



THE VIETNAM VETERANS' NEWSLETTER

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

SUPPORTING ALL WHO SERVE & HAVE SERVED

JULY 2020

*Without the Vietnam Veterans' movement
we would all be a lot worse off*

*Why were we sent to fight the war in Vietnam?
New generation research gives a new perspective*



Phill Thompson OAM

1944-1986



Ray Fulton

1948-2008



Tim McCombe OAM

1945-2015

A FEW ACHIEVEMENTS 1994 TO 2012

FAIR INDEXATION OF VETERANS' DISABILITY PENSIONS.
IN-PATIENT PTSD TREATMENT.
DEVELOPING IN-HOUSE ADVOCATE TRAINING.

SEVERAL COURT BATTLES OVER STANDARD OF PROOF.
LONG BATTLE TO LINK PROSTATE CANCER WITH SMOKING.
DAMAGING APPEALS CHANGES THWARTED.

DVA 'DOCTOR SHOPPING' PANELS THWARTED.

BATTLES OVER LEGAL AID FOR VETERANS.

CHILDREN'S SPINA BIFIDA LINKED TO VIETNAM SERVICE.

VVCS ACCESS FOR CHILDREN.

GOLD CARD FOR OVER 70S.

DVA'S MISUSE OF 'ALONE TEST' CHALLENGED.

VVFA FUNDS CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIPS.

CONTINUING FIGHT AGAINST CIVILIANIZATION OF REPAT.

'MINEFIELD' PROJECT RESULTS IN BEST VIETNAM BOOK.

INITIATED SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM ASSIST.

DVA'S ATTEMPTED GRAB OF AMPUTEES' SPARE PROSTHETIC, THWARTED.

FAIR INDEXATION OF SOME MILITARY SUPERANNUATION.



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DVA Economic-Rehabilitation Fetish harming veterans.
Achievements Part 2. AND MORE.**

VVFA Inc., PO BOX 170 8 MARY ST GRANVILLE, NSW 2142 PH 02 9682 1788 FX 02 9682 6134
NATIONAL PRESIDENT vvfanatpres@vvfa.org.au NATIONAL SECRETARY vvfanatsec@vvfa.org.au
www.vvfa.org.au



ABN 35 490 214 100

Partners

Michael A Carbonaro BA LL B
Greg Isolani BA LL B

Level 5

488 Bourke Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
DX: 488 Melbourne
Ph: 03 8673 5888
Fax: 03 8673 5899
gregisolani@kcilawyers.com.au
www.kcilawyers.com.au

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'KCI's experience and expertise has led to them being a respected voice in Military and Commonwealth compensation, advocating for Veterans and families for 27 years'

SERVICES

DVA - Military Compensation

Commonwealth Superannuation (MSBS, DFRDB and Retrospective medical discharge claims)

Asbestos - Dust Disease Tribunal claims.

Industry super claims - income protection - TPD appeals,

Coroner's inquests

claims for Detriment Caused by Defective Administration - CDDA

See our article elsewhere in this issue

Vietnam Veterans' Stories

From letters diaries and memories

Do you have a story?

We've been including veterans' stories in past issues

They are very popular

Our December issue will be *featuring* veterans' stories

Do you have a story you would like to put together from diaries, letters and memories?

Do you have some photos to go with the story?

Join the growing list of veterans who, without prior experience, have written up their stories and sent them in.

Don't worry about the odd grammatical mistakes—we can help you tidy those up

Just tell your story and we'll look after the rest.

See 'From the Editor's Desk' (page 34) for more details .





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Incorporating

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**CLOSE-OFF DATE FOR
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*****BEFORE*****
3 NOVEMBER 2020**

ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION

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

**The Editor, VVFA NEWSLETTER
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:

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- We represent former as well as current members of the defence force.
- We represent veterans of all conflicts from World War II to Afghanistan. As well as Peacekeeping services.
- 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-Branchees 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.



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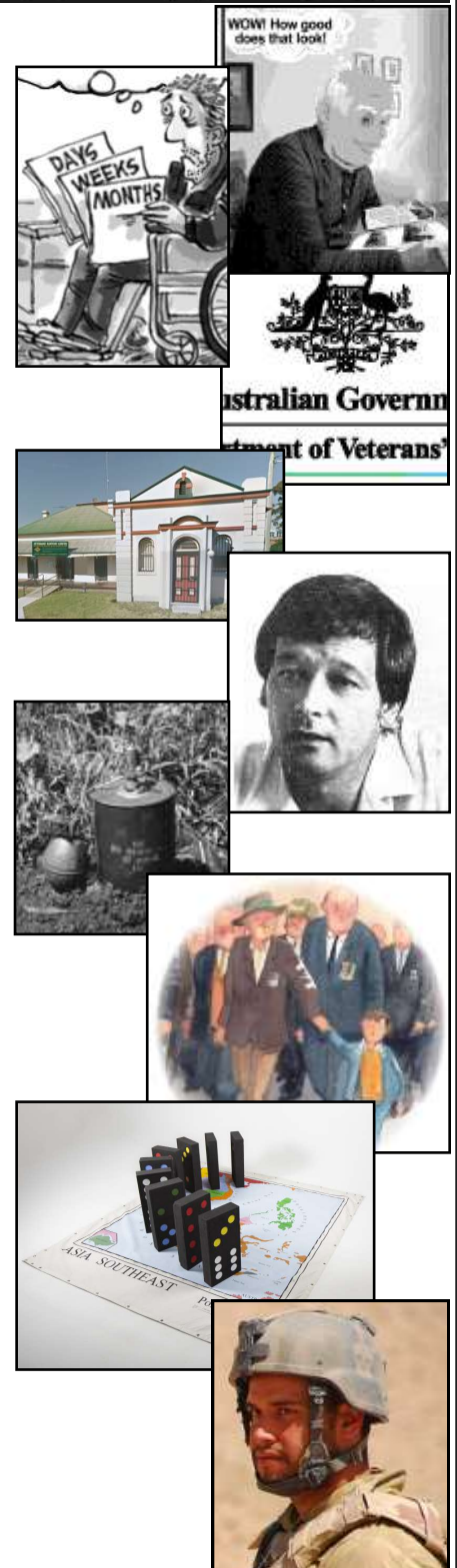
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VIETNAM VETERANS DAY COMMEMORATIONS - SYDNEY 2020 - AND COVID-19 CANCELLATION

The NSW Branch Executive Committee has been considering ways to conduct the regular Vietnam Veterans commemorations in Sydney during the COVID – 19 pandemic and the imposed associated restrictions. The decision has now been made that the normal function usually held at the Bankstown Sports Club will not take place this year. Other alternatives considered were not practical.

This decision was taken most reluctantly as we all understand that our unique group look forward to both the commemorations and the camaraderie which follows on this special day.

A decision on this matter was taken in late May bearing in mind the lead time necessary to organise the Club booking, the service and the lunch and entertainment which usually follow. At the time of writing there was no indication of when clubs would be open for functions such as ours. Medical experts were also predicting a “second wave” of COVID-19 as restrictions were lifted. Other States will make their own decisions in this regard subject of course to the restrictions applying in each individual state.

Unacceptable delays in DVA's processing of compensation claims

Are Claim Delays a Factor in Suicides?

For at least the last year (starting well before the Pandemic became an issue), there has been an unacceptable delay in the processing of veterans' compensation claims.

Many claims are taking months even to get to a Delegate for consideration.

Veteran claimants are, of course, often quite sick and usually quite distressed. These delays can only worsen sickness and distress.

And we know, of course, that such worsening of sickness and distress puts veterans at greater risk of suicide.

The Jesse Bird suicide in recent times is a case in point.

Common sense suggests long delays in the processing of claims may well have been a factor in other suicides.

DVA's Feeble Excuse

DVA acknowledges that even its own 'timeliness targets' are not being met and haven't been for a long time.

Its excuse is that there has been a large increase in claims submitted.

But claim numbers have gone up and down historically. Any organisation worth its salt would have a plan in hand to quickly adapt to these expected increases and decreases in numbers. Apparently DVA lacked such a plan. This failure has led to these unacceptably long delays.

And its not as though this increase in particular should not have been foreseen.

The VVFA has been warning for a long time of the inevitability of a tsunami of compensation claims as the years pass after the end of the Middle Eastern and East Timor deployments. We have recognised that the veterans' multiple deployments would lead to an increasing number of Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans hitting the wall.

Such warnings have been dismissed by DVA.

Now DVA's incompetence keeps sick veterans waiting months more than they should for their compensation claims to be processed and putting them at greater risk of suicide. ■



NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have been open for business

We Vietnam veterans (being over 70) are all specially vulnerable to the dangers of COVID-19 .

So all of at the National Headquarters are wishing everyone a tolerable lock-down and a safe emergence to normal life.

But the VVFA's service is necessary one, so some of our offices round Australia have remained open for physical visits practicing social distancing and other safety measures. Other offices have been contactable by phone or e-mail.

In other words, our work of helping veterans with compensation claims has continued unabated.

And so it must continue because there is an increasing number of veterans hitting the wall, as we predicted, because of the years that have passed since their Iraq/Timor/



Afghanistan multiple deployments.

Sadly and disappointedly, DVA was not ready for the increase, but that's another story.

Rest assured we are here for those who need help and to keep an eye on the government as we emerge from lock-down.

We have seen in the past that the government has no compunction in trying to abolish hard won benefits and downgrade others. So we must remain vigilant.

Stay safe,

Bill Roberts OAM
National President

DVA's economic-rehabilitation fetish is harming veterans

THE suicide of Jesse Bird exposed the failings of the Repatriation System, failings that we have fought against for years.

The basic problem is this:

Sick veterans from more recent wars can be kept waiting for a year or more to establish their condition is stable and permanent, a very long time for the traumatised. It is a process that makes veterans sicker.

DVA justifies its fetish on rehabilitation by making the obvious point that the best outcome for a sick veterans is economic rehabilitation; that is for the veteran to recover so they can return to full time work.

Of course that is true. But it misses the point that many war traumatised veterans, no matter how long they are kept waiting, no matter

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what rehabilitation they may receive, no matter what expeditions they are sent on, no matter whether or not they compete in the Invictus Games, will never again be able to rejoin the normal full-time workforce.

Keeping them waiting can be torture.

And it is not necessary. There is a workable and humane alternative.

Under legislation governing Vietnam veterans, TPI compensation is granted by a medical assessment that the condition is permanent and veterans' capacity to work is limited. Under this system compensation has been granted much more quickly.

And, under this system, if the Vietnam veteran pensioner, after some time, believes his condition has unexpectedly improved so much that he can reenter the workforce, he can apply to do so. He is taken off the TPI pension but left on 100% of the General Rate and returns to work.

If later the veterans' condition deteriorates they can cease work and go back on the TPI pension.

This old but good system avoids the often destructive wait that younger veterans must suffer, yet allows a return to work for the few who unexpectedly recover.

For so many veterans, economic rehabilitation is simply a fantasy. For those veterans, what we should be focusing on is social rehabilitation and this starts with a modicum of financial rescue with a TPI or equivalent pension.

Giving such veterans fast financial peace of mind and encouraging them through VVCS and veterans' organisations to reenter society, should be the priority. It is certainly better for their mental health.

The current system is harmful and should revert to the sane system under which Vietnam veterans have been compensated. ■

If you receive an s137 report from DVA with a 28 day limit to respond, don't be alarmed.

If DVA rejects your initial claim for compensation for war or service caused injury or illness, you have the right to appeal against the decision.

You submit that appeal after which, within six weeks, DVA must provide you with all the relevant evidence that supported its rejection.

This is known as an s137 report.

DVA advises you that you have 28 days (with allowance for consideration of an extension) to respond to this report with such comments or additional evidence that may change their mind.

But some veterans on receiving the s137 report wrongly believe that this is the end of the appeals process, and worry if they don't respond to the report the rejection is final.

This is not so.

If you do not respond to receiving the s137 report in the allotted time the report is simply forwarded to the Veterans Review Board with your application for an appeal hearing.

What is worrying is that DVA don't always send a copy to the veteran's advocate who can then discuss the s137 report with his veteran client.

So if you are a veteran receiving an s137 report, it would be best to tell your advocate about it for reassurance. ■

Achievements

Part 2

What has the Vietnam veteran movement achieved?

Here are just a few of the highlights.

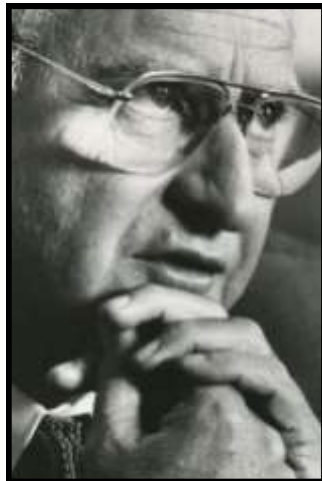
IN Part 1, we gave examples of achievements emanating from the Granville office of the Vietnam Veterans Federation from 1996 to 2012.

But before we set off covering from 2012 to the present day, we should pause to mourn the passing in 2011 of Clyde Holding, the Victorian politician who, in the very early days, took veterans' concerns about chemical exposure to the Federal Parliament and thereafter supported veterans' causes whenever he could.

2012 saw the culmination of some previous campaigning when legislation passed Parliament to refund the cost of pharmaceuticals exceeding the Service Pension's pharmaceutical allowance.

2012 also saw the culmination of our 16 year battle, through tribunals and courts, to have the link between smoking and prostate cancer acknowledged. It could be described as a half win for us. Smoking is now accepted as linked to the *worsening* of prostate cancer rather than its cause. The fight goes on.

2013 saw the VVFA refocus on the damage insecticides may have done us. Vietnam veteran Dr John Mordike wrote a major study highlighting again that there had been a deluge of insecticides



Hon Clyde Holding

such as Dieldren in the bases of Nui Dat and Vung Tau. John Mordike's research also exposed the DVA's altering an army document to downplay its criticism of the way dangerous insecticides were used in Vietnam. This altered document was then given to the Agent Orange Royal Commission. It is probable the alteration of the document was an important factor in the Royal Commission dismissing the insecticide use as having been dangerous.

