



VIETNAM VETERANS PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

MARCH 2016

The behind-the-scenes story of
the Agent Orange controversy

and

What does the government
really
think of war veterans



EDITORIAL, REFLECTIONS OF 2015

2015 began with our saddest news ever, when we lost National President, Tim McCombe OAM , on 31 January 2015, and we reported in our March Journal:

**“There is sadness in the veteran community
for we have lost a champion.”**

With the whole issue being dedicated to the memory of our mentor and great advocate for the benefit of all Veterans.

The July issue brought with it a raft of grievances' toward the government and repatriation commission that threatened the rights of veterans. The government's plans to cut pensions and further impact on the savings of disabled veterans. That battle still continues.

Misleading statements about the suicide rate of our younger veterans were aired once more, reflecting on what we older Vietnam veterans already knew.

The government has withdrawn its \$223million share of an agreement with the States to fund Service pensioners' concessions for travel, electricity, phone and council rates. And continues with an article in this issue.

The government intends to axe the three month backdating of Veterans Disability Pension claims; a very long standing concession giving some flexibility for delays in obtaining medical evidence and a recognition of the special nature of military service. Why?

In the December, (last), issue we reported; That at last—Australian War Memorial Agrees to Commission New Agent Orange Official History. Happy news maybe, but why are required documents being withheld from researchers and the nominated historian who is heading up the new research.

One of the cruellest injustices has been the government's continued closure of VAN offices throughout regional areas, and relocated city offices to DVA offices in the major capital cities. At the same time, it is telling the disabled veterans to 'line up with the general public at Centrelink offices'. It flies in the face of this government's declaration 2 years earlier, on 27 March 2014.

The passing of this legislation today confirms this Government's recognition of the unique nature of military service and the sacrifices military personnel and their families make on behalf of all Australians.”, Malcolm Turnbull said.

The right to proper care from governments who send its people to war must be upheld for the benefit of those who will undoubtedly follow in our foot steps.

An aerial photograph showing a large fire burning in a forest. Several thick, white smoke trails are visible, rising from the fire and drifting towards the top left of the frame. The forest below is a mix of green and brown, indicating the fire's progression.

2008	1433	256 persons	275	100%
2009	1733	300 persons	173	100%



Major General Yuriy Yurievich Kuznetsov

2008	1433	256 persons	275	100%
2009	1733	300 persons	173	100%

ANDREW V. MALKIN
STONE COLD
The extraordinary true story of LEN OPIE
AUSTRALIA'S DEADLIEST SOLDIER

What else is making news

An editorial on reflections of 2015 begins this issue at page 1.

From the Editors Desk brings news of interest to readers and guides them to the appropriate article/s on page 6.

The National President, Jim Wain, presents his unique report on page 7.

A timely reminder from NSW Branch Senior Vice President, Mr W Roberts OAM, on the eligibility of our allies to secure a Veterans Affairs' Service Pension, can be found on page 32.

News about NSW Branch Vietnam Veterans Day function on 18 August is listed on page 33.

NSW Sub-Branch of Mudgee & Districts has relocated to the former Mudgee Railway Station, and the President, Mr Ken Atkinson, has contributed on page 40.

The NSW Branch AGM will be held on 21 May 2016, at Merrylands RSL, and the agenda is listed on page 48.



MEMBERSHIP

Belonging
Advocacy
Success

2016 membership fell due on 1 January.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We thank you for your kind support.



VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION of AUSTRALIA Inc.

Incorporating

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Queensland Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans & Veterans Federation ACT Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Victorian Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation South Australian Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Federation of Australia (WA Branch) Inc.

Vietnam Peacekeepers Peacemakers Federation of Tasmania Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Committee:

National President	James Wain
NSW State President	Frank Cole
Qld State President	Mal Wheat
ACT State President	Ian Thompson
Vic State President	Ron Cargiill
SA State president	John Hough
WA State President	Milton Kirk JP
Tas State President	TBA
National Research Officer	Graham Walker AM

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COVER DESIGN

"Reflections of Agent Orange"

**COMPUTER GRAPHICS
BY OUR EDITOR**

FREE PENSIONS & ADVOCACY SERVICE

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

Contact any of our Branches or Sub-Bran­ches from the lists elsewhere in this Journal. Alternatively, visit our website, www.vvfabranville.org, 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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FROM THE EDITORS DESK

We welcome all readers to 2016 and hope you are well. Hopefully all your parties are behind you, new year resolutions forgotten, and everything is as it should be.

Shift your eyes to the left. Yes a great set of merchandise to purchase for the benefit of your fellow veterans. Buy some now.

Have you spotted the semi-intentional error. It could be on page 46 and involve your Branch and/or Sub-Branch details. Maybe it's all my fault, but being more generous I would report that if the details are incorrect at time of going to press then perhaps there is a chance I was not informed. Please feel free to do so.

The NSW Branch Vietnam Veterans' Day service and function will be held once again at the Bankstown Sports Club, on 18 August 2016. As it is the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, we could expect larger attendees than normal, so get your ticket orders in early. The tickets should be available from 1st July.

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

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Weekdays before 5pm thanks.

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Other comments about the articles should be addressed to:

'The National Secretary'.

Email: raycjoyc@gmail.com

NATIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

HEARING AIDS AND A NEW SUB-COMMITTEE

There have been many complaints raised recently, in relation to the supply of hearing aids, after changes to the Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRC), enabled White Cards to be introduced for SRCA clients on 10 December 2013. The use of White Cards for SRCA clients was one of the recommendations of the 2011 Review of Military Compensation Arrangements.

Restrictions apply when White Cards are utilised for hearing aids, hence an anomaly has arisen for those SRCA entitled clients who have previously been able to access more sophisticated hearing aids free of charge.

Those clients are now required to pay the difference between a 'standard' hearing aid, of the type issued free to veterans with an entitlement under the VEA and MRCA, and the level of hearing aids those SRCA clients require for their clinical needs.

Of course, VEA and MRCA clients have always had to pay the difference between the cost of a 'standard' hearing aid and one with more sophisticated features. It was also known that Comcare clients continue to have the same entitlements previously available to SRCA clients.

The issue as I see it, is that a group of veterans, the SRCA clients, have had an entitlement that has existed since 1988, removed. Consequently the Ex-Service Organisations Round Table which meets with DVA officers, have appointed a sub-committee to look at the anomaly.

The members of that sub-committee, chaired by a DVA Deputy President, include representatives from DVA, Australian Hearing Services, Department of Health, Comcare, National Presidents of the TPI Federation, VVAA and VVFA plus representatives from the RAAFA and DFWA.

The sub-committee met this morning for the first time. We made good progress and will meet again in May with the aim of being ready to finalise recommendations to the full ESORT at the last scheduled sub-committee meeting in Sep/Oct.

Chatham House rules apply to discussions between participants at the sub-committee hence no details are available for VVFA members yet.

Jim Wain
National President

What does the Government *really* think of war veterans?

The Government is closing VAN offices in regional areas at an alarming rate.

Among the VAN offices closed or targeted for closure are Morwell, Ballarat, Frankston, Gosford, Bairnsdale, Wollongong, Wyong, Tweed Heads, Nowra, Toowoomba and Wodonga. No doubt more are in the government's sights.

The reasons enthusiastically espoused by the Repatriation Commission for these closures is falling numbers of clients. The Repatriation Commission has not, however, said what it considers a minimum viable number of clients and the reason for its choice.

This fall in clientele is, the Repatriation Commission claims, contributed to by the increasing use of the internet. This may be so, but it will surely be counteracted by a surge in client numbers as more and more younger veterans 'hit the wall' in coming years.

In any case, the establishment of VAN offices was never about numbers. Far from it.

VAN offices were established in recognition of the special service given by war veterans. Rather than label the help given as 'welfare' and providing it at Centrelink offices, veterans could seek help at VAN offices thus retaining respect and dignity.

Apparently this Government (supported enthusiastically by the Repatriation Commission) believe war veterans no longer deserve this respect and dignity. Veterans deprived of their local VAN office will now have to line up at Centrelink. That gives a good indication of what the Government *really* thinks of war veterans.

(Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Minister for Veterans Affairs responsible for the VAN closures was also the Minister responsible for Centrelink.

And whilst there has been a recent change of Minister, that change has not brought a change of policy.)

And what does the withdrawing of the Federal Government's \$223 million share of its agreement with the States to fund Service pensioners' concessions for travel, electricity, phone and council rates say about what the Government *really* thinks about war veterans. It says, of course, that the Government no longer thinks war veterans' service deserving of these concessions. Indeed, the Government recently emphasized its disdain for war veterans' service by announcing war veterans would, from July 2016, no longer be eligible for concessional travel on The Ghan.

And this Government made pretty clear what it *really* thinks of war veterans when it announced it wanted to downgrade the indexation of the TPI, General Rate Pensions, Invalidity Service Pension, War Widows Pension etc. This downgrading would, over time, reduce the living standards of war veterans significantly. That the government failed to implement this hit on war veterans was not the result of it realizing how much it would show disrespect for war veterans' service; it was because Labor, the Greens, Jacqui Lambie and other independents in the Senate made clear they would not allow the downgrading to pass into law.

That this Government would attack war veterans' benefits in such a dramatic way says it all.

And frighteningly, should the Government gain control of the Senate in the future, it is must be thought likely it would try again to downgrade the indexation of veterans' disability pensions.

And what of that mean act of intending to axe the

three month backdating of Veterans Disability Pension claims; a very long standing concession giving some flexibility for delays in obtaining medical evidence and a recognition of the special nature of military service. And what of the downgrading of the quality of hearing aids available to war veterans under the SRCA scheme.

And what, for that matter, does this Government think of its military personnel?

Last year the Government recommended a pay increase less than the rate of inflation; effectively a pay cut.

It was only after the Liberal National Party in Queensland at the State election lost electorates in which there were military bases, electorates usually won by them, that the Federal Government relented and increased its pay recommendation.

If you want to know what the Government *really* thinks of war veterans listen not to what they say but watch what they do. ■

GRANDDAUGHTER SEEKS INFO



RECOGNISE THIS MAN

Mervyn Mason
4721487 PTE
1 ARU. WIA

Read the full item, and all our *Reunions* and *Notices* beginning on page 38 of this issue.

If you have a reunion coming soon in 2016, or are looking for someone, or just seeking advice, then write to, or email the editor. Our next issue is planned for late June 2016 and the close-off for articles is 13 May 2016. Address items to:
The Editor, PO Box 170 Granville NSW 2142
Email: editor@vfganville.org



Wasn't this the VAN Office you've just smashed up ?
In recognition of the uniqueness of military service you can go to Centrelink !

The Behind-the-Scenes Story of the Agent Orange Controversy

Graham Walker AM

It was late 1981.

I had just left the army after 21 years.

A friend said the Vietnam Veterans Association could use some help.

Who are they? I asked.

There're the Agent Orange mob, he said.

What's Agent Orange, I asked.

The Association's office was in Smith Street, Parramatta, Sydney. I climbed a set of rickety stairs overhung by a fly-marked light bulb leading to the office. The office itself was small, dingy and cluttered, more appropriate, I thought, for the legendary whisky-powered down-at-heel 'private eye' than the Vietnam Veterans Association. I moved through an obstacle course of people, old furniture and cardboard boxes full of documents to meet the National President, Phil Thompson.

