vietnam. Others did the course as individuals then be deployed as a reinforcement to a unit already in country.

NB: The 3 week jungle training course was reduced to 2 weeks after November 1970).

Upon arrival in *South Vietnam* units completed a 2 week acclimatisation and orientation period before becoming fully operational; ready and very willing to take the fight to anyone who dared.

Our opponents had been fighting those they considered invaders for over 20 years. They were well trained, well motivated, and battle hardened.

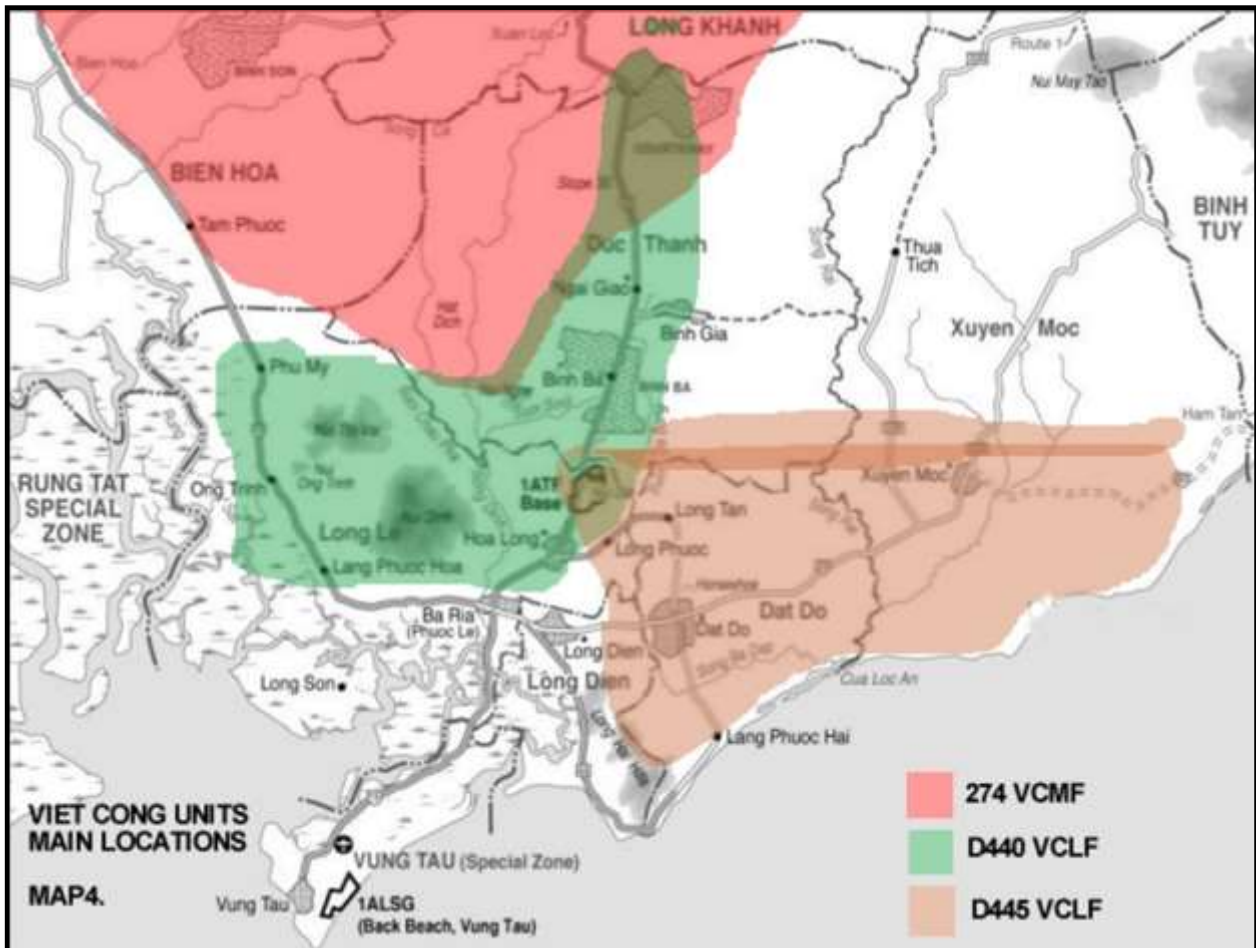
7. Viet Cong and others

The enemy faced by Australian troops in Phuoc Tuy Province was not a ramshackle bunch of *civilians* seeking to undermine authority and terrorise the populace with their ideology. Rather, they were a highly organised and well informed group wishing to unite Vietnam under the one regime aligned to the government of *North Vietnam*.