2013 was also the year we had a stoush with member of parliament, Peter Henty.

He had previously been the CEO of an organisation advocating disbanding the Department of Veterans Affairs and sending veterans to Centrelink as well as downgrading the indexation of veterans' disability pensions.

An acrimonious exchange ensued during which he repudiated his previous views.

In 2014 the VVFA had a huge win. It was a special project of our dogged National President, Tim McCombe.

To have a diagnosis of PTSD, a veteran had to have



Tim McCombe OAM

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experienced a traumatic event such as treading on a mine or the soldier beside him being shot or his helicopter crashing.

But what about the soldier simply patrolling round the Long Hai's where treading on a mine was a real possibility even if he avoided the tragedy, or the helicopter pilot taking a cas-evac from the jungle with the rotor blades slashing the trees even if he doesn't crash.

Having assembled the evidence that simply operating in a 'malevolent environment' should be acknowledged as a cause PTSD, VVFA took the proposition on appeal to the Specialist Medical Review Council

Our win is making the Repatriation system a kinder place for younger war veterans.

2014 was certainly a productive year. The results of several years of campaigning saw DFRB/DFRDB superannuation pensions for over 55s fairly indexed thanks to the support of Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson.

2014 saw, at last, the commissioning of a new official history volume to look again at the issue of chemical exposure in Vietnam. It was the culmination of the VVFA's twenty year campaign.

The volume, which will also cover the traumatic effects of fighting the war, is due to be launched this year, but may be delayed because of Covid 19.

The new volume will address exposure to the deluge of insecticides veterans were exposed to in Nui Dat and Vung Tau as well as the uncertainties of exposure to Agent Orange.

Blue Ryan when he was National President of the TPI Federation famously pointed out that it's not enough just to campaign to rectify the deficiencies of



Blue Ryan OAM

the Repatriation system, there is, sadly, also a need to defend hard won benefits.

2014, as well as being productive, showed the wisdom of that saying. In May of that year the government announced it would downgrade the indexation of veterans' disability pensions; an attack that would have, over time, significantly reduced the living standards of those pensioners.

Amongst other shocks was the Federal government's withdrawing its share of funding for Service Pensioners travel, phone, electricity and council rates.

Alarmed, the VVFA lobbied Senators. In the end it was the resistance of the Opposition and some Independent Senators that saved the day.

And that wasn't all. With Australian troops on the ground in war zones, the government argued before the remuneration tribunal what amounted to a real reduction in pay and leave entitlements.

It showed just how hollow can be governments' expressions of gratitude to the military.

We lost two of our finest in 2014 and 2015.

Terry Loftus was a constant and active presence from the very early 80s, responsible for helping many hundreds of veterans receive deserved compensation and helping agitate for improvements in benefits.

The other was our long time National President, Tim McCombe OAM, a National Treasure in the veteran community.

2015 was the year certain government Ministers and the

DVA made the claim that fighting the war in Afghanistan had not and would not increase the risk of suicide. We countered that it had done so



Terry Loftus

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amongst Vietnam veterans and there was no reason it would not do so in any war.

They asserted that the ADF rate of suicide was the same as their peers in the general population. We pointed out something that they should have known; that veterans should have a lower rate because of the selection process. This phenomenon even had a name in the statistical world; the Healthy Soldier Effect.

This inexcusable ignorance delayed the suicide issue being given the prominence it deserved.

During 2015 the government continued to attack veterans' benefits. In this case the government announced that some 10,000 Part Service Pensioners being means tested on their assets, would suffer a reduction with about 2,800 being struck off altogether.



Jim Wain OAM

We of course loudly objected and the general furore caused a softening of the reduction but still, many veterans were disadvantaged.

2015 saw Jim Wain OAM hit the ground running as our new National President. It was not long before he was presenting a written and verbal presentation to a Senate committee, objecting to legislation proposing a flawed and unfair Repatriation appeals system.

Jim's presentation and submission was partly responsible for the legislation being scrapped.

In a much warranted recognition, 'I Was Only 19' was added to the Sounds of Australia Registry.

2016 saw the culmination of the VVFA's support for the efforts of retired Major General

David Ferguson to bring home the remains of Vietnam War dead from the Terendak Military Cemetery in Malaysia. On 2 June the Australian war dead arrived at RAAF Air Base Richmond. Home at last.

In 2008, Gary McColley, past VVFA State President, after being 'hung out to dry' for 15 months by DVA while investigating an anonymous tip off that he had made false claims, committed suicide by pouring petrol over himself in public and setting himself alight.

Gary was very sick and the stress of waiting so long with little or no news of what was happening got too much for him.

This shabby treatment would have been unforgiveable even if Gary had been guilty, but, in fact, a review found him to be innocent.

The VVFA supported his wife Karen as she attempted to get DVA to court for its negligence. We accompanied her to court on two occasions. Eventually, with DVA claiming it technically had 'no duty of care' (that's right, it claimed it had no duty of care) Karen agreed to a negotiated settlement.

2017 saw one of DVA's most outrageous stunts. It drew up legislation to allow it to release to the public the complete medical files of any veteran it chose to..

Of course it protested that it would do so only under the most extreme provocation, but, frankly, as described in detail often in past journals, DVA simply can not be trusted.

Of course the VVFA strenuously objected, lobbying politicians, so that with the help of the opposition, Jacqui Lambie and other Independent Senators, the legislation was withdrawn..

2017 saw a worrying trend accelerate. VAN office after VAN office closed, veterans being referred to Centrelink. Of course we objected but sadly with little effect. We continue, however, to watch this distressing process.

2017 saw a Senate Inquiry into veteran suicide. The VVFA made a submission. The results supported our concerns about the

(Continued on page 13)

Repatriation system and important recommendations for improvements were made.

One of the Senate Inquiry's recommendations was a Productivity Commission enquiry into DVA. We have made verbal and a number of written submissions to the enquiry.

We have, for instance, recommended that the three pieces of complicated and sometimes contradictory Repatriation compensation systems more than one of which may apply to a veteran claimant, be condensed into one.

And we have strenuously resisted the Productivity Commission's preference for the Repatriation compensation system to become like civilian schemes (a not unprecedented recommendation).

We have also strenuously objected to the Productivity Commission's preference to restrict the Gold Card, in the future, to cover only accepted disabilities.

From this period we can not claim many achievements; it is too soon. Sadly remedying such system faults takes time. We have been simply laying the ground work for future successes and trying to hold the line.

There is too, the continuing fight to have the families of damaged veterans recognised as second wave war casualties. Such recognition has come a long way since we first began this campaign many years ago, but more is required, such as the Gold Card for the spouses of TPI pensioners.

In 2018 Jim Wain did not stand for National President after three fruitful years.

Bill Roberts OAM, a long standing Granville



Bill Roberts OAM

worker, was elected in his place.

2019 saw DVA parading itself as 'veteran centric'. In a concession that DVA perhaps had, in the past, been unfair in parading its bevy of barristers and solicitors against veterans with very little legal resources at appeals tribunals, it produced a document suggesting it would cease doing so.

But true to form, DVA included fine print that could completely negate its fairness promises.

Then there was its circus act of the Covenant. This was parliamentary legislation recognising the unique nature of military service and promising veterans be treated fairly in the Repatriation system. But once again, the fine print made the generous words meaningless pointing out the promises made in the legislation had no force in law. In other words DVA could ignore them without recourse and, at some stage, probably will.

It has been VVFA's task to expose these deceptions.

Most recently we have the spectacle of a relatively inexperienced DVA officer instructing an eminent psychiatrist of 35 years experience with veterans, to downgrade his assessments. If he failed to do so, the DVA officer warned, they would be rejected and the veteran sent to a psychiatrist selected by DVA.

We have, of course, objected to DVA.

So what does 'veteran centric' really mean? Nothing really. Just another marketing slogan.

Most recently, there have been unconscionable delays in disability claim processing. In some cases it has been months before claims even get to a delegate for assessment.

DVA claims the delay stems from a big increase in claims.

The VVFA has been warning of an inevitable Tsunami of claims resulting from the multiple deployment policy for Iraq and Afghanistan. If DVA management had been competent it would have been expecting the

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

increase and planned for it. DVA had no such plan. Long waiting times cause an increase in anxiety and depression in sick veterans and we know that these conditions increase the risk of suicide.

While there is fanfare for this special project or that special project for reducing suicide risk, simple good management, though lacking in photo opportunities, may be the most effective.

What we have learned over the years is that persistence is required to overcome ignorance and misunderstanding. We hope that, in the future we can report that we have succeeded in remedying some of these more recent issues.

In the next edition we go back to the early days to canvas the achievements of the Vietnam veteran movement from 1981 till 1986. ■

**COVID-19
AND
EFFECTS
ON NSW
BRANCH
AGM
SEE PAGES
42,43**

Anzac Day 2020

For many years I rose at dawn, to honour our gallant dead

Those who left our Nations' shores, oblivious to what lay ahead

But this year I must stand alone and face a deadly scourge

I cannot join my comrades, no matter what the urge

Through the curse of nature, we can't gather as a crowd

And signs of close affection, cannot be allowed

It came from far across the sea, there was little we could do

Despite boundaries and borders, it managed to seep through

It took the sick and elderly and some still in their prime

And all the cures of the past, did not work this time

For one fact man has never learned, along the research track

How to fight blind folded, with one arm behind your back.

We all had witnessed terror, in peacetime and war
Some of our brave medics, had seen it all before
There were so many reasons and theories did abound

United with one purpose, a solution must be found.

I bow my head and say a prayer and recall that sacred vow

As I feel the Autumn chill, crisp upon my brow
I listen to the whispering breeze and turn to briefly see

The ghosts of all our fallen, standing there with me.

Tomas (Paddy) Hamilton

The Minefield

An Australian tragedy in Vietnam

Another extract from the book

...Brigadier Greville—who had also served as the commander of 1ALSG in Vietnam—published a history of the RAE. In that work, he made a comment that resonated with significance for both Korea and Vietnam:

‘minefields that could not be covered by observed fire were more dangerous to our own troops than to the enemy’.

A good reason why [Brigadier] Graham’s second world war assumptions about mining remained unshaken by the lessons of the Korean War was that he had not served there. ■

‘One ingenious project the Australians attempted had an unhappy ending.’

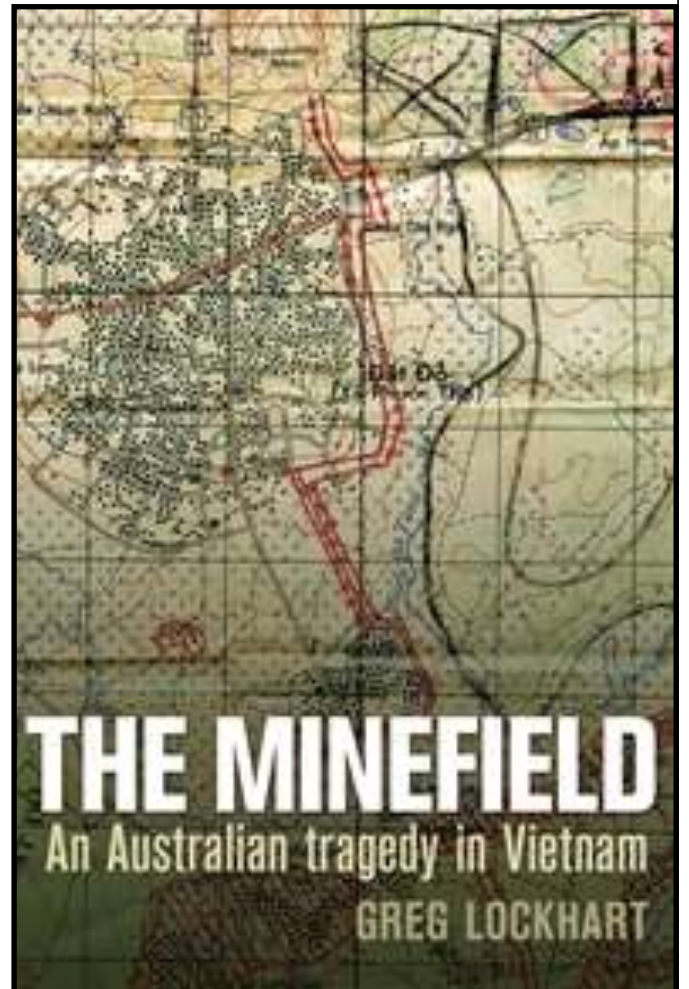
General William C Westmoreland, commander of United States forces during the Vietnam War from 1964 to 1968 in his book, *A Soldier Reports*, 1976

Dr Greg Lockhart is a Vietnam veteran, having served with AATTV.

He is an eminent historian whose work has been widely acknowledged.

His writing of this excellent book came from the VVFA’s concern that it knew very little about the Minefield when dealing with veterans damaged by their contact with it.

He is the VVFA’s honorary historian. ■



It is the best book so far written about Australia’s participation in the Vietnam war. Written ten years ago and still selling well.

To get your copy simply ring the NSW Branch Granville Office on 02 9682 1788. Or order online at: www.vfagranville.org

A gentle way to tell your grandchildren our Vietnam story

The book is suitable for 8 to 12 year olds

(In the book, illustrations are in colour—check it out at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaQQ5YIhIYs>

Available at all good bookstores and on-line

It's a question often asked: 'How do I tell kids about the war I fought in? How do I tell them without unduly frightening them or making them feel insecure?'

Many of us have grandchildren and some even have great grandchildren. If they are between 8 and 12 years old, this book might be the answer.

The book, titled *I Was Only 19*, has been put together by publisher Allen and Unwin using the words of John Schumann's song, with pictures by master illustrator Craig Smith that are sensitive to the age of the 8 to 12 year old readers.