Phil Thompson had been one of the youngest Warrant Officers in the Australian army. He had had two one year tours of duty in Vietnam with the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. In his second tour he was wounded when an enemy rocket exploded in a tree above him, showering him with shrapnel. Phil had loved the army, feeling it was his second family, so when, after 14 years of service, he was discharged for medical reasons, he felt the separation strongly. Leading the fight for veterans to be told to what toxic chemicals they were exposed and what harm might come from that exposure was his way of continuing that service.

I know nothing about Agent Orange or your association, I told Phil, but I can see you could use a filing system.

To establish a filing system you must read every document. What I read troubled me.



Phil Thompson (Dec'd)

After that I became an honorary researcher and writer and helped with lobbying governments and bureaucrats. I continued with those tasks with the Vietnam Veterans Association, then after the 1992 split, with the Vietnam Veterans Federation.

The Vietnam Veterans Association (VVAA) in the late 70s and early 80s had two concerns.

There was concern for the mental health of many Vietnam veterans. It was not unusual for someone to be called out to calm down a veteran in a domestic dispute or sometimes even to help the police with a troubled veteran. Indeed, the Association's office was used as a counselling centre employing several volunteer part-time professional counsellors.

The Association thus saw the need for a properly funded counselling service. With the assistance and case studies of one of the volunteer counsellors, Leanne Grierson, the Association

made submissions to government.

When the government (Senator Tony Messner was the Minister for Veterans Affairs) agreed to establish a counselling service in 1982, Phil Thompson, in recognition of the Vietnam Veterans Association's substantial role in its establishment, accompanied Repatriation Commissioner Major General 'Alby' Morrison touring Australia interviewing potential staff. The



The Hon. Clyde Holding (Dec'd)

first Counselling Centre was opened in Adelaide in 1982 with Phil Thompson making an address at the launch.

A Vietnam Veterans Association representative was appointed to the supervisory body, the National Advisory Council.

Such was the success of that first Counselling Centre that the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service (VVCS) (since 2007 called the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service) has grown to some fifteen centres round Australia.

One of its founding principles was its independence from the Department of Veterans Affairs, an independence we have had to defend from time to time.

The Vietnam Veterans Association's other concern was that exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange and other toxic chemicals whilst on war service in Vietnam might cause cancer in the veterans and birth defects in their children. Also,

some medicos were suggesting exposure to the chemicals might cause Toxic Brain Dysfunction with similar symptoms to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder leading to possible mis-diagnoses.

The exposure to herbicides came about because the United States Air Force was being frustrated. It had mastery of the skies over South Vietnam and wanted to unleash its air power on the local units of National Liberation Front (NLF) and on the troops of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). But those enemies skilfully used the thick canopy of the Vietnamese jungle to avoid detection. For the USAF the solution was clear: remove the canopy by defoliating the jungles with 'Agent Orange'.

The herbicide Agent Orange was a mixture of the chemical 2,4-D and the chemical 2,4,5-T with its inevitable impurity, dioxin. It was sprayed in large volumes by the US Air Force over the Vietnamese countryside. There were other herbicides used and they were often bundled under the banner of 'Agent Orange'.

The United States Air Force ceased spraying herbicides from the air in 1971 because scientific evidence suggested exposure to it might cause cancer and birth defects. After the war, more evidence of the chemical's harmfulness emerged.

Whilst in 1981 exposure to *insecticides* was not yet a concern, the Vietnam Veterans Association's scientific advisers pointed to their dangers. A variety of them had been heavily dispersed to kill mosquitoes, scorpions etc., round the 1st Australian Task Force base at Nui Dat and 1 Australian Logistics Support Group at Vung Tau. These also came to be included under the banner of 'Agent Orange'

Vietnam veterans around Australia had reacted to this scientific news on 'Agent Orange' and formed State based groups. In 1979 the groups federated to form the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia.

Meanwhile, Hon Clyde Holding MP, Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs was taking

the issue to Federal Parliament. In February 1979 he asked a Parliamentary question of the Minister for Defence. The Minister answered: "The Australian Forces did not use Agent Orange in Vietnam".

Several questions followed that elicited little information.

On 28 March 1980, more than a year after the first question was asked, Clyde Holding asked a question in which he supplied more information about herbicide spraying in Vietnam than the Minister had revealed in his several answers.

Clyde Holding asked: "...Was the Minister aware, when he denied the use of Agent Orange by Australian troops in Vietnam, that the term 'Agent Orange' is used broadly, both by the Press and by the

Vietnam Veterans Action Association, to cover a range of defoliants used in Vietnam and include agents blue, orange, white and purple? Is he also aware that tordone, which he stated was used by Australian troops in Vietnam, is simply the trade name used by the Dow chemical company for the extremely toxic defoliant containing a mixture of 2,4-D and picloran which, when used by the military in Vietnam, was described as Agent White?"

The Minister's notorious reply was dismissive, even flippant:

"... I asked my Department what toxic

herbicides were used... and this is the answer I was given: regione, gammoxone, tordone and hyva. I do not wish to be disrespectful to the honourable gentleman, or indeed to the House; but, as far as I am personally concerned in the field of qualifications, they [Agents Orange, Blue, White and Purple] could be four horses running at Rosehill on Saturday...."

The veterans saw it as curious that they could dig up information on the use of 'Agent Orange' that the government could not.

That had certainly been a bad start, but Phil directed me to a document that had been published

by the government in 1981, around a year after the notorious 'four horses running at Rosehill' answer and two years after Clyde Holding's first parliamentary question. The document, titled *Pesticides used in Vietnam hostilities and their use in Australian agriculture: A*



comparative study, listed the chemicals used, discussed their potential toxic effect and assessed veterans' potential for exposure. The document revealed that 'approximately 17,632,000 US gallons [66,744,000 litres] of the herbicides Agent Orange, White and Blue were sprayed over South Vietnam.

"Well", I told Phil, "it has certainly taken an unreasonable time to produce but it looks like the government is trying to keep faith with veterans."

Phil looked at me sadly and shook his head. "Look closer" he said. He pointed out that the document reeked with the fear that the growing 'Agent Orange' controversy would spill over to

threaten the use of those same chemicals in Australian agriculture. It warned:

“...Any restrictions on pesticide use would certainly jeopardise several of our most important primary industries and reduce the quality and quantity of primary produce offered for sale domestically and overseas.”

It pleaded that there were no satisfactory substitutes immediately available for 2,4,5-T and other pesticides or that substitutes that were available were prohibitively expensive.

In any case, it argued, the chemicals were used differently in Vietnam.

“In Australia, Agricultural usage of these pesticides is in no way analogous to the manner in which they were used in Vietnam for military purposes.”

And it suggested that any harm to soldiers exposed to these chemicals in Vietnam might have been through the chemicals’ mis-use:

“Although the regulations were designed to protect personnel from potential adverse health effects, it is impossible to determine the extent to which they were met.”

Phil was right. Keeping faith with those who had fought Australia’s war had been the last thing on the minds of the document’s authors. Reciprocity for a job well done was the least of their motivations. It was saving the reputation of the chemicals used in Australian agriculture that motivated the writing of *Comparative Study*. The veterans were seen simply as a bunch of nuisances whose mischief had to be nullified.

I still believed the government would not abandon its veterans, so I was relieved when, in my reading, I came across the *Vietnam Special Studies Group*. It was a group formed inside the Department of Veterans Affairs in early 1981. Its task, we were told, was to collect and assess information on ‘Agent Orange’ which would form the basis of Departmental policy and the decisions of those assessing veterans’ claims for compensation. This, surely, was good news. It seemed to me an indication that the Department did care about the health of Vietnam veterans and

was keeping faith with them.

Phil’s response to my optimism was not encouraging. He shook his head then related to me the background of ED ‘Mick’ Letts, the First Assistant Secretary leading the *Study Group*.

ED Letts for years had held responsible positions in the Department of Primary Industry, the Department most vociferous in its condemnation of those who warned of the possible dangers of agricultural chemicals. Indeed, in a speech made in May 1979 to the Royal Australian Chemical Institute, the Department’s Pesticide Co-ordinator, Jack Snelson, claimed that those questioning the safety of these chemicals were part of a “powerful, vicious and well organised” plot to exploit the “innocent and unwary silent majority” in order to “draw [sic-probably meaning ‘claw’] down man’s achievements in chemical technology” and emasculate the chemical industry. He referred to those crying caution as “a heterogeneous mixture of activists, axe grinders, do-gooders, cranks, guilt complexes, profiteers and vested interests”. He added, “We have all of these forces at work recently promoting the controversy over 2,4,5-T”. He identified them. “The voices of chaos are a mixed bag and much too noisy. Who are these people? What are they like? Well there are the fearful, the ignorant and the superstitious who see demons in the form of chemicals round every corner; the anti- technologist who promotes the fear of chemicals to hasten their demise; the scientist who promotes the fear of chemicals in hopes of gaining funds for supporting his research; and the politician who promotes the fear of chemicals for political gain and power.”

Even though the anarchy in that dingy Parramatta office would have cleared the Vietnam Veterans Association from any accusation of being ‘well organised’ and though the Vietnam veterans working there seemed to me to be unlikely to fit any of the categories on his list, I felt sure our Association and its volunteers were included in Jack Snelson’s condemnation.

But none of these was Jack Snelson’s most

extreme statement. Here is a report in the National Times with a quote of Jack's that could qualify:

'One of the strongest public defenders of 2,4,5-T has been the officer co-ordinating pesticides in the Federal Department of Primary Industry, Jack Snelson.

...

'When in June of this year [1980] a young farmer and vet [animal vet] Michael Cobb, drank a glass of 2,4,5-T at the NSW State National Country Party Conference to demonstrate its safety, Snelson said: "I'd say he could have drunk several times as much without the slightest risk". 'As recently as 1980, ED Letts had been Assistant Secretary, Grains and Industrial Crops Branch, Department of Primary Industry. Just as I was, to some degree, a prisoner of army culture, would not the First Assistant Secretary, no matter how honest a fellow (and we do not dispute his honesty), be influenced by the radical culture of the Department of Primary Industry? Indeed, would he have been selected for such a responsible post in that Department of Primary Industry had he not been?

"Why not appoint someone from the Department of Health or an independent academic whose focus is on the possible harmfulness of the chemicals rather than someone whose focus has been on their contribution to increasing grain production?" I asked Phil.

'Good question?' he replied.

From the veterans' point of view, the evidence of possible government bad faith was mounting. There was what seemed an unreasonable delay of some two years from the first parliamentary question to providing information on the chemicals used. Then, when a paper was eventually produced, it was aimed at defending the use of chemicals in Australian agriculture against the campaigning of veterans rather than informing

them. Then a senior officer of a government department vociferous in its condemnation of those questioning the safety of agricultural chemicals was appointed to head an 'Agent Orange' study group to advise the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Some veterans, more cynical and conspiratorially minded than I, noted that the Federal Cabinet included five farmers.