Since the withdrawal of the French and the decision not to go to elections in 1956, the *south* became a field of rebellion for those wanting the *north* to have rule. The *Viet Minh* evolved into what became referred to as the *Viet Cong*. The NVA – *North Vietnam Army* – supported the Viet Cong with weapons, training, and doctrine, even supplying troops and their own advisors to include with larger Viet Cong units.

For Australia the main enemy units in *Phuoc Tuy* province included a regiment strength - approximately 1200 to 1500 men and women - unit known as *274 Viet Cong Main Force Regiment*, which operated to the north-west of *Nui Dat* along the borders with *Bien Hoa* and *Long Khanh* Province and the junction with route 2. Another 2 units of between 350 and 500 men and women, known as *D440* and *D445 Viet Cong Local Force Battalions*, with *D440* dispersing with *274 Regiment* in the north-west and *D445* operating in the south-east from *Dat Do* to the *Long Hai* mountains. (See Map4. for locations).

There were also three substantially district-based *Viet Cong Local Force Companies*: *C23, the Xuyen Moc District Company*, of about 30 to 40 in strength. *C25, the Long Dat District Company*, 110 strong; and *C41, the Chau Duc District Company*, also 110 strong. The lowest level of enemy was found in numerous villages ranging from 8 to 20 strong. All were skilled in Guerilla warfare, and were not beyond the intimidation of those villagers opposed to them. ■



Map 4. Showing areas of enemy activity within Phuoc Tuy Province 1965–1970



**NEXT ISSUE
MARCH 2017
THE SAGA CONTINUES
WITH PART 2
OF OUR SERIES
THE VIETNAM WAR
AN AUSTRALIAN
PERSPECTIVE**

**AND BEGINS WITH
ACCOUNTS OF SOME OF THE
BATTLES DURING THE TEN
YEARS OF THE WAR.**

NOT TO BE MISSED.

**ENSURE YOUR COPY BY
MAKING SURE YOUR 2017
MEMBERSHIP IS UP TO
DATE.**



***OUTREACH PROGRAM
PENSION TOURS***

Our Outreach Program continues to be extremely successful in reaching out to Veterans, service and ex-service community living in regional and/or remote areas.

Any Veteran, widow of a Veteran, and/or relative of a Veteran in rural NSW, seeking assistance of the Outreach Team in matters of Service Pensions, Disability Pension Claims, War Widow Pensions, and/or MCRS Claims, etc., should contact the *OUTREACH COORDINATOR* (below) , who will organise assistance.

In the event that members have friends who need assistance they are urged to contact Dennis Hanmer OAM who will coordinate the visit program. Of course, the more people wishing assistance in any one town or rural area, the more fulfilling the trip will be for the team.

Remember, we assist all Veterans, and service and ex-service personnel, in any matter relating to your service that may require the lodgement of a claim or application with DVA..

The team will provide assistance and advice to ALL Veterans of ALL conflicts, including Peacekeeping and Peacemaking deployments.

**ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR
REPATRIATION BENEFITS? OUR
SERVICES ARE FREE.**

Contact: Dennis Hanmer OAM (JP)
Mob:0428 388 221 Ph: 02 9682 1788
Fax: 02 9682 6134
Email: secretary@vvfagranville.org
Mail: VVPPAA (NSW Branch) Inc.,
PO Box 170, Granville. 2142



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

SCHOLARSHIPS

**FOR THE CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN
OF AUSTRALIAN VETERANS**



The Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) is a not-for-profit organisation. AVCAT administers bursaries and scholarships to help children, and in some cases grandchildren, of Australian veterans with the costs of full-time education. The most deserving candidates are provided with financial assistance to facilitate their tertiary studies.

One of the scholarships administered by AVCAT is the VVPPAA Scholarship, specifically available for the children and grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans.

If you would like to find out more about this or any of the sponsored scholarships that AVCAT administers, please contact us:

"It means the world to me that someone I don't know cares about my education and believes I have potential."

2014 Recipient

P: 02 9213 7999

E: avcat@dva.gov.au

W: www.avcat.org.au

APPLICATIONS OPEN 18th AUGUST

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR
A SCHOLARSHIP?
DO THE ELIGIBILITY TEST
NOW!

(See opposite)

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP OR BURSARY THROUGH AVCAT?



Are you a child or a grandchild of an Australian veteran?
YES Go to Question 2. **NO** You are NOT eligible!

Are you an Australian permanent resident?
YES Go to Question 3. **NO** You are NOT eligible!