I Was Only 19's resilience is amazing.

It not only remains the anthem of Vietnam veterans, it has been embraced by a new generation of servicemen and women and veterans.

As well as that, *The Herd* did a Hip-Hop version some years ago that rocketed to number one and stayed there for many weeks. The music video of this version was used by the Melbourne *Shrine of Remembrance* to introduce its presentations to school children.

Now it has been recorded and is often played by John's band, *The Vagabond Crew*. Their latest albums are *Behind the Lines* and *Ghosts and Memories*.

And *I Was Only 19* continues its long and important journey in this book, gently telling our 8 to 12 year olds our Vietnam story.

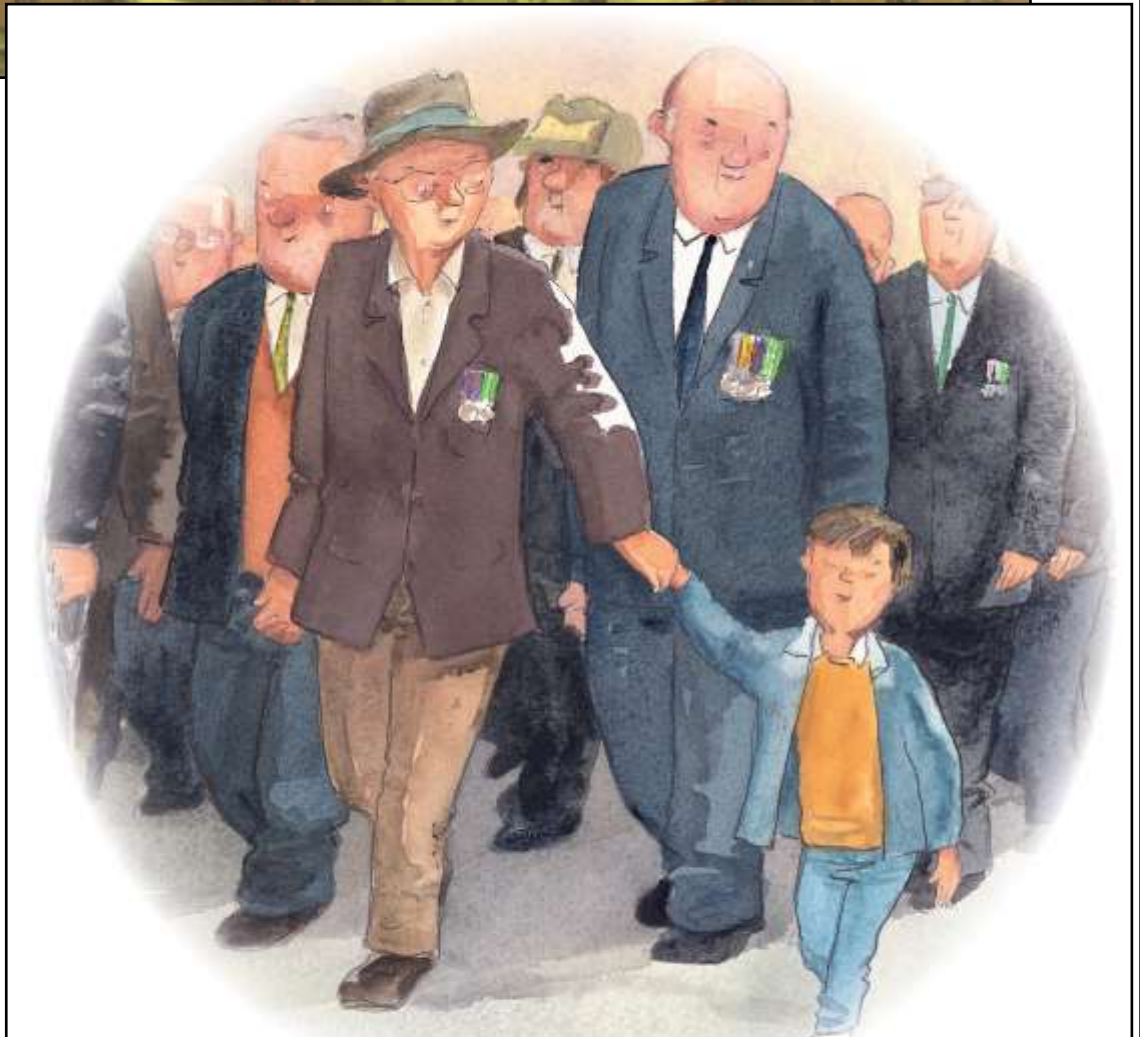
We've reproduced here some of the illustrations, though in the book they are in colour.

This is a book worthy of the song. ■

STOP PRESS

John Schuman and the Vagabond Crew
Re-release of their album
LAWSON





Why were we sent to fight the war in Vietnam?

We thought we knew.

But next generation research casts new light on the origins of the Domino Theory.

Vietnam veteran and eminent historian, Dr Greg Lockhart, author of The 'Minefield' and VVFA honorary historian, examines the evidence, old and new, and comes up with some startling conclusions.

(We publish this article as a matter of interest. The VVFA takes no position on Australia's participation in the war. Our only position is that war-damaged veterans must be generously compensated and given the best medical treatment.)

Made in Britain:

The fantasy driving Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Greg Lockhart



Flawed Theory 2008

Reproduced with the kind permission of Vietnam veteran artist Geoffrey Jones
and the Vietnam Veterans Museum, Phillip Island

Introduction

On 29 April 1965 Australian Prime Minister R.G. Menzies justified Australia's commitment to the Vietnam War in a speech to parliament:

the take-over of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia and all the countries of South and South East Asia. It

must be seen as part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

This claim, which suggests we went to Vietnam to fight China, was a piece of the so-called domino theory. As such, it was seen quickly to be an embarrassment; the governments (Australian and US) who used it, soon forget they

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had ever endorsed it. Between 1945 and 1965, no major Australian military intelligence assessment supported the domino theory; *they all concluded that China posed no threat to Australia.*

Uneasy that our government might be thought to have committed troops to Vietnam on the basis of the groundless theory, the *Official History* (published in six volumes between 1992-2012) says Menzies' explanation of the commitment represented 'a gravely misleading interpretation of the policy-making that led to the decision.' We will be saying that, in fact, Menzies was following official policy.

He had been impressed by early British versions of the domino theory, which reached Australia in 1948, around the time of the outbreak of the Malayan Emergency. With Mao's rise to power in Peking in late 1949, those British versions also began to influence the strategic thinking of the United States, as its global emphasis on the containment of communism was repeated in Southeast Asia. As President Eisenhower famously enunciated the theory of 'Falling Dominoes' on 7 April 1954, a month before the French colonial garrison fell in the decisive battle at Dien Bien Phu: 'You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over fairly quickly' – after Indochina, Burma, Malaya and Indonesia, threatening Australia and New Zealand and forcing Japan into the communist bloc.



'Chinese', were 'coming down' in a dagger-like thrust through the Malay Peninsula'...

To appreciate how the Australian government was drawn into and supported that scenario, we need to go back a step. We need to realise that once the Japanese destroyed the Western, particularly British empires in Asia in 1941-42, the tendency in Australia after Japan's defeat in 1945 was to support the re-establishment of those empires in a new form. This largely meant

Australian government opposition to the post-1945 process of decolonisation going on in the countries to the north; opposition that was race-based. At the same time, the imposition of the Cold War on the process of decolonisation meant that the race strategy, which Australia evolved to establish a new-imperial order in Asia was overlaid and camouflaged by anti-communist

rhetoric. Or, by 1949 new 'red peril' bombast was camouflaging the old 'yellow peril' one in the political discourse with two strategic spinoffs. One was to deflect Asian hostility to white Australia at the time of decolonisation. By providing a language of shared interests with the Americans, the other important use of 'red peril' ideology was to help Australian leaders build a reassuring defence alliance with them against the threat of decolonisation.

The historical issue before us, therefore, is one of how and why that 'red peril' worked to consolidate the race strategy that got us into Vietnam. And the answer revolves around an understanding that the domino theory had far more to do with domestic politics than strategic reality.

The theory was built on a fantasy of British racial, moral and cultural superiority under threat from Asia in Australia. Shaped by the geographical as well as political illusions that 'China' or, at least,

'Chinese', were 'coming down' in a dagger-like thrust through the Malay Peninsula, the domino theory was the fearful side of the race fantasy, the nightmare that vanished once it had fulfilled its political function. That was to constitute the dream of a British-cum-Anglo-American race strategy that would protect white Australia from the process of decolonisation in the Asia Pacific region. And, in 1965, that strategy was to send small forces to Vietnam to encourage and support the engagement of 'white' American power in the region, through its escalation in the Vietnam War.

Before developing the discussion, let us consider some of the basic concepts.



Colonisation and decolonisation

Colonisation was the process lasting about 400 years, in which European and British traders first traded with and, then, settled among indigenous peoples in Asia and gradually incorporated them into their global empires. This was by establishing control over them with colonial governments. By 1900, western empires in Asia comprised mainly the British colonial governments in India, Burma, Malaya, and Singapore, with some concessions in China. The colonial governments in Australia and New Zealand were also British, although they differed from the ones in Asia in that they ruled over British settler societies, which had occupied indigenous lands. Dutch colonial governments controlled the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia); French ones Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos). The Americans controlled the Philippines.

Decolonisation was, then, the reversal of the centuries-long process of Western and British colonisation in Asia. This reversal began in 1941-42 when the Japanese attacked and destroyed all

the Western colonial governments. When the Japanese were in turn defeated in 1945, the various western imperial powers – Britain, America, The Netherlands, France, Portugal – sent forces to Asia to re-establish their colonies post-war. Before the returning powers were in place, however, indigenous movements for

n a t i o n a l independence seized power in a number of countries. Most notably, on 17 August 1945 in Batavia (now Jakarta), President Sukarno declared the n a t i o n a l independence of the Republic of Indonesia. On 2 September 1945 in Hanoi, President Ho

Chi Minh declared the national independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).

On 23 September, the longest and most devastating war of decolonisation began in Vietnam. This was when British Empire troops, who had been sent into the country to disarm the Japanese, facilitated the French *coup de force*, and fighting broke out with the Viet Minh. The Thirty Years War for Vietnamese National Liberation would not then end until the Fall of Saigon in 1975, which is usually thought to end the period of decolonisation.

The threat of decolonisation

In white Australia, the threat of decolonisation was largely seen to be the 'yellow peril' to British race and civilisation. The *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901), which was the legal foundation for the White Australia policy, was shaped by Chinese immigration, which generated fear in Australia during the gold rushes from the 1850s. The federation of the colonial Commonwealth in

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1901 was indeed based on a racial idea of difference, which focussed skin colour and other physical characteristics. Geography, large numbers, culture and economic factors also fed into the sense of threat. The proximity of a small white British settler population with an insecure grip on a vast continent to 'teeming millions' of Asians with a relatively low standard of living had, for well over half a century before 1941, shaped Australian perceptions of the 'yellow peril.'

This did not necessarily mean that Australians opposed movements for national independence in Asia, post-1945.

From 1946, Ben Chifley's Labor government (1945-49) gave important diplomatic support for Sukarno's new republic, as it rose to resist the Dutch re-occupation of Indonesia. At the same time, the Waterside Workers' Union refused to work on ships carrying arms to Dutch forces in Indonesia.

Yet, even on the Labor side of politics there was anxiety about having an absence of white political and military control in Asia. In so far as Chifley's Minister for External Affairs Dr H.V. Evatt took any interest in Asia, he was ambivalent. He advocated changes in the 'offensive' language of the 'White Australia Policy' and called for 'earnest' attempts to assist our neighbours in trade, technical and cultural areas. Yet his post-war aim was not to get closer to the countries in the region. Still anxious about 'the coloured millions' to the near north, Evatt said in 1948 that the aim was to 'maintain' white Australia as a 'defensive policy, not political but economic in character and substance'. His aim was to 'strengthen'— *far away in the east and west rather than in our near north* — both our close relationship with the United States, and our still closer ties of kinship with Great Britain.'

At the same time, the idea of Indonesian independence was beyond the ken of conservatives in Menzies' middle-Australia. As post-war leader of the Liberal-National Party parliamentary opposition, his race-based sense of the threat was not only blatant, it also had a

significant audience. On 6 March 1946, he said in parliament:

Sukarno the man who visited Japan to pay tribute to the Japanese people in this war! Sukarno the man who led the feeling against the British and the Americans in this war! If the Australian waterside workers, with the Australian government doing nothing, are to install him in a position of authority in the Netherlands East Indies, then I say Australia must look to its security! Instead of having, in a political sense, a barrier reef in the north-west, Australia will have a potential base of attack against itself.

Without a 'barrier reef' against the tide of post-war change in the Asia-Pacific region, Menzies believed like many others that national self-determination in Indonesia would 'justify the eviction of Australia from New Guinea and the British from India, Burma and the Malay Peninsula' and produce 'an ever-growing threat to Australia in the future.'

What could that threat of newly emerging nations have been? Without a white presence, Menzies assumed comprehensive Asian incapacity. On the cultural front he said the only Indonesian 'claim to history is that they collaborated with the Japanese during the war'; on the racial front, he announced that Indonesians were not 'fit for self-government'. Instability and chaos would spread. There would be greatly diminished – if any – ways of protecting white Australia from the impending racial isolation and invasion. Countries to the north would be potential bases of attack on Australia, *because they were inhabited by the people who lived there.*

For people like Menzies, however, it became increasingly difficult to say that Asians were not competent to live their own lives. Newly independent Asian governments – particularly in India in 1947 – and leaders across the region could now respond in hostile terms to Australian racism. Increasingly fearful that racist language might help provoke the threat they feared most, the 'yellow peril', leaders like Menzies now had to self-censor.