ED Letts' offside in the *Study Group* was Assistant Secretary Bruce Manning. He was a Vietnam veteran. We have only recently realised his posting in Vietnam was the officer commanding, 25 Supply Platoon, Royal Australian Army Service Corps, in 1969-70. Part of his responsibility was the distribution of insecticides.

Then a senior officer of a government department vociferous in its condemnation of those questioning the safety of agricultural chemicals was appointed to head an 'Agent Orange' study group to advise the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The *Comparative Study* judged that, "Although the regulations were designed to protect personnel from potential adverse health effects, it is impossible to determine the extent to which they were met." In other words, we could not know whether the chemicals were mis-used. The result of mis-use, of course, could have been harmful exposure. Bruce Manning was a participant in the chemicals network about which the *Comparative Study*

could not rule out mis-use. It is in no way casting aspersions on the integrity of Bruce Manning to say that putting him in that situation was to risk him facing a conflict of interest in assessing information on the use of 'Agent Orange'.

"For veterans who may seek compensation", Phil told me, "the central issue is this. Despite all the evidence we have put forward, the Department of Veterans Affairs refuses to accept a link between our veterans' exposure to 'Agent Orange' and certain cancers."

[This article continued overleaf on page 16]

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I wasn't certain his criticism was fair. Certainly the system was slow and seemingly reticent in providing information, but documents showed that the evidence for harmfulness was strongly contested.

"Perhaps the Department has got it right," I said to Phil. "After all, there are studies failing to identify ill effects."

"Not that simple", said Phil, then explained that it was not only a matter of the science but also of Repatriation law.

Repatriation law required the Department of Veterans Affairs to give the 'benefit of the doubt' when assessing compensation claims.

In simple terms, if the assessor could not disprove the link between a claimant's illness and war service, then the claimant would succeed. In practical terms this meant that

if some good evidence showed a link then it would not be negated by studies failing to show that link.

Such special consideration for war veterans was not new. With increasing numbers of servicemen returning from the First World War, the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Bill was introduced into parliament by the Minister for Repatriation, Senator E.D. Millen, in 1917. Repatriation, the Minister said, was "an earnest attempt to meet the nation's obligations to those who on its behalf have gone down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death". The bill included compensation arrangements and medical care specifically tailored for war-damaged veterans.

The Prime Minister at that time, Billy Hughes, had no doubts that this obligation was the result of an unwritten but binding contract between the Australian parliament and Australia's servicemen and women: "[W]e say to them 'You go and fight, and when you come back we will look

after your welfare'... [W]e have entered into a bargain with the soldier, and we must keep it." Hughes made it clear that the servicemen and women had every right to expect that the government would honour its promises: "The

soldier will say to the Commonwealth Government. 'You made us a promise. We look to you to carry it out.'"

By 1929 it had become clear that too great a burden was being placed on returned servicemen in seeking compensation for war-related disabilities. The remedy was the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1929, which relaxed evidentiary rules and put the onus on the Repatriation Commission to disprove a veteran's prima facie case.

In 1941 the Federal parliament again considered its responsibilities to the members

of the armed forces returning from

the front. A Joint Parliamentary Committee examined the adequacy of existing repatriation arrangements "in the light of the conditions caused by the 1939 war" and under the pressure of some "well publicised grievances" generated by the existing legislation. The result was Australia's new repatriation contract with its fighting forces, as embodied in the Australian Soldiers' Entitlement Act 1943.

In framing the new Act, much thought was given again to how difficult it should be for sick and disabled veterans to have their illnesses and disabilities accepted as war-caused.

The thought of sick war veterans having to continue to fight their way through court hearing after court hearing, with too heavy a burden of proof on them, was abhorrent both to the parliament and to the Australian people. So the new legislation included a more lenient test for whether a veteran's sickness could be linked with



Tim McCombe OAM (Dec'd)

war service. In short, the new legislation gave veterans a generous 'benefit of the doubt'. In introducing the legislation, the Attorney-General explained:

"The whole purpose of this provision is to reverse completely the method of proof and put the burden of proof upon the authorities to negative any connection between war service and the disability. In other words, if any question which is material to the case made by any of these tribunals cannot be placed beyond reasonable doubt, the question must be determined in favour of the member of the armed forces."

During the long parliamentary debate on the 1943 bill, the Federal Opposition's only objection to this provision was that it might not be generous enough.

While successive Federal parliaments supported these provisions, ambiguities in the wording of the Act led to disputes between the Repatriation Commission and the veteran community over interpretation of the 'benefit of the doubt' rule.

In 1977, however, parliament settled this issue in an amendment to the Act. In unambiguous wording that closely reflected the Attorney-General's 1943 explanation, the parliament reiterated its intention that a generous 'benefit of the doubt' was to be given to the veteran. The amended act put the onus on the determining authority to prove, beyond reasonable doubt, that a veteran's disability was not war caused.

The Vietnam Veterans Association's scientific advisers and many other reputable scientists were convinced that exposure to 'Agent Orange' could cause cancer. Even though

this view was not yet firmly held by the medical establishment, we strongly felt that Repatriation law demanding that veterans be given the benefit of the doubt would ensure veterans suffering certain cancers would be granted treatment and compensation.

But the Department of Veterans Affairs consistently refused to concede any link.

Phil was convinced the Department was not obeying Repatriation law.

From what I had read, I had to agree. At least on the link between 'Agent Orange' and certain cancers, especially soft tissue sarcoma, there seemed to be credible evidence.

The scientific advisors were also convinced that exposure could cause birth defects. This was not strictly a concern of the Department. If the link was established, legislation amendments would be necessary to include the children.

There was much less scientific evidence of a link with Toxic Brain Dysfunction but because its symptoms were akin to those of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, the Vietnam Veterans Association considered the possibility of mis-diagnosis should be investigated.

Meanwhile Phil Thompson, Tim McCombe,

Terry Loftus and the rest of the team of mainly sick and disabled Vietnam veterans moved from the Parramatta office to a storeroom in the back of an old Granville RSL hall. It was no more salubrious but at least there was room to move.

There was no money for furniture or renovations (indeed, not much money at all), but a truck arrived seemingly unannounced and offloaded old furniture. Then the James Hardie company donated some building material. I was



Terry Loftus (Dec'd)

surprised, too, when a concrete truck drove up

and emptied its contents into formwork at the back door to produce a landing and steps. Mick Scrace with his nail gun and his helpers got to work lining the walls and erecting partitions to form offices with James Hardie material. Norm Robinson, Bob Rogers, John Haines and many others set up shop and the work of advising and helping troubled Vietnam veterans and their families and the work of campaigning to have the harmfulness of exposure to Agent Orange recognised, began in earnest.

The Association magazine, *Debrief*, with a running commentary on the progress of our campaign, was being pumped out monthly.

With appeals to the government and the bureaucracy not having succeeded, it was time to try the judiciary. The Association began a campaign for the establishment of a Royal Commission.

The government said "No".

But in October 1981 the Opposition and the Democrats combined in the Senate to establish an enquiry by the Senate Standing Committee on Science and the Environment. It reported in November 1982.

In short, the Committee was undecided about the link with cancer and found no link with birth defects. It recommended more research into the possibility of Toxic Brain Dysfunction.

Of course we were grateful, but the Senate committee could not call unwilling witnesses, bring witnesses from overseas nor allow any opportunity for us to cross-examine. It held hearings for less than ten days. Though motivated by good will, the Committee was simply not in a position to resolve the huge and complex issue of 'Agent Orange'. It was not a substitute for a Royal Commission.

But it did pose some a valuable questions. It recommended "an examination of the way in which the determining authorities have been applying the evidentiary provisions of the legislation". In other words, was the Department giving veterans the benefit of the doubt as prescribed by Repatriation law? This was to be the Department's first warning.

The Committee also questioned the central

role being played by ED Letts' *Vietnam Special Studies Group*. It recommended an examination of "whether the determining authorities have been relying too heavily on information provided by departmental sources".

Valuable too was insight into the Department's view of the Vietnam War and Vietnam veterans.

Dr Sol Rose had been, until late 1981, Director of Medical Services in Victoria responsible for the training and oversight of medical officers

who dealt with claims by veterans that their disabilities and illnesses were war-caused. His evidence was, in part, as follows:



Evatt

"I do not think that the nature of the war is

Vietnam is any different is significant,

because the service was not a long one in comparison to World War II; they were not debilitated anywhere near to the same as were the ...people coming back from long service in the tropics, particularly those from the New Guinea campaigns which were long and arduous."

This showed a lack of understanding of guerrilla warfare. Indeed, evidence given by Brigadier Rogers, Director of Army Medical Services, who had served in Vietnam, differed markedly. He said:

"I did a little calculation once of the amount of stress put on a Vietnam soldier in comparison to the World War II soldier. The infantry soldiers – the combat soldiers – faced many times more stress."

We were not interested in an argument about whose war was the most debilitating, but we were interested in Dr Rose's misconception of our war, a

misconception that might have influenced the way his doctors viewed the compensation claims of Vietnam veterans.

We felt, too, that such an errant view might not have been confined to the Victorian Director of Medical Services and his doctors. Indeed it was quite possible that Dr Rose's view was widespread.

We wondered whether this helped to explain the Department's obstinacy.

In 1982, while the Senate Enquiry was sitting, the government ordered some 21,000 files raised in Vietnam during the war and housed in the War Memorial archives be examined for evidence of exposure to herbicides and insecticides. A group of round 20 army officers and warrant officers with supporting staff from Army Headquarters in Canberra commanded by an army lieutenant colonel, trawled the files while a small writing team received the evidence and compiled a report.

Assistant Secretary Bruce Manning from the Department of Veterans Affairs' *Vietnam Special Studies Group* was one of the writing team. As I have said, we much later realised that Bruce Manning was, while serving in Vietnam, responsible for the distribution of insecticides. The *Comparative Study* had declared it could not rule out chemical mis-use. So whilst not suggesting any impropriety or dishonesty on his part, Bruce Manning should not have been put in the position of interpreting information on the chemical distribution system in which he participated.