Are you enrolled or planning to enrol in tertiary studies for a minimum of one year?
YES Go to Question 4. **NO** You are NOT eligible!

Will you be studying full-time next year?
YES Go to Question 5. **NO** You are NOT eligible!

Are you or will you be eligible for Centrelink's Youth Allowance?
YES Go to Question 6. **NO** See Note 1 below.

Are you under 25 yrs of age? **NO** See Note 2 below.
YES

Please contact AVCAT for more information.

NOTES:

1. Scholarships are awarded to those students in disadvantaged circumstances as determined by the means test eligibility for Youth Allowance. You need to be eligible for Youth Allowance even if not receiving it.

2. If you are older than 25 years you will need to explain the reasons for your delay in tertiary studies.

To find out more please feel free to contact
 AVCAT:



P: 02 9213 7999 or
 E: avcat@dva.gov.au
 or go our website:
www.avcat.org.au

" HEARTACHE ON THE HOMEFRONT."

He was drafted in the ballot.
 Her son was off to war.
 The news that day so shocked her –
 It rocked her to her core.

Fresh faced, naive , her only son ,
 No sense of self , unsure .
 Was trained to kill, to take a life.
 Her heart-felt pain ignored.

A year of days without an end,
 The horror On The Air.
 Her son there in that story,
 She at home despaired.

To lose this life, her son, what then?
 Each day she faced that fear.
 She dreamt that he was on the phone.
 She prayed "Lord keep him near."

At home at last, alive, alone.
 On red alert, a world apart,
 Each day as if it was his last.
 Her son no more that boy at heart.

Condemned, confused, to start again.
 Flown back to Oz at night.
 "Get on with life ! That was no war!!
 He has no issues ! , right ? "

Her son was in the Ballot,
 Her son was sent to war.
 A mother's pain, a mother's tears.
 Her heartache no one saw.

By
 Ross Bridle.

REUNIONS & NOTICES

Please consider leaving a bequest in your will

Every Veteran deserves a lifestyle and better treatment than is currently available. Every Veteran should be able to successfully attain their rights to pensions and just compensation.

Yet we still receive veterans unaware of their rights, what they may be entitled to, and where and how to apply or enter a claim.

Through your Will, you have the power to help us achieve our goals. Help surviving veterans, and those that follow them, to receive their true entitlements.

Through your Will you have the power to make a difference. Any gift you bequest to our Association, no matter how large or small, will assist a fellow veteran.

You don't need to be wealthy or have tens of thousands of dollars to make a difference to the lives of veterans and those who follow us. Many people leave amounts both large and small through their wills to our association.

Combined each amount assists our association to carry on the vital support network we provide to the veteran community.

OPERATION Life



REGISTER NOW!!

Phone Veterans and Veterans Counselling Service
on 1800 011 046 or 9761 5000

Operation *Life* workshops' emphasis is on suicide prevention – they aim to help members of the veteran community to recognise someone who might be having thoughts of suicide and to link them in with appropriate help. There are three types of workshops:

- Suicide alertness for everyone: (*Safetalk*) – half day presentation.
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training: (*ASIST*) – Two-day skills training
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Tune-up: (*ASIST Tune Up*) – half day refresher workshop

Workshops are open to people who are concerned about veterans, their family, friends or mates in the veteran community. Welfare, pension officers and other helpers from ex-service organisations and the veteran community are encouraged to attend



Veterans & Veterans Families Counselling Service
A service founded by Vietnam Veterans

BRANCH LISTINGS NSW SUB-BRANCHES

BRANCH LISTINGS OTHER STATES

SOLACE

For now the guns and cries are silent, as we ponder through the years.
 The only things remaining are the memories and the tears.
 I recall the times when life was fresh, full of youth to do our best.
 Expectations, adventurers all, heroes came to answer the call.

After many months of training, we were so proud, so splendid on parade.
 Our timing, our marching, people watching were astonished what the Army had made.
 Our backs so straight, our bayonets razor sharp and shiny, our parents saw it all.
 Our eagerness, our fitness, how we craved to answer that far-away battle call.
 With deep regret, my father wasn't happy, as he looked upon the ground.
 You see, he'd seen it all before, for he had been around.

On the night of our departure, there were goodbye kisses and , the parting words quickly said.
 We were off to someone else's war, which filled others with utmost dread.
 I recalled that I looked at my dear father; he was so sad and had held a tear in each eye,
 I remembered how I gently whispered to him, "Don't worry, I promise not to die."