In this situation, the 'red', anti-communist rhetoric of the Cold War came as something of a relief from 1948. Now, without offending Asians, Menzies' government could spruik the 'red-peril' to Asia and Australia, while quietly maintaining its original race-based strategy to counter the supposed 'yellow peril' posed by Asian decolonisation.

Malayan pivot: from 'yellow' to 'red peril' and the origins of the domino theory

In 1948, the Cold War began when the Soviet Union strengthened its influence in Eastern Europe and in June closed Western land access to Berlin. In February, the communist coup in Prague, reminded many of the dangers of Chamberlain's appeasement to Hitler in 1938. In February-March, hot on the heels of Indian independence in 1947, both the World Youth Conference and the Second Congress of the Indian Communist Party in Calcutta, aroused fear of the expanding influence of the Soviet Union in the region among new imperialists in both British Malaya and Australia. They claimed that, with direction from Moscow, the so-called 'communist insurrections' of 1948 in India, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines were orchestrated by 'Calcutta'. Yet recent historical research makes it clear that no explicit instructions were issued by the Soviet Union to Southeast Asian communist parties directing them to violent insurrection post-1945 and beyond.

In relation to Malaya, it is worth remembering the alleged 'communist insurrection' had a certain prominence in Australian thinking about Southeast Asian and world communism. Britain was still the most important power in the region, and, in uncertain times, Australians desired

that remain the case. This was especially as Malcolm MacDonald, the Governor-General of British Southeast Asia (1946-48) and Commissioner-General for it (1948-55) was an old friend of Menzies and other conservative leaders, including R.G. Casey.

MacDonald saw it as his task to recover Britain's major economic interests in the rubber and tin of Malaya, while formally ending the old empire. As such, he was determined to build a Malay Federation with local leaders responsive to London, which was to say a colonial nation within the British Commonwealth.

To facilitate this project, he attempted in mid-1947 to ban the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), which had fought against the Japanese during the war. He insisted that, although the Soviet Union's only representation in the region



The Malayan Emergency 1948 -60

was a small consulate in Bangkok, Soviet allies were at work in Malaya and Singapore among the 'gullible' Asiatic masses and that they would constitute a potential 'fifth column' in wartime. This did not convince the British Labour government and it took the outbreak of the Malayan Emergency in June 1948 to outlaw the Party – though it had not initiated it.

Christopher Bayly and Tim Harker demonstrated in their 2008 Penguin history *Forgotten Wars* that the outbreak of the Emergency was 'contingent on the actions of the British themselves.' The context for the Emergency was a myriad of ethnic, industrial and economic rivalries, over which the Malayan Communist Party had little, if any control. On 16 June 1948, a

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group of Chinese murdered three British estate managers in Sungei Siput. Those murders were police, not national security matters. But the British High Commissioner in Malaya Sir Edward Gent panicked under the pressure of British business interests – not to mention of MacDonald, who urged him to use British troops to guard the estates. Gent declared the Emergency across the entire country, for what was expected to be weeks, but lasted twelve years.

Meanwhile, MacDonald's endless search for hard evidence of an international communist 'plot' exerted wide influence, not least in the Australian press. As early as 8 June 1948, eight days before the Emergency was declared, the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* published a remarkable article based on a Malayan radio broadcast MacDonald had given on 6 June. Called

'Communist Violence in Asia Is A Threat To Australia', the article provides us with a good example of the early domino thinking in Australia's strategic outlook.

The article began: 'Mr Malcolm MacDonald said: 'The Communists have capitalised on the nationalist movements in India and Burma.' Placing a 'red' topcoat over the usual 'yellow' paint job on the 'wretched, undifferentiated Asiatic hordes', the article sought to manipulate old Australian fears:

If the Communists succeeded in setting fire to Asiatic passion, Australia would have something very serious to worry about. For a thousand million under-privileged and under-provided people could become a mighty militant force under the leadership of

communist fanatics, following the directions of the Kremlin's able leaders.

... Australia would come in for a lot of painful kicking around. The Communists' official policy, remember, is opposed to White Australia.



'...the alignment of Australian politics with a *dream* of British Southeast Asia'

Sir Robert Menzies (above) installed as Warden of the Cinque Ports, during a ceremony at Dover, England, 1966.

The 'unhappy' Asiatic masses were not yet differentiated into separate domino-like countries ready to topple down towards Australia.

Just before the British initiated the Malayan Emergency, however, the 'red peril' overshadowed the still smouldering 'yellow' one, as the *Daily Telegraph* article finally linked 'our Wharf Labourers' to 'the Kremlin'. They were said to have done nothing less than 'started the Soviet ball rolling in Asia'; their success in 'carrying Red slogans to the Indonesian masses ... was the first step

of a campaign which is coming to a violent conclusion in Malaya today'. This was published in Sydney eight days before the British declaration of the Emergency.

From that time, a number of MacDonald-Menzies parallels are worth noting. One was that Menzies told the electorate throughout 1949 he would ban the Communist Party of Australia on returning to power. In the same year, his political language also paralleled the language MacDonald's speeches used to outlaw the Malayan Communist Party in Malayan society. Therein, MacDonald repeatedly depicted the Malayan Communist Party as being agents of alien enemies, the Soviet Union and China, even before China was 'communist'. According to MacDonald, those aliens were 'coming down' on Malaya and threatening real

Malayan patriots in their 'homes'. In Australia, Menzies used (in less bloody circumstances) the same language to promote his British empire 'home' ascendancy in the same binary opposition against an alien enemy 'coming down'. This was in many press statements, which linked the Australian 'waterside workers' and 'communists' with the end of the Dutch colonial regime in Indonesia, the British one in Malaya and, then, Australian rule in Papua New Guinea.

The inflation of MacDonald's Australian press image suggests something else that also intimated

Menzies' rise to power: the alignment of Australian politics with a *dream* of British Southeast Asia. Between 1946 and 1955 there were at least 2,300 Australian press articles on MacDonald; in 1948-50 there were at least 1300. Among these, Denis Warner published a memorable one in the Melbourne *Herald* on 10 September 1949. It captured MacDonald, the 'romanticist' and 'practical politician' at Bukit Serene, his palatial residence set in undulating lawns and gardens that swept down to the Straits of Johore. Renowned for his wide range of Asian friends and for not being one to stand on ceremony, he would pull up a chair on the lawn and invite you to take off your coat, without thinking to remove his own:

For a moment you are caught in the spell of his idealism. You too look beyond the slopes of Bukit Serene, beyond the murder and terror of Malaya, the smothering surge of communism to distant and brighter fields. And the emergence of a new and free dominion of South-East Asia, independent, but within the

framework of the British Commonwealth does not seem so remote a possibility. It is the only hope for Britain in South-East Asia: equally certain it is the only hope for South-East Asia itself. And if it is a dream, it is well dreamt.

A presence rather than a power in a waning empire, Warner emphasised that MacDonald had 'no big stick.' Here, then, was a British viceroy, whose character was well calibrated to take on a delicate imperial mission in challenging times, one whose idealism drew Australian imagination into his sphere by assuaging anxiety about what



Bukit Serene

might be going on in the near north. With Casey and Menzies coming to stay and many others passing through, Bukit Serene was, for Australians in the old colonial twilight, British Government House in the Sky.

Between the dream and the nightmare, the political wheel was in any case set to turn. On 1 October 1949, Mao inaugurated the People's Republic of China (PRC) and, buoyed especially by that devil in the 3 December Federal Elections, the victory of the conservative Liberal-National Party Coalition was borne on it. Chifley's central fiscal policy of nationalising the banks had, on the domestic front, made his campaign vulnerable to anti-socialist propaganda. Outlawing the Communist Party of Australia was also a major issue – although it finally failed in 1952 when the High court ruled Menzies' related legislation unconstitutional.

As for the external threat, Country Party leader Arthur Fadden came in on cue. With 'Moscow centre' controlling the Asiatic as well as

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‘...between 1945 and 1965, no major Australian intelligence assessment supported the domino theory; *they all concluded that China posed no threat to Australia.*’

the Western dominions of world communism, Fadden imagined Chinese communist forces ‘thrusting their red spear points towards Australia.’ ‘With the advance guard of communist forces ... extremely active in the pattern of guerrilla war through Burma, Siam, Malaya and Indonesia,’ the report of his speech continued in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 6 December, no one could doubt that ‘a similar fifth column is operating in Australia, as part of a conspiracy of world conquest, sabotage of our Industries and defence activities.’

By late 1949, the ‘red peril’ had clearly overshadowed the ‘yellow’ one, but not because it provided a more accurate measure of strategic risk. If one looked around at any time between 1946 and 1965, it would have been impossible to define a plausible Chinese military threat to Australia. This was especially when, from 1950, the counterfeit constructions of communist violence linking Asia and Australia revolved around another country in the domino theory’s fully-fledged form: Vietnam.

Indochina pivot: Australia adopts the domino thinking

For MacDonald, the advantage of claiming that

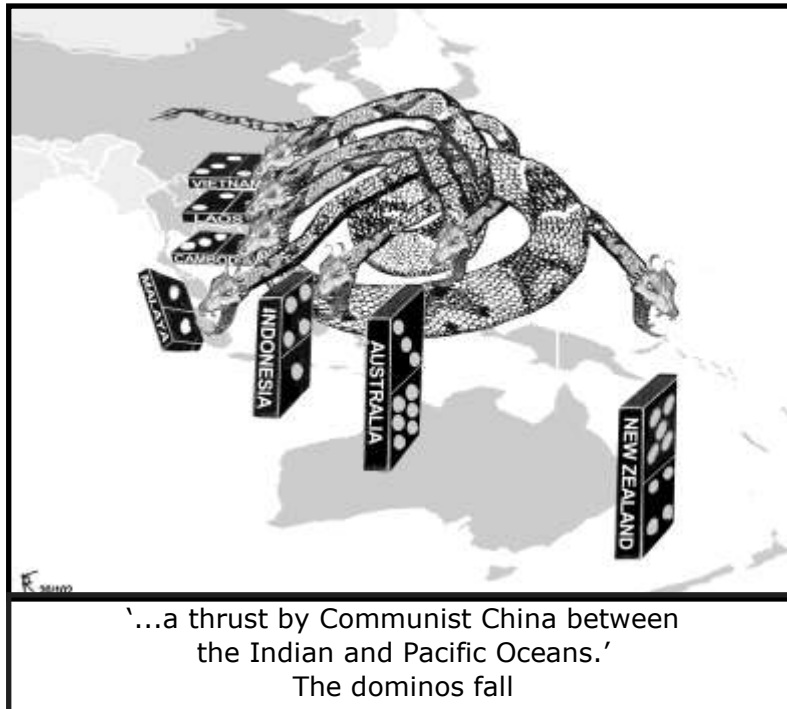
communists outside the country were connecting with the Malayan Communist Party inside the country was that it provided a convenient explanation for ‘the murder and terror of Malaya’.

Further disguising the stark reality of Britain’s project in the region, his self-fulfilling designation of the enemy also enabled him to float his politically potent dream of Bukit Serene.

In January 1950, the British Commonwealth Conference at Colombo, which convened to discuss the Commonwealth’s response to the

new Communist China, provided him an opportunity to expand his work. As a British delegate to the Conference, he met Menzies’s first External Affairs Minister Percy Spender. From that point, Australia’s Vietnam policy began to take shape around MacDonald’s expanded idea of the defence of Malaya. This meant preventing communist China ‘coming down’ through Vietnam and ‘outflanking’ Malaya by embracing MacDonald’s highly questionable support for the ‘Bao Dai solution’.

Note that Vietnam was not China. But with no reference to Vietnam’s thousand-year history of resistance to its northern neighbour, MacDonald submerged Vietnamese identity in it. He saw Ho Chi Minh’s guerrilla resistance to



‘Note that Vietnam was not China. But with no reference to Vietnam’s thousand-year history of resistance to its northern neighbour, MacDonald submerged Vietnamese identity in it.’

French neo-colonial rule in Vietnam as a part or, at least, an extension of Communist China. Making this crude reckoning at the Colombo Conference, he compounded it by dismissing Ho Chi Minh’s leadership credentials out of hand. He then threw his support behind French attempts since early 1949 to place Bao Dai, the former Vietnamese Emperor, who had abdicated in 1945, at the head of a government within the ‘French Union’. At Colombo, MacDonald argued in the face of great scepticism among other delegates, particularly Indian Prime Minister Nehru, that Bao Dai was ‘a sincere nationalist and not a tool of the French’ – although even French colonialists were describing Bao Dai’s Ministers as ‘puppets’.

MacDonald’s biographer Clyde Sanger suggests MacDonald’s position was ‘naïve’. As a neo-colonialist strategist with his imagination, however, MacDonald was bound to support Bao Dai and did until the French were defeated in 1954. In 1951, MacDonald even flew in a light plane with newly appointed commander of French colonial forces Marshal de Lattre de Tassigny over his defence lines around the Red River Delta. Looking down on the fortifications, he knew de Lattre had been appointed in the hope of reversing a steadily worsening military situation, which Bao Dai’s government was unable to reverse. Yet any thought of a final French colonial defeat receded in such powerful company and in the associated dream of Bukit Serene.

Already, on 8 February 1950, Percy Spender had fallen like a domino for all that. Then, one day after Britain and a wary US recognised Bao Dai’s government, Australia followed suit. This was despite voices in Spenders’ own Department of External Affairs, that of diplomat Ralf Harry, for one, who stressed

Ho Chi Minh’s ‘unusual ability and unrivalled popularity’ and his credentials as a ‘sincere nationalist’. Others warned of the dangers of investing Australia’s longer-term interests in Bao Dai’s government.

On 9 March 1950, a landmark speech Spender made in parliament embodied MacDonald’s strategic outlook in Australia’s Southeast Asia policy for the next twenty years.