The report which emerged from this process, titled *Report on the Use of Herbicides, Insecticides and Other Chemicals by the Australian Army in South Vietnam* and known of the *Army Report* was

completed too late to be viewed by the Senate Committee. Neither did it go directly to Parliament. First it was sent for review to the Department of Veterans Affairs' *Benefits and Special Projects Division* (formerly *Vietnam Special Studies Group*) led by the import from the Department of Primary Industry, ED Letts. This seemed unnecessary and inappropriate. Why should the Department of Veterans Affairs be reviewing a report produced by the army rather than acting on its unreviewed contents? On 25 November 1982 Phil Thompson

distributed a press release objecting. It said in part:

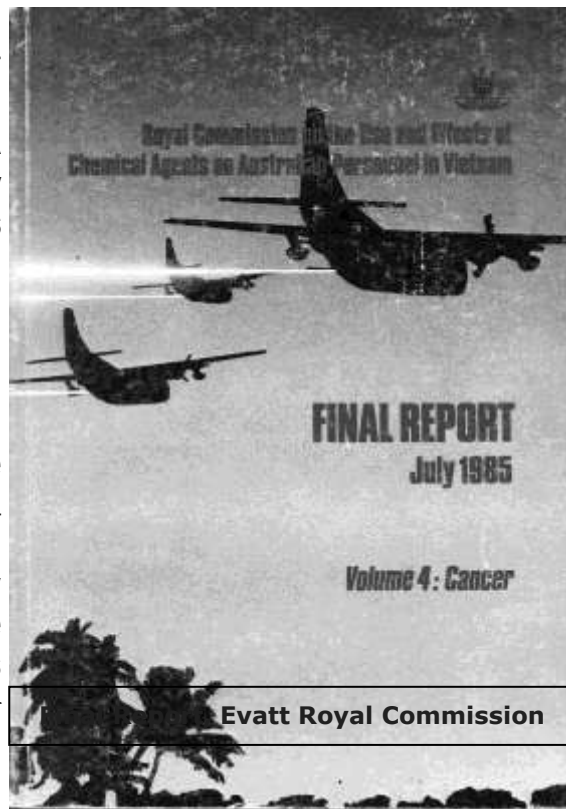
"There is also an obvious conflict of interest in the DVA revision of the original Defence Department report. This interference must destroy the credibility of the final version of the report." The Minister for Defence, in answer to a Parliamentary question, claimed the revision was only to add information where a more detailed description of events was felt necessary; to make minor corrections of factual detail; to make editorial corrections such as spelling and typographical corrections; and make other editorial changes to improve the flow

of the report. In saying this he implied there would be no significantly changes to the report's thrust.

However, the Minister added that only one copy of the original would be retained. It was a copy to which we would not have access.

But, as we were to discover much later, fundamental changes to the original report had indeed been made.

Meanwhile, Shadow Minister Clyde Holding was able to include the establishment of a Royal Commission on the Labor Party's election platform.



In 1983, Labor won the election, and one of its first actions was to announce a Royal Commission into the 'Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam'. Its terms of reference were wide and it was properly resourced.

We couldn't have been happier. Now the truth would out.

We noted with concern, however, that the Department of Veterans Affairs was providing its input to the Royal Commission through the *Benefits Special Projects Division (Special Projects Branch)* headed by ED Letts.

As the hearings progressed we had other concerns.

One was that, while the Royal Commission was still sitting, the government amended Repatriation law making it more difficult for veterans' compensation claims to succeed. The amendment required that a 'reasonable hypothesis' be established before the 'reverse onus of proof beyond reasonable



A soldier sprays herbicides unprotected.

doubt' standard could be applied. This meant that the assumptions underpinning the Vietnam Veterans Association's campaign were changed. We wondered how this would affect the Royal Commission's outcome.

Also of concern was the Association's case itself. It was a somewhat messy affair. Whilst some of its witnesses were world-renowned and reliable experts, others turned out to be unreliable and even dodgy.

Even with the Association's sometimes messy case and with the law-change making compensation claims' success more difficult, the

Royal Commission found that a Repatriation determining authority might well attribute a Vietnam veteran's soft tissue sarcoma or non-Hodgkins lymphoma to his exposure to Agent Orange while on war service in Vietnam. We wondered how long that list of cancers would have been had the law not been toughened up.

A second finding of the Royal Commission vindicated our campaign even more. It found that the Department had, "for a number of years, refused to concede that benevolent judicial interpretations of the application of ... [the law] were consistent with parliamentary intention". And, the report said, the Department was guilty of "finding a method whereby the Repatriation

Commission may restrict benefits which have flowed from a generous – though proper – interpretation of the legislation". The Royal Commission went so far as to accuse the Department of training Determining Officers "to find ways around Court statements of what the law was" and of emphasising "ways in

which a claim could be 'knocked-out'."

The Royal Commission scolded the Repatriation Commission saying that if it was unsatisfied with the law it should move to change it, not break it. This was the Repatriation Commission's second warning.

However, the Royal Commission reported there was insufficient evidence to find the chemicals guilty of harm at the standard of proof required in a civil court. This was, of course, largely irrelevant to the veterans whose compensation cases were heard within the Repatriation system where the benefit of the doubt applied.

Our response to the Royal Commission findings was two-fold. We were unhappy with how it had handled some of the evidence, causing a storm in the scientific community with world-renowned scientists outraged by the unequivocal 'guilty' findings and two of them expressing their outrage in a letter to the Governor General. Then we found that great slabs of the most important parts of the Royal Commission's report were lifted verbatim (mistakes and all) and without attribution from the submissions of the chemical company, Monsanto. A Wollongong University academic specialising in the study of incidents of plagiarism wrote:

"The extent of plagiarism is undoubtedly great. I have examined hundreds of pages which are transcribed almost verbatim, while other parts appear to be based on the content and structure of arguments in the Monsanto submission. Of the many instances of plagiarism which I have studied, this is one of the more egregious cases."

We reasoned that without these blemishes, the Royal Commission 'not guilty' findings (at the civil court standard of proof) may have been less emphatic leaving more room for doubt.

This concern was later reinforced when, in 1989, an academic conference titled *Reappraisal of the Findings on Agent Orange by the Australian Royal Commission* concluded:

"We believe that the final decision by the Australian Royal Commission to completely exonerate 'Agent Orange' (and other chemicals) was incorrect."

Our second and more important response was focused on the Department. We waited expectantly for a 'Mia Culpa' over its systemic avoidance of Repatriation law and for an acknowledgement of the Royal Commission's findings on cancer.

We waited in vain. Astonishingly, the Royal Commission findings made not a scrap of difference to the Department's behaviour. We noted that ED Letts' *Special Projects and Co-ordination Division* (*Special Projects Component*) was responsible

for advising "the Secretary, the Repatriation Commission and the Minister on matters arising from the report of the Royal Commission..."

In the Department of Veterans Affairs 1986-87 Annual Report, the Minister for Veterans Affairs was reported as announcing:

'On the basis of scientific, medical, statistical and other evidence relied on by the Commission the Government accepts that the case for a link between Agent Orange and the health problems among Vietnam veterans has not been established.'

We noted again that the *Special Projects Component* was responsible for advising the Minister and that the Minister had omitted mention of the Royal Commission's findings that under Repatriation law a link had been established between exposure to 'Agent Orange' and certain cancers.

By June 1989 the *Special Projects and Co-ordination Division* had been disbanded and ED Letts had left the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 1986 Phil Thompson committed suicide.

No doubt the poor outcome from his cancer operation, his marriage breakdown and his severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder were the primary causes. But his disappointment that the Royal Commission he had fought so hard to establish had not changed things for the better could not but have contributed.

But the Agent Orange Royal Commission had not been a waste of time. In its two years of enquiry, it had collected and collated mountains of scientific evidence and information about the use of toxic chemicals in Vietnam. And the Royal Commission had pointed out that:

'It is a matter of public record that there has been a clear divergence of opinion and of result between the Repatriation Review Tribunal and the Repatriation Commission as to the proper interpretation and application of the standards of proof prescribed under the legislation.'

In other words, the appeals tribunals were

obeying Repatriation law even though the Department wasn't.

So using the information collected as a base, the Vietnam Veterans Association took the fight to the independent appeals tribunals.

Adrian Crisp's Vietnam service was as a rifleman with the 8th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in 1969/70. In 1977 Adrian died of malignant schwannoma of the right brachial plexus, a cancer of the nerve sheath. This is a variety of soft tissue sarcoma, a cancer identified by the Royal Commission as linked with exposure to Agent Orange. His widow applied to the Department of Veterans Affairs for a war widows pension on the grounds that exposure to toxic chemicals whilst in Vietnam caused

Adrian's cancer. The claim was rejected.

With information gathered by the Royal Commission in the hands of two eminent Australian medical scientists, the Sale sub-branch's Ted Warner with National President Tim McCombe, appealed the case. In 1989 the case came before the

Administrative Appeals Tribunal (the second level of appeal). The case was won. Adrian Crisp's cancer was attributed to his exposure to 'Agent Orange'. The 'reason for decision' carefully explained how the Tribunal identified the existence of a 'reasonable hypothesis' supporting Adrian Crisp's case. Its findings made it clear that our success came because of the good quality of evidence presented on behalf of the veteran and because the law required the Tribunal to give the veteran the 'benefit of the doubt'

Two similar successes followed, each success discrediting the initial Departmental

rejection.

In December 1992 the cases of Ken Kain and Peter Edwards came before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Both veterans had been diagnosed in the early 80s with Hodgkin's disease, a cancer of the lymph glands. Of particular note in this hearing was Dr Millar's comprehensive evidence of the veterans' potential for exposure to a wide range of toxic chemicals. The Tribunal acknowledged there was a difference of opinion between experts, but that a 'reasonable hypothesis' had been established and that the contrary evidence did not disprove that 'reasonable hypothesis' beyond reasonable doubt. The appeals succeeded.



'Fogging' herbicides/insecticides

In February 2001 the Administrative Appeals Tribunal handed down its decision in the case of Robert Cornish. He died of disseminated Cancer of the Colon. Whilst there was considerable evidence against 'Agent Orange' being the cause, it was not sufficient,

the Tribunal said, to disprove beyond reasonable doubt the

'reasonable hypothesis' supporting the link. The appeal succeeded.

In addition there were some dozen cases won at the Veterans Review Board (the first level of appeal) and a number of cases withdrawn by the Repatriation Commission before Administrative Appeals Tribunal hearings.

There would no doubt have been other successful cases sponsored by other ex-service organisations and by individuals.

In July 1993, the US National Academy of Science released a report (commissioned by the US Congress) on the association between 'Agent

Orange' exposure during Vietnam service and ill health. The report was based on a review of existing evidence. In the report a list of cancers was linked with exposure to 'Agent Orange' at a standard of proof approximating that demanded in Australian civil courts.

One of those cancers cited was Hodgkin's Disease.

Only months before the US Academy of Science report's release, the Repatriation Commission had appeared before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in the Kain and Edwards case. There, it had argued that, even at the lower standard of proof required by Repatriation law, there was no link between Hodgkin's Disease

and exposure to 'Agent Orange'. Both bodies had access to the same evidence and the Repatriation Commission had a statutory responsibility to investigate thoroughly. The Repatriation Commission's investigation with the less onerous standard of proof did not find the link

while a link was identified using a more onerous test by the US Academy. Something was wrong.

The 1993 US Academy of Science report's findings, at that civil court standard of proof, effectively overturned the Agent Orange Royal Commission finding at a similar standard of proof that "[t]here is no reliable evidence that the chemicals in Agent Orange cause cancer in humans".

The US Academy finding could not be ignored.

In 1994 the system of assessment of claims for compensation was changed with the

establishment of the Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA). Its task was to determine and publish the causes of illnesses. After the establishment of the RMA there could be no more arguing the causes of diseases before the appeals tribunals. But the RMA, following its own procedures, found a link between veterans' exposure to Agent Orange and much the same list of cancers as had the US Academy but adding multiple myeloma; and respiratory cancers (lung, larynx and trachea).

In 1994, *Medicine at War*, Volume 3 of the Official History of the Vietnam War, was published. Its publication came seven months after the release of the US Academy of Science report

effectively overturning the Royal Commission finding exonerating Agent Orange of causing cancer.