Through the many months of combat, when our next step could be our last,
 having artillery shells roar over us, sounding like a steam train's lonely blast.
 I can still feel the freezing jungle nights, the warmth of the morning sun.
 The body counts from our night ambush, they were always done.
 I remember well, those rotten politicians, I never once saw any of their lot,
 not one of them appeared amongst us, probably none ever fired a bloody shot!

It was so darn hard to keep on going, through the rain, the death, the fear.
 The constant fall in our numbers, as our mates, our friends, disappeared.
 The Jumping Jack mines ever present; the M.60 machine-gun blasts,
 the AK-47 replies, the shells zinging and whip-cracking past.

And so, as I recall, it never did get any better, in that rotting, stinking place,
 where huge spiders and scorpions lived and thorns ripped through your face.
 To make a friend was frowned upon, for tomorrow he may not be there.
 He may end up a 'dust-off' in a body-bag, and majestically lifted into the air.

Oh, to be young again, to feel immortal; to think you're far beyond death's door.
 Never to have experienced the thunder of cannon, nor the horror of bloody war!
 And when the call's been answered, and we reflect upon those days,
 I must admit we lived a life of fortune, in so many different ways.

To my father, I kept my promise – I did not come home dead.
 I recall how happy he was, as he smiled at me, as I lay in my hospital bed.
 Some say you should be happy if you've survived a terrible plight,
 but tell that to my dreams and nightmares, as I still wander through the house at night.

But now we're old and weary, and the very young look up and frown.
 "What's wrong with you ol' Digger, did you never get around?"
 Then they look at your medals gleaming, and then look you in the eye.
 A sudden change in recognition occurs, as the troops go marching by.

And through all the days of Anzac, the memories still contain,
 Youthful thoughts and feelings, only a Digger can explain.

Solace: Copyright © Garry W Morton 2016 (Ex Infantry)



VVCS - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service

A service founded by Vietnam veterans

The VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service provides counselling and group programs to Australian veterans, peacekeepers and their families. It is a specialised, free and confidential Australia-wide service.

VVCS staff are qualified psychologists or social workers with experience in working with veterans, peacekeepers and their families. They can provide a wide range of treatments and programs for war and service-related mental health conditions including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Veterans Line can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and counselling. Phone 1800 011 046.*

* Free local call. Calls from mobile or pay phones may incur charges.



1300 924 522

Our programs

Alcohol Drugs Eating disorders
Anxiety Depression Bipolar
disorder
Borderline personality disorder
Schizophrenia and psychosis
Veterans services

Wesley Hospital Ashfield and Wesley Hospital Kogarah provide compassionate care for those in need of psychiatric help. The goal of the hospitals is to provide positive outcomes, not only for our patients with a mental illness but also for their family and carers. As centres of excellence within Wesley Mission our Wesley Hospitals have been providing professional and compassionate care for over 60 years.

Wesley Hospital Ashfield and Wesley Hospital Kogarah are private psychiatric hospitals which offer both in-patient and day patient services. Our treatment programs combine medication, therapy and include life skills and support networks to ensure recovery is effective, ongoing and enriching.

91 Milton Street,
Ashfield NSW 2131

&

7 Blake Street,
Kogarah NSW 2217

A HERO PASSES ON

Phil "Doc" Dobson passed away in Ipswich near Brisbane on Sunday night 10 July 2016, aged 75, after a stroke three months ago. He earned an MID (Mentioned-in Dispatches) for his valour at the Battle of Long Tan in Vietnam, 18 August 1966.

6 RAR D Company commander at the battle, Harry Smith upon hearing of "Docs" passing said, "Corporal Dobson was a reluctant hero who always maintained he was just doing his job as a senior medic in treating 23 wounded soldiers during the battle against an overwhelmingly superior enemy force in the Long Tan rubber plantation."

Harry Smith added, "Dobson did an *outstanding job* not to lose any of the wounded men under his care during the battle."

"He was able to bandage people, care for them and all he had by the way of what we called an 'aid post' was a hollow in the ground about 15 metres across and one metre deep and he did an outstanding job,"

"The fire from the enemy was thousands and thousands of tracer rounds coming at us and going over my head and back over the aid post area. If it had not been for "Doc" Dobson's work, the death toll would have been higher than the 18 soldiers killed."

"The soldiers themselves, in the platoons, were flat out doing what they had to do, which was mowing down the enemy that attacked us in suicidal waves. Unless we had the medical orderlies, the wounded wouldn't have survived. [Doc] was a wonderful, quiet, humble man — and not only at Long Tan."

Many tributes from his former colleagues flowed into Vietnam Veterans Federation offices after hearing of death in July.