Now, in Spender’s words, ‘Vietnam was the greatest present danger point in the South-East Asian area’:

Should Vietnam come under the heel of Communist China, Malaya is in danger of being outflanked and it, together with Thailand, Burma and Indonesia, will become the next direct object of further Communist activities.

Such, at the heart of state policy in 1950, was the perceived threat to the revival of British rule in Southeast Asia. Adding to the naming of the countries that would fall – like dominos – we have the idea that these would fall successively as a result of communist ‘activities’. This was the strategic illusion of the not-yet-named domino theory, which now turned on Vietnam.

As the theory assumed its fully-fledged form, Spender’s phrases ‘coming under the heel’ and ‘being outflanked’ strongly implied the danger of ‘activities’, for which there was no evidence: sweeping Chinese military manoeuvres into the south. In fact, an April conference of British and Australian military intelligence authorities in Singapore, which Denis Warner reported on for the Melbourne *Herald* on 11 April 1950, assumed such movements were not possible: ‘Communist China, lacking ships and aircraft, could not undertake a major operation so

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‘Despite intelligence assessments, which showed China was incapable of replicating Japan’s southern military conquests of 1941-42, that scenario all too simply assumed China would pose the same kind of threat.’

far from home.’ A recurring theme in the adoption of Australia’s version of the domino theory comes into view: determined political indifference to the informed military as well as political intelligence available to the government. Determining that indifference was, then, the white settler society’s desire for the revival of the British empire in the region after its fall in 1941-42.

Lifting the threat strategy out of historical context

Consider now an historical analogy from the Second World War, which MacDonald used to reinforce his geo-political musings on Indochina: the Japanese advance into the Pacific. This analogy had potent political implications in Australia, wherein the dagger of the *downward thrust* of Japan sunk deeply into popular awareness, as the relevant volume in the Second World War Official Histories showed. When Lionel Wigmore’s volume of it came out in 1957, it was called *The Japanese Thrust*.

It will be helpful, however, to first appreciate the use MacDonald made of the analogy with some interested American officials in 1950. For the first time since 1945, the rise of the People’s Republic of China in October 1949 had revived US interests in Southeast Asia, within wider concerns about containing global communism. For MacDonald’s part, he realised that Britain’s power was waning and wanted eventually to hand over British interests in the

region to US hegemony for safe keeping in the Anglosphere.

On 8 August 1950, two months before the fact of China’s involvement in Korea, he advised a US fact-finding mission to Southeast Asia led by John F. Melby that, if China’s Korean expansion succeeded, ‘Indo-China is next’. Why? Let me cull my answer from the account of that meeting presented in Wen-Qing Ngoei’s masterful 2019 book, *Arc of Containment: Britain, the United States and Anticommunism in Southeast Asia*, while retaining its exact quotes from original documents.

Basically, MacDonald informed Melby, Indochina had been the country from where, in 1941, the Japanese, who had coveted the tin and rubber of Malaya, launched their attack on it. Pursuing again what he liked to call

the ‘great prize’ of Malaya’s resources and the communications hub at Singapore, MacDonald explained that the Chinese would again spring south from Indochina. It would be ‘the place of attack ... the highway to the rest of Southeast Asia’. Melby wanted to know if there were proven links between Peking and the Malayan Communist Party. The Commander-in-Chief British Far East Land Forces General Sir John Harding, who was also at the meeting, could say that the Malayan Communist Party received ‘guidance from Peking’. MacDonald buffed up the point: far from being delivered remotely by radio, he said, the ‘guidance’



The real Japanese real downward thrust.
Political poster

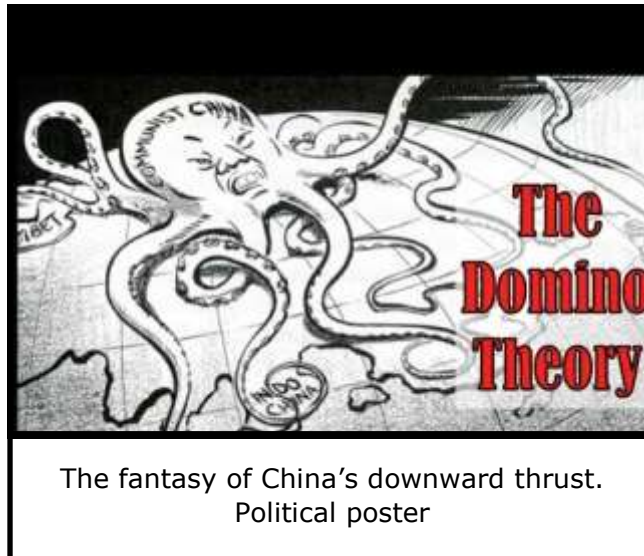
was administered by Chinese communist messengers in person at meetings in 'Bangkok, Hong Kong, much through the USSR embassy in Bangkok'. The succession of falling dominos was re-described: Siam, Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia and beyond. By August 1950, the US State Department was officially saying: the 'Japanese had demonstrated the way' the Chinese would 'invade' the region.

Set in domino thinking, the scenario obviously confused two historical periods; it was anachronistic. Despite intelligence assessments, which showed China was incapable of replicating Japan's southern military conquests of 1941-42, that scenario all too simply assumed China would pose the same kind of threat. Presumably, in the US, that confusion went unnoticed in a cosmic sense of confrontation with global communism, whereas, in Australia, it went with a white dream of British southeast Asia floating in race fear. Either way, diverting attention from the absence of evidence for what British, US or Australian officials were strongly predisposed to think, MacDonald's historical Japanese analogy was empowered in Australia too. Following Spender's remarks in March, we are reminded how the September 1950 strategic appreciation of the Australian Chiefs of Staff spoke from all points of the Anglosphere when it said:

the front line in the cold war in south east Asia lies in Northern Indochina. If that front gives away ... an invasion route to Malaya lies open to the Communist forces ... because of its effect on the defence and internal security of Malaya, Indochina occupies an important part of our strategy.

This, we should add, was even though the available intelligence, which looked forward to 'the next ten years,' caused the same strategic appreciation to inform the government that 'neither the Soviet nor the Chinese communists are likely to be able to mount a seaborne invasion of Australia.' 'The problem of Indonesia,' it added, is internal, there being no immediate threat of external aggression.'

Domino fantasy and fiction



The fantasy of China's downward thrust.
Political poster

Before 1953, Menzies had such little time for the domino theory he did not seem to think it represented strategic reality. When, in May, MacDonald arrived in Canberra to discuss Australian military assistance for Malaya, Menzies was in fact devoted to bolstering the imperial centre. At that point, he was preoccupied with planning for an

Australian imperial force to return to the Middle East to support Britain in the event of a third world war. All he could do to assist MacDonald was to send a handful of jungle warfare advisers to Malaya; create the Australian Secret Intelligence Service to assist in the application of the dark arts; and make available six Lincoln bombers and eight Dakota transport aircraft.

In June and July 1950, Menzies' response to the American request for assistance in Korea was again conditioned by his primary loyalty to the British imperial centre. When the British made a Royal Navy ship available to the Americans, Menzies made two Australian frigates available. Spender further offered No. 77 Mustang Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Initially, however, Menzies made no

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offer of ground troops, because Britain had not made one. An infantry battalion would eventually be forthcoming in late July, once Britain decided to commit. The great flying of No 77 Squadron in the desperate defence of Pusan then became a significant talking point around which the

‘Australia, New Zealand and United States’ (Anzus) Pact was concluded in Washington to secure what Australians saw as the ‘bolt on the back door’ to Asia.

In that race-based imaginary, French colonial setbacks in

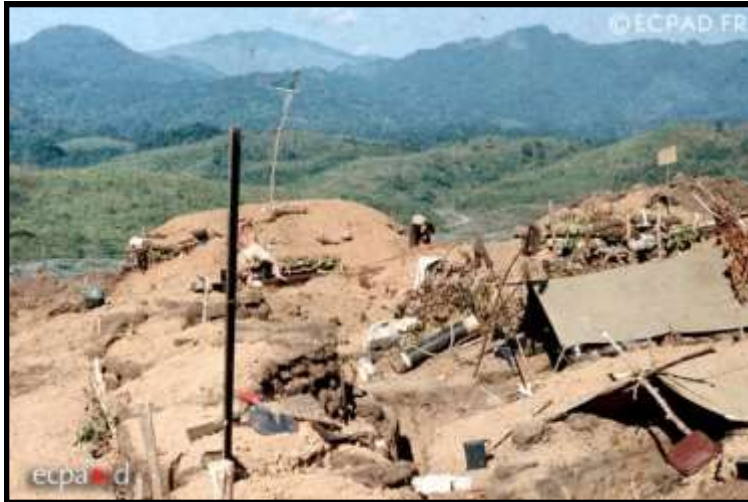
Indochina began to stretch Menzies’ primary allegiance to Britain. In October 1953, by which time French forces were very stretched in their efforts to contain the Viet Minh, Menzies hesitated when the British proposed a Far Eastern Strategic Reserve in Malaya to underwrite the Australia, New Zealand and Malaya (Anzam) area alliance. The security situation in Indochina caused him to seek US support before he committed. The threat of Chinese communism seemed so great to Menzies that only American power could guarantee Anzam.

Although in Vietnam and not China, the fall of Dien Bien Phu on 7 May 1954 greatly reinforced this view. Five regular divisions of an Asian Army – Menzies would not have clearly differentiated a Vietnamese and Chinese one – had defeated an elite French force in an epic battle. The French compared the event with the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Not only the French colonial position in Indochina and the British one in Malaya but, since the British had left India in 1947, the entire western position, which was also

to say the white man’s position, east of Suez seemed to be at stake.

Already on 7 April 1954, Eisenhower had anticipated the potential effects of the then probable fall of Dien Bien Phu: they were ‘just

incalculable’, he said. As we saw at the outset, he next enunciated ‘the domino theory’. In September, the US also set up at Manila the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (Seato) to prevent communism from advancing into the region along the theory’s lines.



French position at Dien Bien Phu

Significantly, besides the US, an old imperial rear-guard of white states, Britain and France along with Australia and New Zealand, still held the Organisation together with no more than three Asian signatories: Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand. South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were offered protection. India, Indonesia and Malaya declined to take part.

On 2 February 1955, still in the aftermath of Dien Bien Phu, Menzies attended the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting in London. There, the now Chief of the Imperial General Staff General Sir John Harding, whom Menzies had already met at Bukit Serene, reminded him in the defence discussions that Britain was interested in a contribution of Australian forces for its Far Eastern Strategic Reserve in Malaya. After noting the impressive fighting capacities of the Chinese in the Korean War, Harding said:

In an attack on south-east Asia the Chinese forces would be limited for logistic reasons to five armies totalling about 250000 men and a small force of about 200 aircraft mostly of the

‘Note further that the scenario had again contradicted informed military intelligence appraisals.’

ground attack type. The main axis of their advance, in which they would have the support of the whole Viet Minh Army, would be through Hanoi to the Siamese border at Thaket and thence to Bangkok. A secondary line of advance would be through central Vietnam to Saigon. By these routes the enemy might reach Saigon about three months after passing the Chinese border ... The enemy might direct some forces against Burma ... But the real prize at stake would be the rubber and tin of Malaya and [the] focus of sea and air communications at Singapore ... From the strategic point of view Malaysia and Singapore were of critical importance for the defence of South-East Asia.

Menzies replied: it was ‘certainly vital that the Treaty Powers build up a strategic reserve on the spot and have plans ready to dispatch supplementary forces if the need arose.’

He was, of course, agreeing vacuously with a fantasy and a fiction. Harding had repeatedly said ‘would.’ No citation of Chinese plans or force analysis also added up to a remarkably over-determined forecast of Chinese aggression in *all* of Southeast Asia. Note further that the scenario had again contradicted informed military intelligence appraisals. A November 1954 Anzam assessment of the period to 1956 had concluded that ‘it was most unlikely that communist China would initiate aggression in the period under review.’

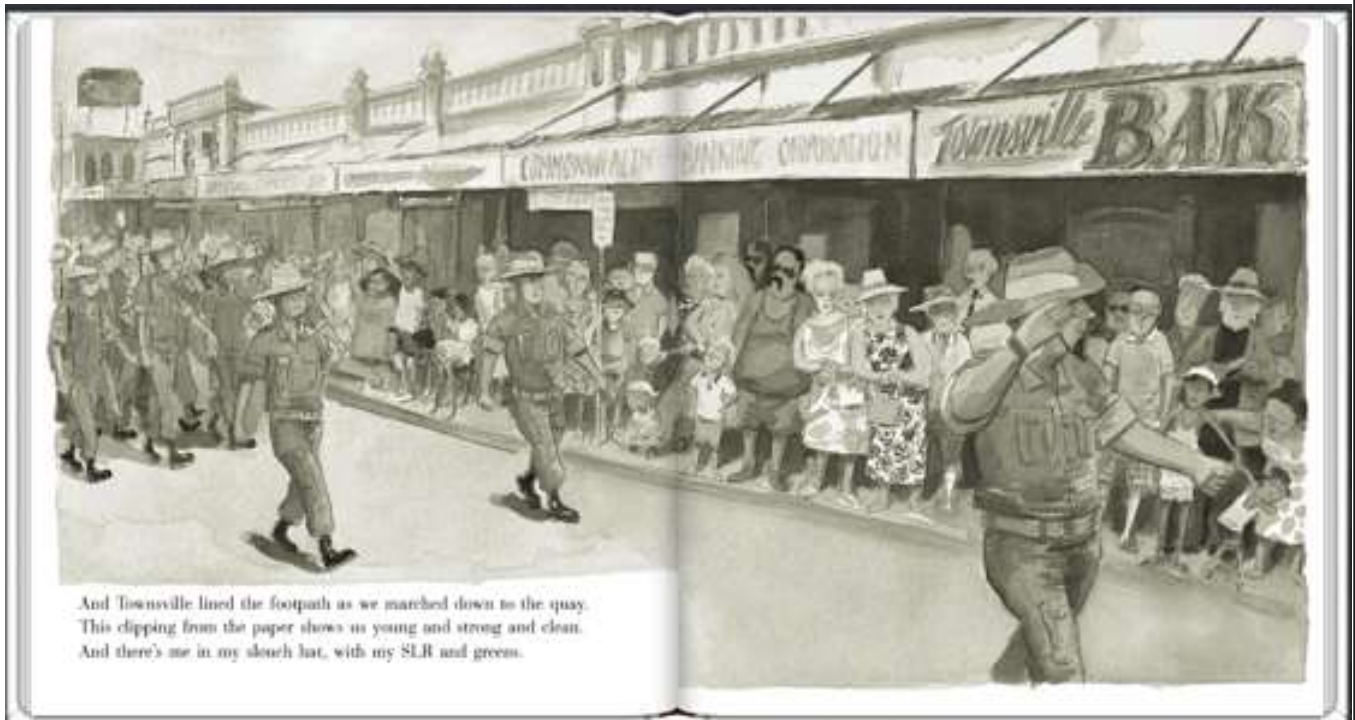
Significantly, Harding’s fiction had centred the historical analogy of the Japanese attack south from Indochina in 1941-42, which we have seen caused Menzies to live through his ‘darkest hour’. And that was something the confected scenario could only have reminded Menzies he would not want to re-live. Menzies was in fact so deeply impressed by what Harding told him that he went ahead and tried to persuade

the Americans to underwrite Anzam. Shocked in July 1955 by the US Pentagon’s refusal to work outside the Seato alliance – to which Malaya was not a signatory – however, Menzies was left with little alternative other than, finally, to commit an infantry battalion and an RAAF fighter Squadron to the defence of Malaya. Still, the MacDonald-Harding-Menzies-Chinese-downward-thrust fiction, which translated into Eisenhower’s falling dominos, now shaped Australian military planning all the way to Vietnam.