We had been looking forward to the publication of this volume of the Official History expecting the narrative about the Agent Orange controversy to go something like this:

The Department of Veterans Affairs

repeatedly rejected veterans' claims that they may have been harmed by their exposure to 'Agent Orange'. The veterans believed those claims were being rejected mainly because the Department failed to give the 'benefit of the doubt' as required by law. Their suspicions were confirmed by the Agent Orange Royal Commission which reprimanded the Department for wilfully circumventing this law. While the Evatt enquiry was sitting, a legislative amendment was passed that made it more difficult for veterans' compensation claims to succeed.



Heavy spraying, South Vietnam circa 1967

Despite this added difficulty, the Royal Commission found that, under Repatriation law, soft tissue sarcoma (with its very many varieties) and lymphoma could be linked with exposure to 'Agent Orange' in Vietnam. Subsequently, the campaigning veterans, time and time again, sponsored cases at the appeals tribunals in which veterans' cancers were attributed to 'Agent Orange' exposure.

We expected this narrative to lead to the conclusion that the veterans were vindicated in their 'David and Goliath' contest with the Repatriation Commission.

But rather than acknowledge the veterans' success in that contest, the author FB Smith launched an attack on the campaigning veterans' leadership. Professor Smith had a belief about the 1980s. It was a time, he proclaimed, "when ... private greed became, for

some, a public good." Without interviewing any of the campaign's national leaders, he lumped them into that category. In intemperate outbursts, he declared: "A small minority of disgruntled Vietnam veterans seized on the issue both as an explanation of their discontent and a likely source of additional repatriation benefits." For Smith, "[t]he clash epitomizes many of the worst aspects of Australian behaviour in the 1980s."

What had happened was this. FB Smith had failed to include in his account the two Royal Commission findings (identifying two categories of cancer linked with exposure to Agent Orange

under Repatriation law and the attempts by the Repatriation Commission to circumvent the law and the intentions of parliament) that vindicated the veterans' campaign. This extraordinary failure allowed him to wrongly claim that the veterans had no case. Claiming they had no case made it possible for him to fit the campaigning veterans into his views on behaviour during the 1980s and accuse them of dishonesty and greed.

We noted that FB Smith, during the writing of his account, had not interviewed even one of the national leadership of the 'Agent Orange' campaign. Perhaps if he had, his account would not have been so flawed.

Neither did FB Smith's account mention the US Academy findings even though they had preceded the Official History's publication by seven months. Perhaps this was too short a time for the publication process to be interrupted

with an amendment. But neither did FB Smith ever acknowledge that the US Academy findings might modify his account.

Controversy followed but Official Historian Dr Peter Edwards defended FB Smith's account and criticised the campaigning veterans.

In 2012, *Fighting to the Finish*, Volume 9 of the Official History written by Ashley Ekins was published.

On the findings of the Agent Orange Royal Commission the author reported only:

Fogging in camp beside amenities.



“In the 1980s and Australian Royal Commission concluded that these claims were not substantiated.”

No mention of the findings under Repatriation law linking exposure to ‘Agent Orange’ to cancer. No mention of the Royal Commission rebuke to the Department for evading Repatriation law.

In 2013, the revision of the *Army Report* again became an issue.

As previously discussed, in 1982 a team of army officers and warrant officers was assembled to examine some 21,000 files raised in Vietnam during the war for references to the use of herbicides and insecticides.

The report which emerged from this process, titled *Report on the Use of Herbicides, Insecticides and Other Chemicals by the Australian Army in South Vietnam* was known of the *Army Report*. The report did not go directly to Parliament. First it was sent for review to the Department of Veterans Affairs’ *Benefits and Special Projects Division* (formerly *Vietnam Special Studies Group*) led by the import from the Department of Primary Industry, ED Letts.

The Minister for Defence, in answer to a Parliamentary question, claimed the revision was only to add information where a more detailed description of events was felt necessary; to make minor corrections of factual detail; to make editorial corrections such as spelling and typographical corrections; and make other editorial changes to improve the flow of the report. In saying this he implied there would be no major changes made.

However, the Minister added that only one copy of the original would be retained. There were thus two versions of the *Army Report*; the original

version dated May 1982 and the revised version dated December 1982. The original was not made publicly available.

The revised version of the *Army Report* was also presented to the Agent Orange Royal Commission where it became a key piece of evidence.

In 1982 Major John Mordike was selected as a permanent member of the team to examine the 21,000 files because of his academic research experience. He supervised a small group given the sole responsibility for seeking out and examining records of insecticide use.

In 2011 the now professional historian Dr John Mordike, suspecting the full story of Australia’s use of insecticides had not surfaced, and concerned veterans’ exposure to them may have caused unacknowledged harm, sought out copies of the original and the revised *Army Report*.

What he found in the insecticide section of these reports alarmed him.

He found that far from only minor amendments being made to the original, a key passage had been erased making the revised edition unjustifiably beguine.

In his paper, *Insecticide Deceit? the truth about insecticides use in Nui Dat*, Dr Mordike quotes from the May (original) *Army Report* describing the 1 Australian Task Force Hygiene Officer’s initial concerns about the use of insecticides at Nui Dat:

“The concern, that untrained personnel were apparently using toxic insecticides without any knowledge of concentrations, dilution factors, human toxicity factors and general safety precautions, resulted in the intended publication in Routine Orders of information on safe insecticide practice.”

The critical words ‘that untrained personnel were apparently using toxic insecticides without any knowledge of concentrations, dilution factors, human toxicity factors and general safety precautions’ had been removed.

In the December *Army Report*, the revised version presented to Parliament and used by the Royal Commission, that statement was amended to read:

‘The 1 ATF Hygiene officers [sic] concern that practices for the use of toxic insecticides needed improvement resulted in the intended publication in Routine Orders of information on safe insecticide’

The critical words ‘that untrained personnel were apparently using toxic insecticides without any knowledge of concentrations, dilution factors, human toxicity factors and general safety precautions’ had been removed.

These words were critical because they came from a trained hygiene officer and suggested long standing mis-use and negligence. They also suggested the possibility of military personnel being dangerously exposed. The hiding of such information could only mislead Parliament and the Royal Commission as well as deprive veterans of evidence in claiming medical treatment and compensation for war-caused illnesses.

The omission of those words from the December (revised) report cannot but raise questions about the role of the *Vietnam Special Studies Group* and its successors.

Dr Mordike compared only the sections of the May and December *Army Report* dealing with insecticide use. What amendments were made to the rest of the original report about herbicide use remains to be discovered. Work on this is planned. But Dr Mordike relates that much more disturbing for him was his discovery that key documents that described the misuse of the highly toxic insecticide Dieldrin at Nui Dat in 1970 and 1971 - documents that he considered to be a major discovery of the research project with profound implications for the health of soldiers - had been omitted from the original version of the *Army Report*. Dr Mordike relates that in 1982, as the officer responsible for insecticides on the research team, he submitted copies of the Dieldrin-related documents along with file summaries to the writing team for inclusion in the *Army Report* as a key

breakthrough for the research project. He was convinced that misuse of insecticides would become the subject of major interest for questions concerning Veterans’ health. Yet the omission of these key documents in the *Army Report* diverted attention from insecticides and, specifically, forestalled further questions about the implications of prolonged exposure of soldiers to Dieldrin.

He then set off on a two year study of those same files to rediscover what had been omitted.

During this study Dr Mordike discovered that several documents he had sighted in his original search describing egregious mis-use of insecticides, were now missing.

The investigation led to his paper, *Insecticide Deceit? The truth about insecticides use in Nui Dat*, a paper which has radically changed our understanding of Australian insecticide use during the Vietnam war.

What will result from Dr Mordike’s exposé, time will tell.

For more than twenty years we have been fighting for a new and accurate official history of the Agent Orange controversy to be commissioned. Last year our efforts were rewarded.

This year, 2016, the project of writing a new official history titled *The Medical and Health Legacy of the Vietnam War* begins. It will take three and a half years and cost one and a half million dollars and be carried out by historian Dr Peter Yule.

We wish Dr Yule well and look forward to the new history’s publication. ■



Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers
Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc.
 Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc



2016 Membership Application / Renewal Form

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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' Name _____ Service number _____

SVN Unit _____ Tour date/s) _____

Cause of death (if known) _____

(**SR** Service Related **UK** Unknown **S** Suicide **O** Other)

Date of death (if known) _____ Location at time of death (State & Town) _____

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Ph **(02) 9682 1788** Fax **(02) 9682 6134**
E-mail to **secretary@vfvagranville.org**



Kỷ niệm 50 năm Chiến Thắng Long Tân của Quân Đội Hoàng Gia Úc, với tấm lòng tri ân thương mến đến những người đã hy sinh cuộc sống của mình để chiến đấu bảo vệ nền tự do cho Miền Nam Việt Nam đến từ đất nước Miệt Dưới Úc Đại Lợi, xin gửi đến quý độc giả Độc San Grom Thiêng lời của bài hát: **Always Our Heroes- Our Friends** do Báo Khánh sáng tác và trình bày. Bài hát này cũng đã được một Cựu Chiến Binh Úc của Bass Hill RSL làm thành một DVD và đã gây quỹ cho LEGACY Sydney số tiền 20,000 Úc Kim.

Quý vị muốn xem DVD này có thể vào Google và bấm : **Our Heroes Our Friends - Báo Khanh**. Bài hát này đã gây xúc động cho nhiều người dân Úc khi nghe, đặc biệt là những thân nhân của những cựu chiến binh Úc tại Việt Nam vì đã cho thấy rõ chính nghĩa chống cộng bảo vệ tự do trong cuộc chiến tại Việt Nam. Kính mong quý vị tiếp tay phổ biến.

ALWAYS OUR HEROES - OUR FRIENDS

*There was the time - You were there for us
There was the time - You fought for us
For our freedom - For our lives*

*Always the time - We'll adore you
Always the time - We'll remember you*

Our Heroes - Our Friends

*Long Tân, Núi Đất, Phước Tuy, Bà Rịa
Saigon, Bình Ba, Hòa Long, Vũng Tàu
You were there to defend our land
You were there against Red Demons.
Your Sacrifice was for good cause
Your Sacrifice for us to live.*

*For Freedom, Democracy
- Vietnam always remember!*

*Now is the time we gather here
Now is the time we remember you
To all soldiers- Australian.*

*Always the time- We'll adore you
Always the time- We'll remember you
Our Heroes - Our Friends,
Lest We Forget*

Các anh đã từng đến với chúng tôi
Các anh đã từng chiến đấu cho chúng tôi
Để cho tự do và cuộc sống của chúng tôi.

Mãi mãi yêu thương quý mến các anh.

Mãi mãi tôn vinh tưởng nhớ các anh.

Những vị anh hùng và là bạn của chúng tôi.

Long Tân, Núi Đất, Phước Tuy, Bà Rịa

Sài Gòn, Bình Ba, Hòa Long, Vũng Tàu

Các anh đã đến nơi đó để bảo vệ quê hương tôi.

Các anh đã đến chống lại loài quỷ đỏ tanh hôi.

Sự hy sinh chiến đấu của các anh vô cùng chính nghĩa.

Sự hy sinh chiến đấu của các anh cho chúng tôi được bình yên.