Phil Dobson received a Mentioned in Dispatches gallantry award for his actions at Long Tan but the sentiment from many was that he deserved a

higher recognition for his bravery

Dobson was in action again in November 1966 when D Company had one soldier killed and 10 wounded by an enemy improvise mine.

In another action, the company was hit by "friendly fire" from a New Zealand artillery battery six months after Long Tan, Corporal Dobson was also at the forefront. Although wounded himself that day, "Doc" still continued tending the other wounded with him.

To put it plainly in the words of those who served with Phil.

"A True Hero Marches Out"





Last Post





Last Post





Last Post





Last Post



But each one, man by man, has won imperishable praise!

Each has won a glorious grave - not that sepulchre of earth wherein they lie, but the living tomb of everlasting remembrance wherein their glory is enshrined. Remembrance that will live on the lips, that will blossom in the deeds of their countrymen the world over. For the whole earth is the sepulchre of heroes. Monuments may rise and tablets be set up to them in their own land, but on far-off shores there is an abiding memorial that no pen or chisel has traced; it is graven, not on stone or brass, but on the living heart of humanity. Take these men for your example. Like them, remember that prosperity can be only for the free, that *freedom* is the sure possession of those alone who have courage to defend it. Pericles

We make every endeavour to ensure the accuracy of all names published in "The Last Post". If any omission or error has been made we apologise unreservedly...please contact the editor if you feel an error has been made.

Vale Ed Margetts

Here lies an old man, a husband, a father, a grandfather, a friend to many, a survivor and to me a hero.

Very few men are called to serve their country as Ed Margetts was, he was called up to become a National Serviceman by an unlucky lottery, he joined as many did with a sense of adventure and excitement. He trained alongside men who normally would become lifetime friends and he went to war for that country because his government asked him to. Little would have prepared him for the country he went to, however, his friends and comrades would have sustained him.

Ed was trained in a mortar platoon and formed close friends with the people he was with. It was simply bad luck that he and his comrades found themselves at a place called Coral and were about to embark unbeknownst to them in a battle which would cost many Australian lives. Battles are strange things but they have a certain type of order in it. Ed was in a mortar platoon and normally they would be placed behind infantry men and further behind them would be heavy artillery, so even in chaos, there is a certain amount of order.

On this occasion, the infantry were dropped by the Americans in the wrong area. Ed's group could hear the enemy over an open ground of approximately 2km and it was getting later in the day, all they had time to do was make scrape holes.

A great deal of confusion existed on the Australian side in trying to get things sorted out, the infantrymen who are normally in front were dropped in the wrong area and they had no cover in front of them. **A good enemy doesn't wait for the other side to be ready but takes advantage of it and the North Vietnamese were a very good enemy.**

They attacked over open ground and Ed and his mates were pouring mortars into them. They kept shortening their range as the enemy advanced. At the very end they said goodbye to each other and were literally shelling themselves. The North Vietnamese swept straight through them and continued on to get the heavy artillery. What followed was an incredible night of confusion and death. Many good people died. The air force was dropping bombs and rocketing the enemy.

Somehow Ed had survived the initial charge from the North Vietnamese and as he laid there right through the night, surrounded by dead and dying people, he was now being shelled by his own people.

Could you imagine what it felt like for Ed? In the morning the North Vietnamese had either been defeated or chosen to withdraw. As dawn broke, silence came and Ed stood up miraculously the only person in his group left alive, untouched by anything in this slaughter house. The first thing he would have felt was survivor guilt that people he would have normally remained friends with all his life would "grow not old as he who was left, grow old".

On return to Australia, he was not welcomed as people from other wars were. He was shunned because this was the first television war and very unpopular at home. This could be verified by a couple of things, we never ever saw any politician turn up at any vets funeral. Nowadays they hire the buses and outnumber the mourners. **At the height of the Vietnam wars' unpopularity, vets flown back into Sydney airport, arrived in the middle-of-the-night and were slipped quietly out into society.** In many cases they could be fighting on Friday morning and arriving home Saturday night as civilians, highly traumatised, disillusioned, and with little or no support from the government that sent them. How difficult was it for Ed to come home, to be shunned, vilified and left to fend for himself. In many cases even the RSL gave little or no support. The only support they could really count on was each other. Support and recognition came later. Too little, too late

These people were irrevocably damaged. This is why Ed is one of my greatest heroes. He survived all of this and stayed in the same relationship forever. He worked out how to live his life in a constructive way and still contributed to society. To me Ed was one of the very few who will always have my undying admiration and respect.

VALE Ed Margetts



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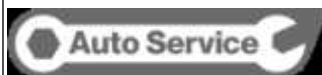
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