Race strategy

By 1955 the defence of Australia was invested in its ‘collective security arrangements’, which were all or for the most part *white*: Anzus, Anzam, and Seato. Erected in the decade after 1945, but ostensibly to contain the Japan-like *downward thrust* of communist China post-1949, this race-based scaffolding represented the new imperial position in Asia and the Pacific—which the British construction of Malaysia in 1963 was developed to reinforce.

In April 1955, when Anzam plans were to defend Malaya from China in Thailand, Menzies announced the centrality of Malaya in Australian defence thinking. ‘Malaya’, he declared, ‘was vital to our defence, more vital, properly understood, than some point on the Australian coast.’ What he meant was not, of course, the defence of Malaya, but the British position in Malaya against an Asian army advancing through Thailand from Vietnam. To defend against that imaginary threat as late as 1966-70, senior officer training exercises at the Australian Staff College still had a northern Thai setting. According to one scenario, an Australian division would deploy to the east of the Mekong river astride the main highway from Nong Khai through Udon Thani to protect Malaya from the downward thrust of communist China.



'And Townsville lined the footpath as we marched down to the quay
This clipping from the paper shows us young and strong and clean'

From the book 'I Was Only 19' by John Schumann and Craig Smith (Allen and Unwin 2014).

If one thought the Chinese – communists – were 'coming down', one obviously built barrier defences forward. Much as the defence of Malaya was to be in Thailand and, with the US bankrolling the Ngo Dinh Diem's Regime in Saigon since 1954, in Indochina, the Australian government had, by 1955, already adopted the strategic posture, which the Chiefs of Staff described in 1964 as 'Forward Defence.' As the Chiefs then saw it, Australian forces were 'contributing to the security of the more immediately threatened areas in South East Asia, and in turn attracting the support of powerful allies, particularly the United States.' (Italics added). Long since a cutting edge and yet on the margin of Australian strategic thinking, Vietnam was then a place that would become increasingly central to perceived United States and, for that reason, Australian interests, as they intersected in the domino theory.

The immediate determinants of Australia's Vietnam involvement are clear. One was the 1962 opening in Saigon of the US Military Assistance

Command Vietnam (MACV), whose badge featured a stylised Great Wall of China pierced by a sword. As in Malaya, the Australian government attached to MACV a small number of Australian advisors experienced in jungle warfare. Other determinants were the strong fear in early 1965 of a communist takeover in Sukarno's Indonesia, coupled with indications that the US was about to send ground troops to escalate and assume the central role in the war they had been supporting in Vietnam since at least 1951. To encourage and support this escalation, the Menzies government deployed an Australian infantry battalion and, in 1966, a larger task force. That is how Australia would pay minimally for its 'barrier reef' of US forces against the incommensurate race-based threat of decolonisation in the near north. And that was the strategic foundation for white Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

For the first time Australia would be in a war that did not involve Britain. Still, the conservative Australian desire for imperial revival

in the region, which determined the Australian version of the domino theory, was one of the fading British empire.

For Menzies, the strength of the theory was paradoxically the great body blow Japan had historically dealt to the British empire in Asia. Given the empire's yawning weakness at the time of the Cold War, a man of Menzies' uncompromising Britishness could only build his power base in white Australia on a geo-political illusion. To 1955, when MacDonald took a post in India, his presence in British Southeast Asia helped Menzies to inflate that illusion. In 1965, with the perceived threat of communism coming down through Indonesia, he had no alternative other than to use a cut back version of Harding's 1955 fantasy and fiction to encourage and support the escalation of US power in the region.

In 1965, we must emphasise once more that Menzies' version of the threat contradicted the then Defence Committee's last military intelligence assessment of the strategic basis for Australian defence policy. The assessment of October 1964, which only slightly revised the fourteen-year-old one of September 1950, was that Indonesia was the only country which might pose 'a direct military threat to Australia ...', although its capacity to do so was still negligible. China was not expected to act aggressively. We see yet again that, regardless of the intelligence, Menzies was always going to claim that the communists in southern Vietnam were the strategic spearhead of 'a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.'

Postscript

That fearful intervention only evaporated after we got into Vietnam and found we were not at war

with China. And that is not the only major point the *Official History* has since obscured. Its uncritical recording of the 'buying-time' refrain, the mantra that the Vietnam involvement created a shield behind which the countries of Southeast Asia had a decade to consolidate their nation-states before their exposure to communism also

denies reality. As with that *History's* idea of the unimportance of the domino theory for Australia's entry into the Vietnam War, the reverse was true. In strategic terms, the containment of communism in Asia had very largely *preceded* the escalation of US forces in Vietnam in 1965 – and was confirmed by the formation of Association of for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967.

By 1965, the Vietnam War was, as Wen-Qing

Ngoc put it, strategically 'anomalous'. Thailand was a US client state, Malaysia a colonial nation, Singapore a prospering US aligned Republic, the Philippines a right-wing US backed dictatorship. Indonesia was where the US supported the right-wing coup of October 1965, and where, also with some British and Australian oversight, the massacre of half a million 'communists' followed. All those Southeast Asian countries had anti-communist nation-states by the time the US, urged and backed cleverly with small forces by the Australian government, seriously escalated the Vietnam War, which went on to kill millions in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. If there had ever been a need to contain communism, there was no 'thrust by communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans', and the war that went on in the aftermath of that illusion of falling dominos had no strategic justification. ■

...the mantra that the
Vietnam involvement
created a shield behind
which the countries of
Southeast Asia had a
decade to consolidate their
nation-states before their
exposure to communism
also denies reality



FROM THE EDITORS DESK

Join the list of veterans who have become authors by telling us your stories in words and pictures.

The List (so far)

Al Wood

Ray 'Boris' O'Brien

Tomas Hamilton

Dave Clark

Garry Gleadhill

Bill Griffiths

Lachlan Irvine

Graham Munsell & Barry Hodges

(have I missed any?)

Send Contributions to:

editor@vvfagranville.org

Or by snail-mail to:

Editor

VVFA

PO Box 170

Granville NSW 2142

Note: We prefer contributions submitted by e-mail in Microsoft Word with images in JPEG or bitmap files.

But if you can't do that then any way will do. We'll sort it out.

So find those old letters, photos and memories and think about having a go.

I pray everyone has remained well, safe, and Covid free during our latest winter of perils. We learnt a new word "Coronavirus", added a new pastime, 'isolation', and forgot about footy for awhile.

Our sincerest condolences go to the family and friends of all who have passed on since our last edition. In grief we also love. Lest we forget.



From: JS

Dear Editor,

Congratulation on the latest newsletter as it was full of good reading and information.

You have excelled yourself with this edition.

Regards

JR

PS I missed the pages about the RAAF.

Editor's reply

Maybe we could encourage any RAAF budding authors out there to write in with their stories in our next issue, and thanks for passing on that idea.

Bob

From: Geoffrey Allen

Dear Editor,

I did enjoy the "BUT" following the introduction of "The Covenant" (APRIL 2020).

Have viewed the "veterans" badge and the covenant as a load of garbage propaganda along with the "title of veteran for one and all". Codswallop, smoke and mirrors trick to appease everyone with a bit of 'colour to recognise service'.

VETAFFAIRS newspaper Vol 36 No1, Autumn 2020, page 8 article . Apply for your Covenant pack today, the introductory sentence reads :

More than 83,000 veterans and Reservists have now applied for the Australian Defence Veterans'

Covenant (the Covenant), including the Oath, Lapel Pin and Veteran Card.

It appears the DVA considers Reservists are not properly categorised yet??

I haven't received nor will I apply for any of this, I regard it as insulting.

Regards,

Geoff Allen.

We received the following from CEO Geoff Evans of Team Rubicon and thought our readers would be interested as we carried so much of their valiant efforts in previous Newsletters.

[IN PART]

"Dear Sir,

I want to thank you for the coverage you have given Team Rubicon Australia in your newsletter. This email is to let you know that as of 12 pm, on Friday 29th May 2020, Team Rubicon Australia will re-brand to become:

Disaster Relief Australia (DRA).

Why are we re-branding?

1. It uncouples us from the idea we are a US organisation.
2. It frees us from licencing restrictions.
3. It allows us to chart our own course.

We feel that the Team Rubicon brand has not resonated deeply in Australia. The new name spells out who we are, what we do, and where we come from.

The true value of Team Rubicon Australia was never in the brand, but rather in our ability to bring help and hope to the survivors of natural disasters and, to provide veterans with the opportunity to continue to grow beyond their military service.

If you are able to assist us to spread the message of this change in your newsletter I would appreciate it.

If you require any further information please contact me. I look forward to continuing to work with you and I hope you will join us at the formal launch of DRA later this year."

"25 May 2020



FORMAL NOTIFICATION – CHANGE OF COMPANY NAME

Dear Sir/Madam

I am pleased to inform you that the name of our company has changed: From: Team Rubicon Australia

To: Disaster Relief Australia

Following the restructure of the licencing arrangements between Team Rubicon Australia and Team Rubicon Global, and a special resolution by our Members and approval of Board of Directors, the company's name will change with effect 29 May 2020.

The change has been approved by ASIC and the new name updated in their records.

You will shortly notice our change of name and logo on all our notices, mailings, promotional material and social media – it's still the same company, with the same ABN. Our dedication and service to our nation, the community and our veterans have not changed.

If you have any on-going agreements or contracts with Team Rubicon Australia, kindly notate the change of company name or contact our CFO Mark Welton on 0431 305 483 or mark.welton@disasterreliefaus.org, with the required documents at the earliest, so that we can replace them with the name of our new company.

If you have any questions regarding our company's name change, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Geoff Evans

Chief Executive Officer & Company Secretary"

FROM THE 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. Whilst all donations are gratefully received, and combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are too numerous to list. However, periodically, we will publish a list of individual NSW Branch members who have donated amounts of \$200 or more.

Generous supporters of the NSW Branch since the last Journal are:

\$5,000	John Stoker
\$2,000	Anonymous
\$1,000	Amelia Jenkins
\$500	Adrian Starr, Harry Lester, Robert Ferrari OAM
\$250	Frederick Moody
\$200	Rowan Gillard, David Coleman

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

Dr John Carroll has requested we make the following information available. Note it's not just Navy, it includes anyone who sailed on Navy ships, too.

"The HMAS Association is seeking assistance with a Petition regarding Agent Orange exposure during the Vietnam War.

The Petition is located at URL

<https://www.gopetition.com/petitions/agent-orange-exposure.html>

Further details regarding the studies used as background to this Petition may be found in my book, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind, the RAN in Vietnam 1965-72. (2020) Rosenberg, NSW."

A short Precis of the Chapter dealing with this issue may be sent as further background should you need further clarification on this issue.

Agent Orange exposure did not discriminate against anyone who served in Vietnam, but, as studies have shown, it was sailors, and those who travelled by sea to Vietnam, are the ones it has hit the hardest.

This would include those who served in Army Small Ships, or those who were transported by sea to Vietnam in HMAS Sydney.

The HMAS Association hopes you can assist.

Dr John Carroll - President, HMAS Sydney Assoc. (Inc. Vic.)"

2019/2020 RAFFLE WINNERS

Congrats to our annual raffle winners, and thanks to everyone purchasing because it helps us administer our Scholarships each year.

1st Prize: G Lovett North McLean Qld

2nd Prize R Boucher Trangie NSW

3rd Prize V H Lee Mt Pritchard NSW

4th Prize M O'Halloran Wollongong NSW

**Ron O'Connor JP
National and NSW Secretary**

NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S REPORT



COVID-19 UPDATE

The Granville Veterans Support Centre has been manned by a skeleton staff only since health restrictions were imposed in March. Despite these restrictions' clients continued to be serviced albeit by electronic means as opposed to face-to-face meetings. Monday 1 June saw a return to normal business with emphasise on social distancing and appropriate office cleaning.

Your elected NSW Branch Committee have continued to meet monthly via the internet. Normal face-to-face committee meetings will resume in the month of June.