Và nền tự do dân chủ đã có mà Việt Nam chúng tôi sẽ luôn ghi nhớ.

Giờ phút này đây hãy ngồi lại với nhau.

Cho chúng tôi bày tỏ những ân tình

Tình yêu thương đến người lính Úc Đại Lợi.

Mãi mãi yêu thương quý mến các anh

Mãi mãi tôn vinh tưởng nhớ các anh

Những vị anh hùng... Những người bạn của chúng tôi.



Vietnam Sydney Radio

Thứ Hai : 5pm - 7pm 98.5FM

(Mon) : 8pm-10pm 2000 Digital

Thứ Ba : 5pm - 7pm 100.9FM

(Tues) : 8pm-10pm 2000 Digital

Thứ Tư : 5pm - 7pm 100.9FM

(Wed) : 8pm-10pm 2000 Digital

Thứ Năm (Thu): 5pm - 6pm 98.5FM

www.vnsr.net

Liên lạc BÁO KHÁNH Mob: 0412 296 155



Vietnam Veterans', Peacekeepers & Peacemakers
Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc.
State Head Office Granville, NSW



VĂN PHÒNG KHAI THUẾ VÀ KẾ TOÁN
TERESA TRAN & ASSOCIATES
Certified Practising Accountants & Registered Tax Agent



**Chuyên nghiệp
Tận tâm
Uy tín**



Teresa Trần Hương Thủy

Chúng tôi chuyên phục vụ quý vị:

- * Đảm trách tất cả các dịch vụ khai thuế lợi tức và thuế GST cho mọi ngành nghề
- * Giữ sổ sách thường xuyên cho các cơ sở thương mại
- * Thành lập công ty, xin số ABN, trong vòng 24 tiếng
- * Thành lập quỹ hưu trí (Self managed super fund)



Trước thềm Xuân Bính Thân 2016, chúng tôi chân thành kính chúc toàn thể quý khách cùng quý đồng hương một mùa Xuân Vui tươi, Hạnh phúc và một năm mới An khang, Thịnh vượng Mọi sự Như ý

51 Kenny Street, Wollongong 2500
PO Box 1374 Wollongong DC 2500
Tel: (02) 4229 5133 - Fax: (02) 4225 1059
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Metapower

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Tel: 02 9623 1011

ALLIED FORCES Service Pension and Membership entitlements

There are provisions within the Veterans' Entitlement Act, 1986 (VEA), for allies of Australia during World War Two, and the conflicts that followed, to apply for a Service Pension through the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), provided that they have satisfied all the DVA and Government requirements for that pension.

I am aware from my conversations with a number of our members and readers of this Journal, that many are unaware of the assistance that the Association also provides to the former "Allies" of the conflicts that Australia has been involved with. These allies (post WW2) included South Korea, South Vietnam, New Zealand, America and the Philippines, and now a number of others, following Australia's recent deployments.

From about 1994 our Association has had an "open door" policy, and have assisted Australian veterans of all conflicts, Peacekeeping deployments and past and current serving members of the Defence Force, with disability pensions and welfare matters, at no cost to them and with no requirement to be a member.

Please note that the allied veterans are only entitled to claim for the Service Pension, and not the Disability Pension. I might also point out that under the

Association's Constitution, allied veterans are entitled to join the Association as "Ordinary Members", and many have done so, not dissimilar to RSL Sub-Branches.

In appreciation of our assistance to them, the "South Korean Vietnam Veterans Association" and "South Vietnamese Vietnam Veterans Association (ARVN)" in particular, have, over the years, held various "functions and ceremonies" where monies raised have been donated to our Association to help us to continue our assistance to all Australian and allied veterans. Some of the donations have been quite substantial, and very much appreciated.

A considerable number of our South Vietnamese and South Korean members, who receive our Journal, are unable to read English, but would still like to receive advice or information, preferably in Vietnamese or Korean, of special events or important Government issues affecting them.

As they are members and have supported the Association for many years, by way of monetary donations, and in other ways, I believe that it would be reasonable and prudent of the Association to include in our Journal, when required, information in the Vietnamese or Korean language, in our Journal or by way of a "flyer", or a separate mail-out, on those occasions.

A message for Korean Veterans

The following may be of interest.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs has approved a commemorative mission of eight veterans of the Korean War 1950 -1953 to travel to the Republic of Korea in October 2016 (timed around United Nations Day – 24 October). On behalf of the Minister, MAJGEN Kelly has written to representative ESOs concerning the mission and to call for veteran nominations. Nominations for the mission are now open until Friday, 13 May 2016. A selection process will follow before briefing the Minister with recommendations on veterans to issue a formal invitation to travel. It is forecast that veteran nominees can expect to receive advice on the status of their nomination around late July/August 2016.

The nomination package (including nomination forms) for the mission (attached) will this week be placed on the DVA Website under "Commemorative Missions" accessible via the "Commemorative and War Graves" Quick Link from the DVA website homepage <http://www.dva.gov.au/commemorations-memorials-and-war-graves/commemorative-missions>

Information about the mission will also be advertised to veterans in the Autumn 2016 edition of *Vetaffairs*, to allow for veterans not linked to an ESO the opportunity to lodge a nomination.

How do veterans access the nomination package?

Please refer interested persons to the DVA website link referred above in the first instance.

Alternatively email korea2016mission@dva.gov.au and indicate preference – forms to be sent by return email, post or fax.

For veterans with no or limited IT access or capability, phone Mathew Hardy in Commemorations Branch – 02 6289 6509 .

Who do veterans contact to enquire about the mission?

By email to korea2016mission@dva.gov.au

By phone to Mathew Hardy, Commemorations Branch – 02 6289 6509.

Hadyn White

Executive Officer to the Deputy Commissioner NSW & ACT

E-mail: Hadyn.White@dva.gov.au

Phone: (02) 9213-7773 Mobile: 0413 302 693



BankstownSports

**VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS
ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) Inc.**

in conjunction with

BANKSTOWN DISTRICT SPORTS CLUB

Invite you to attend

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

THURSDAY, 18 AUGUST 2016

**COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
BATTLE OF LONG TAN.**

BANKSTOWN SPORTS CLUB, in conjunction with THE VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) Inc., will once again host this years VIETNAM VETERANS DAY COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE.

The club is located at 8 Greenfield Parade Bankstown. If arriving by rail use this entry. If arriving by vehicle, free car parking is available via the Mona St., car park entry. There are also bus services from Parramatta, Liverpool and Hurstville. Doors open at 0900hrs. Make your way to the Grand Ballroom entry hall.

You may wish to avail yourself of the TRAVELODGE HOTEL located within the club premises at special rates for those attending the function. You can stay the prior evening or following the function. However, we advise to book early. YOU MUST MENTION THE VIETNAM VETERANS FUNCTION TO ACHIEVE THE SPECIAL RATES.

For bookings call 02 9793 0000 or 1300 886 886.

This is a ticketed event and entry will only be granted to those holding tickets. Pre-purchasing tickets is the preferred method to ascertain attendance figures for catering arrangements and seating by the club.

Arrangements are still in progress as we go to print, Ticket Prices and Room Rates are not available and will be announced in our next issue due out in early July 2016.

*Contact the Granville office for further information: Ph 02 9682 1788 Fx 02 9682 6134 or
email to secretay@vfvfgranville.org*

We bring our readers an article from the 1978 VVAA NSW, (Now VVF/VVPPAA), President and National Secretary, Mr Gary Adams. It is envisaged that in future issues we will bring readers a serialisation of our story. The beginnings of the organisation, from 1978, it's people, the formation of a formidable lobby group on behalf of veterans. Our History. ...ED

THE EARLY DAYS

THE WAR MEMORIAL AND THE VIETNAM CHEMICAL OPERATION REVIEW TAKING A QUOTE FROM SHAKESPEARE – TO BE OR NOT TO BE.....

Will the re-writing of the Vietnam Chemical Operation at the War Memorial be fully disclosed - I think not, Agent Orange was a “smoke screen” for what really took place. There has been a number of researchers & historians that have distorted not only the chemical issue but the inception of the Vietnam Veterans Associations. As a founder of the VVA NSW and the 1st National & State Secretary. I hope in coming articles to give the true story of how and why we formed, the full story on the chemicals etc, the brick walls that had to be knocked down and the recognition to those who were instrumental in the associations development and the creation of the magazine “Debrief” at our first office in Tooradin Place, West Pennant Hills.



A Huey delivers it's sprayload.

When I first made mention in the Sunday Telegraph on 5th November 1978 about the problems that Veterans were experiencing it opened the door. So many Veterans that served in Vietnam had no idea about the chemical exposure that we were subjected too and the effects it was having on the Veteran Community and their family.

Strangely enough the Australian Government knew exactly what effect it would have on everyone in Vietnam and not only on the Troops. Why? Do you ask, well the Government did thorough testing of the chemicals in Innisfail in Queensland. This area was chosen because it was very similar countryside to South Vietnam. I beg you to go onto the web and search “chemical spraying in Innisfail QLD, as well as Dr Jean Williams. You will see how it has affected its residents and the destruction it has caused. There was prior knowledge of the effect of Chemicals as far back as 1899, information to be found in Senate Paper

Speech, House of Representatives, 15th May 1980 by Mr C Holdings.

There is also a website from the New Zealand Government -- NZ Health Select Committee Agent Orange Enquiry Submission. This clearly states that the company responsible for producing chemicals, Monsanto made Fraudulent and Manipulated Scientific Studies of the results of testing. This resulted in Monsanto paying out 16.5 Million in Punative Damages. Also interesting is that Monsanto's Chief Toxicologist was a Consultant to the Australian Government for the Australian Royal Commission....?

As I said Agent Orange was a smoke screen, the Government knew the dangers it could

cause. Why did the Government want Agent Orange as the main Chemical? Simple the other chemicals used were worse than Agent Orange, 245T and 24D had an extra nasty Component DIOXIN. Then there were agents Blue, White, Purple, Green, Pink, Gramoxin, Malathion and Paraquat. When these chemicals were mixed together it was an unknown cocktail. The mix came about when the spray tanks were not cleaned out, added to this problem aerial spraying is well known to have enormous spray drifts. The Hercules and helicopters that were used in these operations were generally at 50 metres, one only has to remember for those in the Nui Dat base in PHOU C TUY Province who were sprayed with Malathion at a 10 times higher concentrate than that used in the Agriculture sector. Added to this when the Malathion was sprayed what other chemicals were combined with it (from the residue of previous sprays). This is why I make reference again to the

fact that “Agent Orange” was a very colourful smoke screen to take attention away from all chemicals that were sprayed in South Vietnam. Reason being not only was Vietnam an issue, but remember that these chemicals were widely used in the agricultural sector worldwide and the economic consequence was too great for the Government to admit or include all the chemicals that were used.

There is a myriad of information if one has access to a computer to search the Federal Government web site under the headings of:-

Chemicals used in Vietnam - 1980 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HANSARDS AND THE SENATE

Defoliants used in Vietnam - 1980 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HANSARDS AND THE SENATE

This will show you related information from the early sixties through to end of troops being in Vietnam also the Defoliants and Chemicals that were used in the Phuoc Tuy province apart from aerial spraying. Information goes back to 1899 and in particular chemical usage by the Germans in the 30's and the Americans in the 2nd World War on

the rice fields in Japan.

CHEMICAL USAGE IN SOUTH VIETNAM:-

CHLORINATED HYDROCARBONS:

D.D.T, Chlordane, Dieldrin

ORGANO PHOSPHATES:

Malathion, Diazinon, Pyrethrins

HERBICIDES:

Hyvar, Regione, Tordon

REPELLANTS:

Di Butyl Phthalate and Dimethylphthalate.

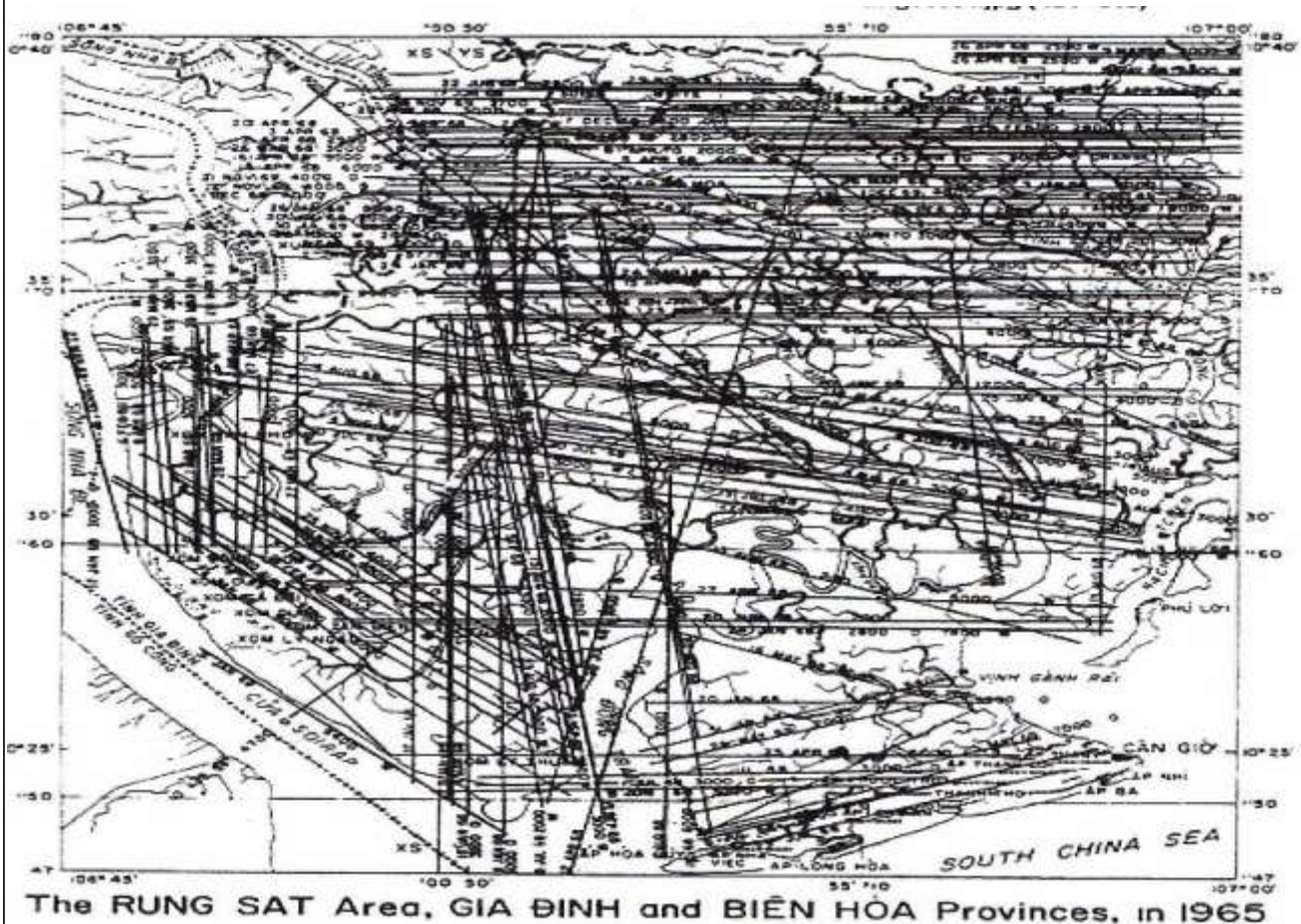
PARAQUAT:

dimethyl-4,4'-bipyridinium dichloride

To understand this more fully one needs to look at the table, (*Below*), of the chemicals and the amounts sprayed and the time frame used. This table is an extract from Statutory Declaration by a SGT in the Army which was presented in full to Parliament on 15th MAY 1980. Mr Clive Holding MP requested it to be logged in the Hansard – leave granted.

TABLE 3-4: MAJOR HERBICIDES USED IN OPERATION RANCH HAND 1962-1971

HERBICIDE CODE NAME	FORMULATION	PURPOSE	GALLONS SPRAYED	PERIOD OF USE
Purple	2,4-D; 2,4,5-T	General defoliation	145,000	1962-64
BLUE (Phytar 560-G)	Cacodylic acid	Rapid defoliation, grassy plant control ,rice destruction	1,124,307	1962-71
Pink	2,4,5-T	Defoliation	122,792	1962-64
Green	2,4,5-T	Crop destruction	8,208	1962-64
Orange, ORANGE 11	2,4-D; 2,4,5-T	General defoliation	11,261,429	1965-70
White (Tordon 101)	2,4-D; Picloram	Forest defoliation, long- term control	5,246,502	1965-71



Also the map, (above), shows the sorties flown for one period by "Operation Ranch Hand" which began in the early sixties. The map is of Phouc Tuy province and each black line represents the flight path of the C123's. These lines show the date, the type of chemical and the gallonage. As stated before, the planes flew at approx. 50 metres above ground and 80 metres apart on each sortie. This is fixed wing aircraft only, not including helicopters. Again search under OPERATION RANCH HAND VIETNAM and be amazed with the information and the images that are there.

Taking the amount of chemicals used you also have to consider that contamination was inevitable. It was in the water supply system in which we bathed, washed clothes and consumed, added to this also my Unit 1 Fld Sqn Workshop had our clothes washed by villagers close to camp. One thing that was continually commented on was that they smelt and "prickly heat and skin rashes" were a common occurrence. Our water was that foul tasting that we ordered "Happy Aid" from our families so that we could drink the water.

How anybody could write the WAR MEMORIAL'S official history of the Agent Orange controversy whilst having all this information to refer to and even to the point of the Royal Commission not reporting the information correctly. We were very privileged to meet with Doctors Professors Scientists, Defence Personnel and many others, we remember very clearly one of the leading CSIRO Professors saying to us "the biggest regret I have in my life is that I was part of the Committee that banned DDT. At least we knew what DDT would do and its effects. What we have in place now is a completely unknown scenario". (Statement made in 1980)

In summary the VVA of NSW was started so Vietnam Veterans had a vehicle to find out what went so wrong for them and their families. When we first started the VVA of NSW no one was interested in helping, the RSL didn't want to know us as in their eyes Vietnam wasn't a real War, and they hoped that we would go away. DVA was also a brick-wall but we managed to knock it down by

sheer determination and persistence. The Government of the day didn't want to admit to a "wrong doing" that they knew only too well about. So one can only hope that the review and re-writing of the chemical issue in Vietnam by the War Memorial is a true and accurate one and not just "Agent Orange". The Veterans, their families and future generations deserve the right to know exactly what took place so that this type of cover-up will never happen again.

This information is taken from the "extensive" files and information that we have built up since 1978 when we realised that there was a major problem with the Veterans health.

Prepared by

Gary and Sandra Adams

NOTE: We hope to be able to report in future issues the full story of the "early days" of the VVA NSW and the National VVAA.

If anyone has questions or has more information please contact us as we are working our way through a complete history of the formation from 1978 through to "The Royal Commission".

EMAIL: gadams4748@outlook.com

CONGRATULATIONS

The following 3 members are the lucky winners our Bunnings Gift Card 2016 (early) Membership Draw

Membership Card # 1497
Mr Geoffrey Nash
Yatala Vale SA

Membership Card # 1017
Mr Carl Piazza
Fishermans Paradise NSW

Membership Card # 0919
Mr James Gates
Carindale Qld

We congratulate the lucky recipients.

**War Widows Guild of Australia
NSW Ltd. and The Partners of
Veterans Assoc. of Australia NSW
Branch Inc.**

**Vietnam War
Commemoration Service
11 am 29th September 2016
ANZAC War Memorial Hyde
Park Sydney**

The War Widows' Guild of Australia NSW and Partners of Veterans Association of Australia NSW have partnered together to hold this important Commemoration Service in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan and of the Vietnam War.

The Commemoration Service is being held for the Widows and Partners of Vietnam War Veterans.

To express interest or for further information please contact WWG on

02 92676577 or 1800 451 615

Please see overleaf for more Reunions.....>

LOOKING FOR

JOHN NESBITT

Service # 2787518 ex - 5RAR

Last known at Windemere Park, near Morisset NSW. Anyone knowing Johns whereabouts is asked to contact the secretary at Granville.

secretary@vvfagranville.org

Phone: 02 9682 1788 weekdays 9:00 –3:00

Please see overleaf for more Notices.....>

REUNIONS & NOTICES

REUNIONS & NOTICES



Mudjee Railway Station, now home to our Mudjee & Districts, NSW Sub-Branch.

Mudjee & Districts' New Home

Mudjee Sub-Branch has relocated to new premises in the former Mudjee Railway Station, at 21 Inglis Street, and the intrepid volunteers want all local veterans to know. The almost 60 newer ex-service veterans now calling the region home, are invited to give us a call and pop in for a visit.

Australia's past and present veterans are not looked after on a regular basis and many don't sleep at all, (well). For current Defence Force members, there's no bigger relief than coming home to your family. But for many returning veterans, the battle is only half won. Former servicemen and women often require quality advice and assistance to help with the transition into everyday life.

There is, however, help out there. The Mudjee and Districts Sub-branch of the Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc., (Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.), provides assistance to War Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers, and all current and former members of the Australian Defence Force, their families, AND War Widows. Often, that assistance can be as little as a friendly chat but can make a world of difference to a veteran feeling the strain of life after combat service. VVPPAA Mudjee and Districts Sub-branch volunteers deal with veterans involved in past and present conflicts.

We look after veterans from all conflicts, and that doesn't mean a specific war. Very few people even know Australians were involved in Namibia, for instance. We assist veterans of United Nations Peacekeeping missions who receive no help unless they "fight" the Australian government. Peacekeepers and Peacemakers are tied in with the United Nations, so until the Australian Government recognises it as 'active service', or 'hazardous service' they don't receive many entitlements.