The virus pandemic resulted in a change of date and venue for the NSW Branch AGM which was originally scheduled for Saturday 23 May 2020. **The AGM will now be held on Saturday 25 July at the Veterans Support Centre, 8 Mary Street, Granville commencing at 1030 hours.** A General meeting of members will be held at 1015 hours to consider a change to our Constitution to facilitate electronic banking.

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2020

The Vietnam Veterans Day **commemorations normally held at the Bankstown Sports Club on 18 August has been cancelled** due to the uncertainty surrounding the health restrictions imposed on licensed clubs. This was a most difficult decision to take as we all look forward to the commemorations and the camaraderie which follows on this special day.

The decision was taken in late May when there was no indication of when clubs would re-open and we needed sufficient lead time to organise and publicise the event. Other options were considered but deemed impractical.

WORKLOAD

The NSW Branch workload continues to be high despite the interruptions caused by the pandemic. I would like to congratulate our Compensation Advocates who continue to achieve great results for our clients. Likewise, our support staff who are mainly volunteers, continue to selflessly give of their time and skills to keep the Veterans Support Centre and indeed our NSW sub-branches operating in a most efficient manner.

VOLUNTEERS ON SICK LIST

Two of our long-term volunteers are currently experiencing health issues. At the time of writing both John Rogers OAM (formerly RAAF) and Bob (Bluey") Gagan (formally RAA) are in hospital over-coming these setbacks. Each of these men have made an enormous contribution to the Association over many years. We sincerely wish them a speedy recovery.

Frank Cole

NSW Branch President

The Jesse Bird suicide The inquest What the Coroner found

The Victorian coroner found that DVA's bureaucratic failures contributed to the tragic suicide of Afghanistan veteran Jesse Bird.

Readers might know the story of Jesse Bird's suicide.

It is a tragic story of a very sick veteran reaching out for help from those responsible for providing it and finding only rejection and incompetence. In the Coroner's words:

"I...find that Jesse's personal difficulties were exacerbated by the frustrations he experienced in interacting with, and navigating, DVA's complex compensation and rehabilitation system."

"There appeared to be a lack of care, attention and proactive support, leaving Jesse with the belief that the only choice he had was to give up."

Alarming the Coroner also found:

"My investigation revealed that a practice had been established within DVA that was contrary to law and policy."



(August 2009): Private Jesse Bird interacts with a local at a vehicle check point while deployed with Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force 2 (MRTF2) in Afghanistan. Photo by Corporal Rachel Ingram.

Following more than one investigation, DVA says it has made improvements to the Repatriation system that will lessen the likelihood of it contributing to more suicides.

We can only hope so. ■



VIETNAM VETERANS PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) Inc.

Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.

2020 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

SURNAME	FIRST NAME	SECOND NAME

STREET ADDRESS

SUBURB/TOWN	STATE	POST CODE

HOME PHONE	MOBILE PHONE	OTHER PHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS [PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY]

SERVICE NUMBER	SERVICE UNIT	O'SEAS AREA OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE

NEXT OF KIN	RELATIONSHIP	CONTACT PHONE [NOK]

ITEM	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
MEMBERSHIPS SUBS	(YEARS)	@\$30.00 PER YEAR	\$
DONATION	(AMOUNT ONLY)		\$
RAFFLE TICKET/s		@\$2.00 EACH	\$
MERCHANDISE			
			\$
			\$
			\$
			\$
Stock item numbers and prices are available on line and from branches. Also page 44,45.		TOTAL AMOUNT DUE	\$

PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD (Circle one only) CASH CHEQUE MONEY ORDER CREDIT CARD

CREDIT CARD DETAILS (Mastercard or VISA only)

CARD HOLDER NAME (PRINT)

CREDIT CARD NUMBER

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EXPIRY DATE	TRANSACTION AMOUNT	SIGNATURE
(Mnth/Yr) ____/____	\$	

All cheques and money orders payable to VVPPAA NSW Mail to PO Box 170 Granville, NSW 2142
Credit Card payments may be phoned in to (02) 9682 1788 Mon-Fri 9:30am – 3pm.

OFFICE USE ONLY

MEMBERSHIP RECEIPT DATE:	DONATION RECEIPT DATE:
MEMBERSHIP RECEIPT N ^o :	DONATION RECEIPT N ^o :
MEMBERSHIP CARD NUMBER:	COMPLETED & ISSUED BY (PRINT):
COMPLETED & ISSUED BY (PRINT):	BANK SHEET ENTRY BY (PRINT):

MERCHANDISE FOR SALE



VVPPAA NSW ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

COVID -19 UPDATE

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

Also known as **VVPPAA NSW Inc.**

AMENDED DATE AND VENUE FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

The Annual General Meeting 2020 of the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc, will be held at the Veteran's Support Centre, 8 Mary Street, Granville at 10.30am Saturday, 25th July 2020.

AGENDA

Opening of Meeting by the Chairman
Apologies
Confirm the Minutes of the AGM 2019
Business Arising from the Minutes of the AGM 2019
President's Report
Treasurer's Report
Secretary's Report
Membership Report
Appointment of Association Auditors
Life Membership proposals
Other Business by leave of the Chairman
Close of Meeting

NB: The NSW Branch Constitution requires elections to be held biennially. The next election will be held in 2021.

Any items for General Business must be in the hands of the Secretary by close of business on Tuesday, 21st July 2020.

Next AGM to be held on a date to be confirmed during May 2021.

Ron O'Connor JP
Hon. Secretary
NSW Branch



Notice
General meeting
THE VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC.
Also known as **VVPPAA NSW Inc.**

A General Meeting of NSW Branch members is required to vote on any change to the NSW Branch Constitution. The NSW Branch Committee has approved certain changes to the Constitution which seek to:

Vary – PART V, Section 41 – “INCOME AND PROPERTY - MANAGEMENT”.

**The General Meeting will be held at THE Veteran’s Support Centre, 8 Mary Street,
Granville New South Wales at 10.15 am on Saturday, 25th July 2020 (immediately prior
to the 2020 AGM).**

The proposals to vary the Constitution are:

AIM

To vary the NSW Branch Constitution to provide further clarity to Section 41 – “INCOME AND PROPERTY - MANAGEMENT”

VARIATION REQUIRED

Insert a new Sub-section (3) ii – which states, “The authority for any payment or transfer of funds, electronically and online via the internet, from any bank account of the Association, comes from the Committee. The Committee shall authorise the persons to access online banking facility.

Transactions may be completed by authorised persons before approval of a transaction by the Committee up to certain limits and for certain purposes decided by the Committee, such payments being made the subject of scrutiny at the Committee meeting following the payment.

REASON

The provision within the Constitution of the NSW Branch to facilitate electronic banking.

PSK FINANCIAL SERVICES ARTICLE

From bushfires to Coronavirus – 5 ways to turn down the noise around investing.

Covid-19 has quickly turned the share market from record returns into a big storm, as we put health before economics. Everywhere you turn, from friends, colleagues or sensationalist news reports, you can find someone with an opinion about the financial markets, but it is very important as investors we stay focused on the medium term, not what the market is doing today.

It's OK to be worried, I think everyone is to some degree. For our superannuation/investments, our health, our families and our way of life.

For investors, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed by the relentless stream of news about markets. Being bombarded with data and headlines presented as affecting your financial well-being can evoke strong emotional responses from even the most experienced investors.

2020 has seen a very noisy start to the year with one major event with significant human and investment market implications after another. For Australia it started with an intensification of the bushfires but moved on to a significant ramping up of US/Iran tensions and now the coronavirus outbreak is creating fears of a global pandemic and a big hit to global economic activity. These are scary in terms of their human consequences, but also in terms of the potential economic fallout and what it means for investors. The coronavirus outbreak in particular continues to pose significant uncertainty around the short-term economic outlook.

In today's world we are now exposed to more information in relation to everything, including our investments. This is great in the sense that we can check things, analyse them and sound more informed than ever. But often we have no way of weighing such information and no time to do so. If we can't filter it, it becomes information overload and noise. This can be bad for investors as when faced with more (and often bad) news we

can freeze up and make the wrong decisions with our investment as our natural "loss aversion" combines with what is called the "recency bias" that sees people give more weight to recent events which can see investors project recent bad news into the future and so sell after a fall.

The problem is being compounded by an explosion in media outlets all competing for your attention. We are now bombarded with economic and financial news and opinions with 24/7 coverage by web sites, subscription services, finance updates, dedicated TV and online channels, etc. And in competing for your attention, bad news and gloom trumps good news and balanced commentary as "bad news sells."

So naturally it seems that the bad news is 'badder' and the worries more worrying than ever. Google the words "the coming financial crisis" and you get 236 million search results - up from 115 million around 18 months ago - with titles such as:

"World economy is sleepwalking into a new financial crisis";

"4 early warnings signs of the next financial crisis";

"The coming economic crash";

"Why the next global financial crisis may dwarf...2008"; and

"Financial crisis – Bible prophecy & current events."

The trouble is that there is no evidence that all this noise is making us better investors. Average returns are no higher than in the past. A concern is that the combination of a massive ramp up in information combined with our natural inclination to zoom in on negative news is making us worse investors, more fearful, more jittery and more short term focussed.

Five ways to manage the perpetual worry list

Put the latest worry list in context. Remember that there has always been an endless stream of worries. Here's a list of the worries of the last five years that have weighed on markets at various points: deflation; commodity/oil crash; Grexit; China worries; Brazil and Russia in recession; manufacturing slump globally; Fed rate hikes; Brexit; South China Sea tensions; Trump; Eurozone elections; North Korea; Germany; Catalonia; Italy; US inflation and rates; Trade war; China slowdown; Aust Royal Commission; Aust housing downturn; US government shutdown; inverted yield curves; impeachment; Aust recession fears; and Iran tensions. Yet despite this extensive worry list investment returns have actually been okay with average balanced growth super funds returning 7.3% pa over the last five years after taxes and fees.

And while history doesn't repeat it does rhyme and it's often useful to look back at previous similar events to the latest worry to see how they panned out. This is where the experience around SARS is useful in relation to the latest coronavirus outbreak.

Recognise how markets work. A diverse portfolio of shares returns more than bonds and cash over the long-term because it can lose money in the short-term. While the share market is highly volatile in the short-term it has seen strong returns over rolling 20-year periods. So, volatility driven by worries and bad news is normal. It's the price investors pay for higher long-term returns.

Find a way to filter news so that it doesn't distort your investment decisions. For example, this could involve building your own investment process or choosing 1-3 good investment subscription services and relying on them. Or simpler still, agreeing to a long-term strategy with a financial planner and sticking to it. Ultimately it all depends on how much you want to be involved in managing your investments.

Don't check your investments too regularly. If you track the daily movements in the Australian All Ords price index or the US S&P 500, it has been down almost as much as it has been up. So, day to day it's pretty much a coin toss as to

whether you will get good news or bad. By contrast if you only look at how the share market has gone each month and allow for dividends the historical experience tells us you will only get bad news 35% of the time. Looking only on a calendar year basis, data back to 1900 indicates that the probability of bad news in the form of a loss slides further to 20% for Australian shares and 27% for US shares.

The less frequently you look the less you will be disappointed and so the lower the chance that a bout of "loss aversion" triggered by a bad news event will lead you to sell at the wrong time.

Look for opportunities that bad news throws up. Periods of share market turbulence after bad news throw up opportunities as such periods push shares into cheap territory.

Concluding comment

My experience around investing tells me that it's far more productive to disengage with predictions of financial gloom because most of the time they are wrong and end up just distracting investors from their goals.

To discuss further or to arrange a time to review your current financial position please contact Paul Messerschmidt at PSK Financial Services on 0414 811 777, 02 9895 8800 or paulm@psk.com.au

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Information contained in this article is general in nature. It does not take into account your objectives, needs or financial situation. You need to consider your financial situation before making any decisions based on this information.





SCHOLARSHIPS

FOR THE CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN

AVCAT OF AUSTRALIAN VETERANS

The Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust is a national independent charity helping the children and grandchildren of ex-service men and women to a better future through tertiary education. Through the generous support of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs, ex-service organisations, corporate sponsors and private donors, we provide scholarships which assist recipients to obtain the tertiary qualification they need for their chosen career.

One of the scholarships administered by AVCAT is the **VVPPAA Scholarship**, specifically available for the children and grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans. Our proud association has seen many successful recipients achieve tertiary qualifications and reach their goals, that erstwhile may not have been available to them. We hope to continue this proud heritage long into the future with your help. It is through your generous support of this organization, and valued donations, that we keep the hopes of children alive.



Some of our recent recipients and successful achievers in their chosen fields

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

2014 Recipient

2019 scholarships
open in August 2018
and close at the end
of October 2018.
See below for more.

"Without the scholarship, achieving my goals would be almost impossible. The financial support has provided me the opportunity to study and without your support I would simply not be in the position I am in today, and for that I will be forever grateful". Recent recipient.

You are eligible to apply for a scholarship with AVCAT if you answer yes to the following questions:

- Are you a child or a grandchild of an Australian veteran? A veteran is a person who has rendered service as a member of the Australian Defence Force.
- Are you an Australian citizen or permanent resident?
- Are you enrolled, or planning to enroll, in tertiary studies for a minimum of one year?
- Will you be studying full-time next year?
- Are you or will you be eligible for Centrelink's Youth Allowance?
- Are you under 25 years of age?

To apply you should contact AVCAT and request to be added to the expressions of interest register.

Phone: 02 9213 7999

Web: avcat@dva.gov.au

PO Box K978 Haymarket, NSW 1240



DUE TO COVID-19 PLEASE CHECK REUNIONS WITH ORGANISERS

REUNIONS & NOTICES

Our name has changed but we will continue to provide professional, military aware, support to all current and former serving ADF personnel and their family members.



Free and confidential counselling to support your mental health and wellbeing is available 24/7. We also run group programs and suicide prevention training.

JUST CALL 1800 011 046

If overseas call +61 8 8241 4546

FORMERLY KNOWN AS

Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service



**Call
24/7**

A service founded by Vietnam veterans



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.