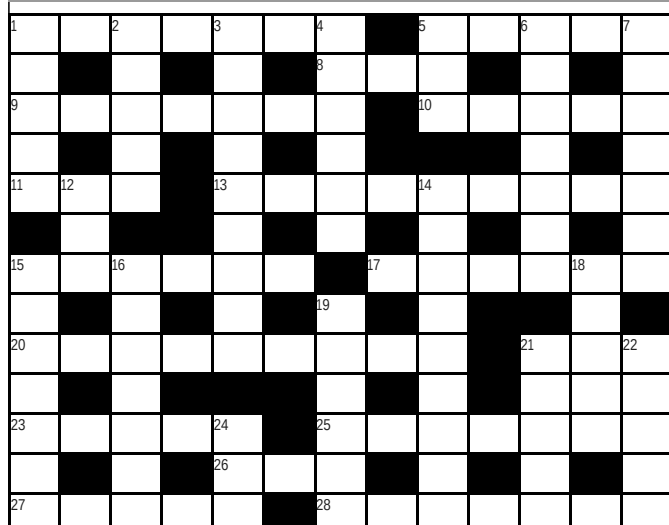
Mudjee & Districts Sub-Branch's main concern is the young fellas who are out there. War causes not only physical injuries, it's also the psychological and mental illnesses. While young veterans are in the forces they have mates who 'have their back', but once they are discharged they don't have that support. That's where we come in to help. We want them to know we've got their back.

Sub-Branch President, Ken Atkinson, invites... "All those young guys out there, come and see us and we will fight for you. If you've got a problem, I've got the contacts. I will try to get you to the people that you need to see, and the help you need". Ken also advises that it's important that not only veterans but also their partners, and war-widows, receive help. The silent thinkers are the ones you have to look out for because they're more likely to harm themselves. A frightening statistic like the fact we lost 42 men in the war (Afghanistan and Iraq) and more than double that (so far) from suicide. Facts not monitored by government.

If you know a veteran or a partner of a returned serviceman or woman who needs help, please do not hesitate to contact Ken Atkinson on 0428 246 147 or drop in to the old railway station at Mudjee, or call the new phone line: (02) 6372 7740.

The VVPPAA Mudjee Sub-Branch has "got your back" and "will move heaven and earth" to help.

CROSSWORD CORNER

*Across*

1. Back up
5. Weary
8. Guess arrival
9. Type of Elephant
10. Chooses
11. Look into
13. Trembling
15. Cowboy shows
17. Entry to
20. Forebears
21. Beat
23. Lift
25. Mariners
26. Adams partner
27. Reside
28. Clothes

Down

1. Acute
2. Social gathering
3. Times
4. Sport
5. Faucet
6. Accept gift
7. Plans
12. City in Brazil
14. Extreme
15. Arrived
16. Refuse
18. Ceylon? – Lanka
19. Threw
21. Barbs
22. Protruding ivory
24. Israel city - Aviv

Solution next issue

THE UNKNOWN COMIC

A bank robbery is taking place by a masked gunman and everyone is ordered to lie face down and not look at him.

He is just about to walk out the door with the loot when his mask slips and one of the bank customers who defied his orders sees his face.

Not wanting to be identified later he shoots the person that saw him point blank through the head and yells at the rest of the terrified people; now is there anybody else that saw my face?

One man replies; 'Um yeah, I think the missus here caught a glimpse.....'

Barry went to the cop shop and asked could he speak to the burglar they had just caught for breaking into his house the previous night. The desk sergeant told him he'd get his chance in court, and it was too late to wake the prisoner anyway.

Barry told the cop it was urgent as he needed to know how the burglar got into his house without waking his wife.

In that space on the form where it asks who to contact in case of an emergency, I always write, 'The best doctor available'.

If you're not supposed to enjoy a midnight snack, why is there a light in the refrigerator?

I thought I'd forgotten how to throw a boomerang—but eventually it came back to me.

DECEMBER 2015 SOLUTION

	C		S	P	E	E	D		L	A	S	H
A	L	T	A	R		L	A	P	E	L		U
	E		T	O	W	E	R		S	O	F	T
S	A	L	E	M		V	E	S	S	E	L	S
P	R	E	S	I	D	E	D		O		O	
I		G		S	I	N		D	E	C	O	R
E	V	A	D	E	D		R	E	S	I	D	E
S	A	L	E	S		B	I	D		D		S
	L		C		S	E	D	I	M	E	N	T
D	I	V	I	D	E	S		C	O	R	E	S
E	D	A	M		V	I	T	A	L		E	
E		S	A	V	E	D		T	A	R	D	Y
P	E	E	L		R	E	F	E	R		Y	



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

SCHOLARSHIPS

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



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

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

2014 Recipient

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

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

P: 02 9213 7999

E: avcat@dva.gov.au

W: www.avcat.org.au

APPLICATIONS OPEN 18th AUGUST

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

(See opposite)

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

TEST YOUR ELIGIBILITY NOW!!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please contact AVCAT for more information.

NOTES:

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

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

To find out more please feel free to contact AVCAT:



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

OUTREACH PROGRAM PENSION TOURS

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

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

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

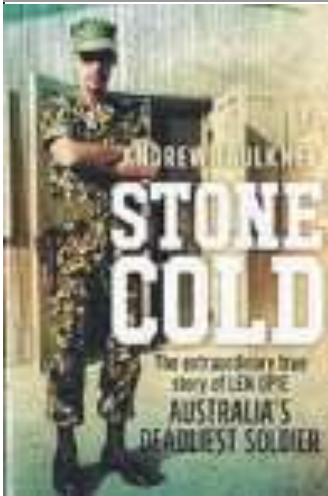
Remember, we assist all Veterans, and service and ex-service personnel, in any matter relating to your service that may require the lodgement of a claim or application with DVA..

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

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

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

BOOK REVIEW



Stone Cold,
Andrew Faulkner,
Allen & Unwin, \$32.99

Try all good book stores
quote

ISBN 9781742373782

This is the true story of Len Opie. A soldier cast in the image of ANZAC, and revered in the post World War II military as a peerless fighter.

Born in Snowtown, South Australia in 1923, Opie was an unremarkable student who revelled in the cadets and went train-watching when he should have been doing his homework.

He enlisted as soon as he was of age and through three wars, the quiet kid with the train set grew into one of the most decorated soldiers in the nation's history.

Opie was a paradox; he was a cold-eyed killer but drank nothing stronger than weak tea, never smoked and seldom swore. He killed people with his bare hands, but in civilian life he liked nothing better than a well-put-together model railway. He set his own bar high and expected others to do the same.

This, the first Opie biography, traces the fighting history of this remarkable man from the jungles of New Guinea and Borneo to Korea, where he emerged from the ranks to excel in the epic Battle of Kapyong and play a key role at the Battle of Maryang San.

Then, as a member of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, Opie joined the CIA's black ops program **Phoenix**, and as head of training found himself at the heart of the American counterinsurgency war in Vietnam. Some believe his CIA association continued after the Vietnam War.

When he was finally discharged, to Opie's great disappointment, he had nineteen medals, a stack of friends in high places and a pining for the army that lasted the rest of his life.

'Kill or be killed' was Opie's mantra; he did a lot of killing and died of natural causes as an old man.

[Post Ed: one reader read all 320 pages in a sitting and reported, "the hardest book to put down I have ever read..."]



Opie at age 84. Picture courtesy Allen & Unwin.

BRANCH LISTINGS NSW SUB-BRANCHES

BRANCH LISTINGS OTHER STATES



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

2016 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - AGENDA

The 2016 Annual General Meeting of the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc., will be held at Merrylands RSL Club 10.30am Saturday, 21 May 2016.

AGENDA

Opening of Meeting by the Chairman

Apologies

Confirm the Minutes of the AGM 2015.

Business Arising from the Minutes of the AGM 2015

President's Report

Treasurer's Report

Secretary's Report

Membership Report

Appointment of Association Auditors

Appointment of Association Legal Representatives

Appointment of Life Members

Other Business by leave of the Chairman

Close of Meeting.

Any items for General Business must be in the hands of the Secretary by close of business on Monday 2 May 2016.

Next AGM to be held on a date to be confirmed during May 2017.

Ron O'Connor
Hon. Secretary
NSW Branch

Vietnam Vets

By Gwen Cassell

You went over there to lend a hand,
What you went through we don't understand.
The pain, the loss of limbs and friends,
And the horror of memories never ends,

The choppers reverberate through your brain,
You hear the screams, again and again,
You were boys when you went to your baptism of
fire, with your dreams of your youth soaring higher
and higher,

But you soon lost your innocence and became
men, fighting a battle you just couldn't win,
There were some not touched by the horror of war,
Is it true you didn't know what you were fighting
for?

It's bad enough, when you know why,
To be fired upon and to see your mates die.
Then there's the mines, snipers and such,
But "Agent Orange" was a bit too much,

Showered upon you by your own side,
So the Viet Cong would have nowhere to hide.
Then there was a war of nerves as well, as you tried
to survive a living hell,
Who would go home, who would stay, who was
going to die today?
When you were finally shipped back home,
Under cover of night, feeling so alone,

You brought home with you, your memories and
pain, your broken bodies, some were insane,
And what did you get for your sacrifice?
A welcome home that was less than nice,

Abused and scorned, shunned and cursed,
Your hearts were broken, your hope dispersed.
We as a nation should pray and weep,
How could we do this to you and sleep?

You have done what you could, now you're back
in your land, but how could your family and friends
understand. Someday your valour will reap its
reward, then the country will cheer with one accord,

You have earned your honour and borne your
loss, and now with God's grace may you cast off
your cross. We all love you for the job you've done.
Good luck, God bless. I'll sign this "A Mum".

A MESSAGE FROM THE NSW BRANCH

Once again we say THANK YOU to our many
members who have made a financial donation to
their State Branch.

Without these donations we would find it much
more difficult to cater to the needs of our war
veterans, service and ex-service persons generally.

Periodically, we will publish a list of individual
NSW Branch donors of amounts of \$200 or more.
Whilst ALL donations are gratefully received, and
combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are
too numerous to list.

Donors to the NSW Branch of \$200 or more since
the last Journal were:

\$750	Ken Hull
\$640	Tanya Hackett
\$500	Geoffrey Jones, John McNeill
\$270	Thomas Grills, Russell Huxley
\$220	David Gibbs
\$200	Christopher Buckley, Stephen Ellis, John Robiicheau, Albert Brown, Warren Coupland, Colin Kelson, John Phillips, Wesley Hindmarsh, Don Green, John Jacobs, Geoffrey Riley.

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





VVCS - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service

A service founded by Vietnam veterans

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

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

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

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



1300 924 522

Our programs

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

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

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

91 Milton Street,
Ashfield NSW 2131

&

7 Blake Street,
Kogarah NSW 2217



Last Post





Last Post





Last Post





Last Post



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

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

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

Please consider leaving a bequest in your will

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

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

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

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

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

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

OPERATION Life



REGISTER NOW!!

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

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

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

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



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

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
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02 9897 1002
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Sat 8:30-12:30**

BATTERIES

POWER PRODUCTS For all your power needs

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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 Sth
Windsor
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Fax: (02) 4577 7768

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ASHFIELD, NSW, 2131
02 9798-6166

GEORGE KAWAUCHI (owner)

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PANELS, BOOSTER

CABLES,
FUSES, GLOBES,
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**OPEN SAT FROM: 9.30am-
3.30pm**

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holidays.

10% Discount to veterans

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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

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Airport or Cruise Terminals

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VETERANS**

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0404 754 899