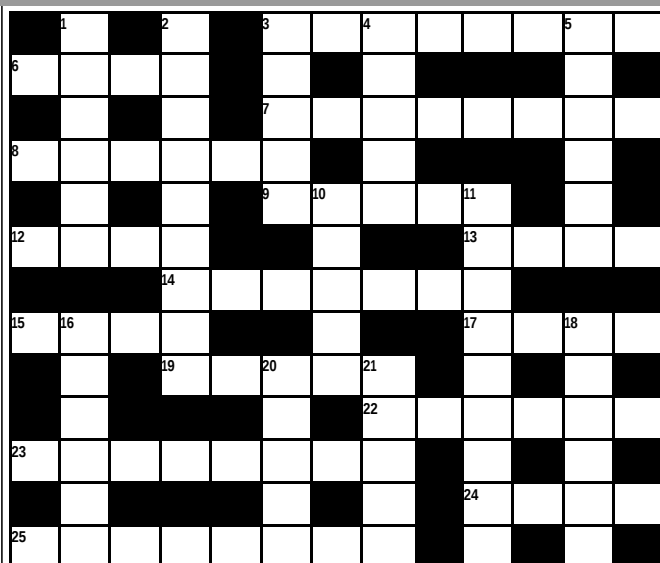
Wesley Hospital Ashfield and Wesley Hospital Kogarah are private psychiatric hospitals which offer both **in-patient** and **day patient** services. Our treatment programs combine medication, therapy and include life skills and support networks to ensure recovery is effective, ongoing and enriching.

**91 Milton Street,
Ashfield NSW 2131**

&

**7 Blake Street,
Kogarah NSW 2217**

CROSSWORD CORNER



ACROSS

3. (Fr) Chicken dish
6. Hike
7. Insistent person
8. Golfers aide
9. Great fear
12. Capital of Ukraine
13. Assist illegally
14. Piano keys (slang)
15. Conceited
17. Quiet
19. Huge person
22. Wore away (land)
23. Chart of months
24. Mature
25. Maths branch

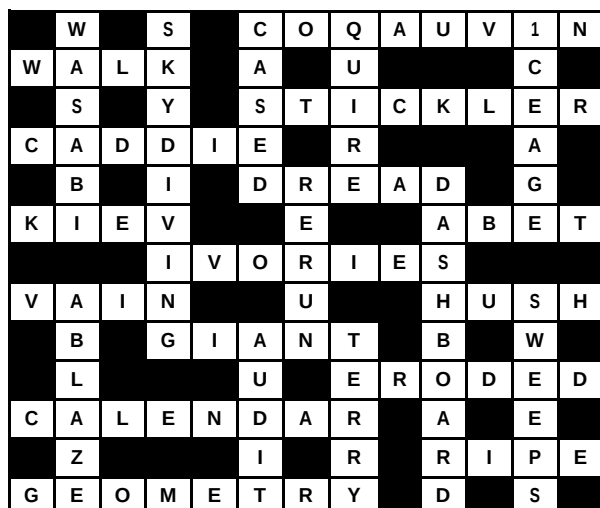
DOWN

1. Japanese spice
2. Parachuting
3. Looked over joint
4. Paper quantity
5. Frozen era
10. Replayed movie
11. Vehicle panel
16. On fire
18. Uses broom
20. Check books
21. Towelling material

SOLUTION

NEXT ISSUE

APRIL 2020 SOLUTION



THE UNKNOWN COMIC

A park ranger, reaching for his ticketing booklet, tells the shapely woman, "Sorry, but swimming in the lake is prohibited". The young lady protests, "Well, why didn't you tell me that before I got all my clothes off?". The park ranger, looks up from his ticket writing and says. "That's not prohibited".

A Pommie walks into a pub in Sydney and clears his voice, then shouts to the crowd of drinkers, " \$500 dollars to anybody in here who can drink 15 schooners of VB back to back." The room is quiet and no one takes up the Pom's offer. One man even leaves. Thirty minutes later the same bloke who left shows up again and asks the Pom if the bet was still on. The Pom says yes and asks the bartender to line up 15 schooners of VB. The Aussie rips into all the schooners, back to back. The other patrons cheer as the Pom sits in amazement, and gives the Aussie the \$500 and says, "If ya don't mind me askin', where did you go for that 30 minutes you were gone?" The Aussie replies, "Oh...I went to the pub down the street to see if I could do it first."

A fire started in the middle of a small shopping complex. The fire brigade was called to put out the fire, but it looked too much for the first fire truck, and they called for reinforcements. Someone suggested that it was time the new rookies were put into action and despite some doubt the rookies were called. They arrived with all the sirens and lights flashing, and rumbled straight into the middle of the flames, and stopped! The firemen jumped off the truck and frantically started spraying water in all directions. Soon they had snuffed out the center of the fire, breaking the blaze into two easily-controlled parts. Watching all this, the shop owners were so impressed with the fire department's work and were so grateful that the complex was saved, that right there on the spot they presented the rookies with a cheque for \$1,000. A local news reporter asked the rookie fire captain what the department planned to do with the funds. "That ought to be obvious," he responded, wiping ashes off his coat. "The first thing we're gonna do is get the brakes fixed on our fire truck!"

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

SURNAME

FIRST NAME

SECOND NAME

--	--	--

OLD DETAILS *[PRINT CLEARLY]*

OLD ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

NEW DETAILS *[PRINT CLEARLY]*

NEW ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

EMAIL ADDRESS *[PRINT CLEARLY]*

--

YOUR SIGNATURE

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

Complete all sections and post to:

The Secretary
 VVPPAA NSW
 PO Box 170
 Granville
 NSW 2142

OFFICE USE ONLY**MEMBERSHIP REGISTRY****DETAILS CHANGED****DATE:** ____/____/____**INITIALS:** _____

VETERANS MORTALITY REPORT

As you are aware, Vietnam Veterans are dying at a rate higher than while on Active Service. This situation is perhaps a natural phenomenon compared to non-serving members of the public, who might die of an illness which is equally distributed through the population of the same age group.

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc has for many years maintained records of the deaths of Vietnam Veterans and the cause of death if known. This has proved invaluable regarding the health standards of Vietnam Veterans when compared to the general public.

We seek your assistance in reporting the death of Vietnam Veterans, past or recent, to allow the Federation to expand and preserve it's record base.

Kindly circulate a copy of this page through your RSL Club, Unit or Corps reunions and meetings and raise it as an issue. The information gained from these reports will greatly assist all Vietnam Veterans and their families regarding future claims for benefits.

Please print clearly

VETERANS DETAILS

SURNAME FIRST NAME SERVICE NUMBER

--	--	--

SVN UNIT/S TOUR DATES

--	--

CAUSE OF DEATH (If known)

--

SR Service Related **UNK** Unknown **S** Suicide **O** Other)

DATE OF DEATH (If known) LOCATION AT TIME OF DEATH

	(TOWN)	(STATE)
--	--------	---------

YOUR NAME

--

SUBURB/TOWN STATE POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE MOBILE PHONE SIGNATURE

--	--	--

RETURN FORM TO: **The Welfare Officer**
VVPPAA NSW Branch
PO Box 170
Granville NSW 2142

Phone: 02 9682 1788
Fax : 02 9682 6134
Email: secretary@vfvfgranville.org

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!!

CALL **1800 011 046**

OPEN
Veterans & Families
Counselling
ARMS

Operation Life workshops emphasis is on suicide prevention – they aim to help members of the services and veteran community to recognise someone who might be thinking of suicide, and link them with appropriate assistance. There are 3 types of workshops

- Suicide alertness for everyone (Safetalk) ½ day presentation
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) 2 day skills course
- ASIST Tune Up ½ day refresher workshop

Workshops are open to anyone concerned about veterans, their family, friends and mates in the service and veteran community. Welfare, Compensation Advocates and other helpers from ESO's are welcome and encouraged to attend.

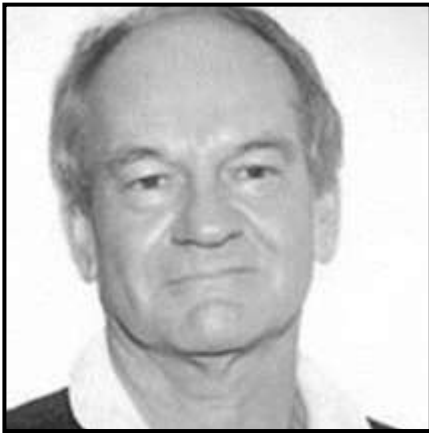
FORMERLY

Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service





Last Post



VALE
BARRY LEYSHAN
22/3/41-26/3/2020
AGED 79 YRS

We will remember him
Lest we forget



It is with saddened hearts that we report the passing of **Barry John Leyshan**, on 26 March 2020, after a long battle with cancer.

Barry served with 1 RAR in Malaya followed by a period in Army Reserve. He then had a long career in the Federal Public Service.

Barry was a volunteer at the Granville office of the VVPPAA NSW for many years, beginning in about 1999/2000. He carried out many voluntary duties including the reception of office visitors, manning the switchboard when required, and everyday administration duties associated with our busy office. He was also involved with and held Committee positions with his local RSL Sub-Branch.

However, his forte proved to be grounded in the early days of scheduled planning in the operation of Program ASIST, where, with guidance from our Federations program founder, Bob Tyrell, he excelled in organising many courses throughout NSW in conjunction with Operation Life, for the Assisted Suicide Intervention Skills Training program. A post he held from 2001 until forced to retire due to family crisis and his own failing health in 2016.

The fact that he was able and determined to carry on under very trying family commitments and circumstance showed the true mettle and nature of this gentle soldier. A person, whom all of us at the Granville office, held in high esteem, and valued his friendship. It is a cruel twist of fate that his passing coincided with the Covid-19 restrictions and denied us our chance to pay due process and respect for our fallen mate.

Barry is survived by his wife Mary, children and grandchildren.



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

PLEASE NOTE

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.

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

The following businesses are offering discounts to members of The Vietnam Veterans Federation.

MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICES

CARNEEDS Pty Ltd
152 Parramatta Rd
STANMORE
Prptr: Robert Stenta
Ph: 9519 1441
10% discount
On mechanical repairs & competitive prices on tyres and batteries.
To all Vietnam Veterans Federation Members.

MALCOLM MOTORS

Automotive Service Specialist. All mechanical repairs & servicing.
15% Discount for members on services and repairs.
JOE CARE
603-605 Parramatta Rd
Leichhardt NSW
MTA Lic. # 42198

TRAILERS TOWBARS BULLBARS

Fastfit Bullbars & Towbars
Trailer sales and spares-side steps Bike beacons-Custom work
65 St Hilliers Road
AUBURN
Ph: (02) 9749 1209
10% Discount on products

EXHAUST SYSTEMS

Menai Mufflers
Unit 4/788 Old Illawarra Rd
MENAI
Ph: (02) 9541 4720
20% Discount

Balmain Radiator Centre
Mark Borghonzian
22d Crystal St
ROZELLE
Ph: (02) 9818 4920
Mbl: 0419 417 206
10% Discount

SMASH REPAIRS

Wreck-A-Mended Smash Repairs
Unit 1, 20 Bosci Rd
Ingleburn NSW
02 9605 9008
Ask for Alan
Tell them you are a member and they will send us a donation

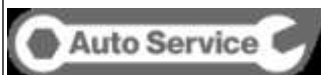
MOTOR CYCLE ACCESSORIES

Motor Cycle Accessories Supermarket
Head Office.
321 Parramatta Rd
Auburn NSW
(02) 9648 1400
www.mcas.com.au

CITY: 9261 5182.
LIVERPOOL: 9601 8276.
CARINGBAH 9574 5100
PENRITH 4737 6100

10% Discount except helmets and tyres

TYRES



BRIDGESTONE

Tyres & Complete Auto Servicing.

10% discount to members
(not current specials)

223 Woodville Rd
Merrylands NSW
02 9897 1002
Mon-Fri 8—5
Sat 8:30-12:30

BATTERIES

POWER PRODUCTS
For all your power needs

**BATTERIES
SOLAR POWER
INVERTERS
GENERATORS**

Motor Cycle battery specialists

Russell is offering 15% discount to VVF Members on Batteries . 5% on Solar products, Inverters & Chargers 10%

3/3 Sovereign Pl
South Windsor
Ph: (02) 4577 7761
Fax: (02) 4577 7768

Ashfield Battery Centre
110 FREDERICK STREET
ASHFIELD, NSW, 2131
02 9798-6166

GEORGE KAWAUCHI
(owner)
We sell:

CAR, TRUCK, MARINE,
DEEP CYCLE, GOLF
CART,
MOBILITY, MOTOR
CYCLE BATTERIES.
CHARGERS, SOLAR
PANELS, BOOSTER
CABLES,
FUSES, GLOBES,
INVERTERS,
TERMINALS, BATTERY
BOXES.

OPEN FROM: 9am - 5-
30pm Mon-Fri
OPEN SAT FROM: 9.30am-
3.30pm
Closed Sundays and public
holidays.
10% Discount to veterans

FLOOR COVERINGS

Waratah Floor Coverings
473 Burwood Rd
BELMORE
Ph: (02) 9759 6511
Ask for Special Rate

MOTELS

**Golden Chain
Motor Inn Ltd**

Ph: 1800 023 966

Must have Golden Chain Card. Its Free When You Call The Number Above And Ask
Present your Federation membership card and ask for a "Golden Link" card to be issued.

There is a **10% discount** on room rates
Australia wide

TRAVEL TRANSFERS

GROUP TRANSFER

Airport or Cruise Terminals
All Tours, All Services

15% DISCOUNT FOR VETERANS

For Bookings call:

Michael Viet
(02) 9723 2262
0404 754 899

PLEASE REPORT ALL INSTANCES OF BREACHES TO OFFERED DISCOUNTS

